

**Role of Shyness and Perceived Social Support  
in Self Disclosure Among  
University Students**



**By**

**FARWA BATOOL**

*Dr. Muhammad Ajmal*

**NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF PSYCHOLOGY**

*Center of Excellence*

**QUAID-I- AZAM UNIVERSITY**

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**FARWA BATOOL**

*Dr. Muhammad Ajmal*

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## **CERTIFICATE**

It is certified that M.Sc. Research Report on “Role of shyness, perceived social support and self disclosure among university students” prepared by Farwa Batool has been approved for submission to the National Institute of Psychology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad.

**Ms. Aisha Zubair**

*(Supervisor)*

**“DEDICATED TO ALMIGHTY ALLAH”**

O My Allah!

It is enough for my respect that I am Your slave,

And it is enough for my pride that You are my God,

You are exactly the way I desire, Thus, mould me! The way You desire.

**Imam Ali (AS)**

**FOR THE SILENT PRISONERS OF SHYNESS**

**“WE BUILD TOO MANY WALLS AND NOT ENOUGH BRIDGES”**

**ISSAC NEWTON**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The present study investigated the role of shyness and perceived social support in self disclosure among university students. Moreover the role of various demographics was also explored in relation to the study variables such as gender, family monthly income and parental education. Shyness Questionnaire (Henderson & Zimbardo, 2010), Perceived Social Support Scale (Gul & Najam, 2008) and Self Disclosure Scale (Magno, Cuason, & Figueroa, 2008) were used to measure shyness, perceived social support and self disclosure respectively. The sample consisted of 380 university students including both men and women within age range of 18 to 30 years. Sample was collected from both public and private sector universities of Islamabad. The results showed that there was a significant negative relationship of shyness with self disclosure and perceived social support. Self disclosure had significant positive relationship with perceived social support. Moderating effect of perceived social support had not been supported. The results showed that there were significant gender differences on shyness, perceived social support and self disclosure. Male university students were found to be high on perceived social support and self disclosure while they were low on shyness as compared to female students. The results also showed significant differences in the shyness and perceived social support among the three family income groups. University students belonging to low income group were found to be high on shyness and low on perceived social support as compared to the students belonging to other high income groups while non significant findings had been observed on self disclosure among the students belonging to the three income groups. Maternal education had been found to have significant effects on the shyness and perceived social support of the university students, as students having highly educated mothers were postgraduate were high on perceived social support and less on shyness as compared to the other students having less educated mothers. The paternal education had significant effects on the self disclosure and perceived social support of the students. The students having high paternal education were high on both self disclosure and perceived social support while non significant findings were found on shyness. Future implications of the study were also discussed.

### INTRODUCTION

Man is considered as a social animal. A man's nature impels him to live and interact in order to get recognition and support from others. Through interaction relationships are formed. Social support is one of the important functions of social relationships. Interaction with others is not only a way to build relationships but is also important for the individual as it provides social support in the times of need. But building relationships is a complex task. It starts with the partners disclosing themselves and the literature evidences show that this initial interaction is difficult for the individuals who are shy and reluctant in their dealings with others. Thus for successful socialization and relational life, shyness and self disclosure are important to be considered along with the social support available to the person.

#### **Shyness**

It is defined as the "behavioral inhibition involving anxiety and fear of social situations" (Shiner, 2006, p. 3). The relationship of shyness has been seen with fear, as fear is considered to be the main constituent of shyness (Rothbart, 2006). However, the link between shyness and fear is not yet fully researched and explained (Shiner, 2006). Similarly, shyness is considered as an innate ability of the individual (Henderson & Zimbardo, 2009). It has also been defined as an excessive self focus, being characterized by the negative self assessments which usually bring the feelings of distress and uneasiness in social settings and it causes hindrance for the person in achieving his daily life as well as career goals (Henderson, Zimbardo, & Carducci, 1999).

Shyness can be experienced at all of the following levels i.e. at affective level (such as extreme feelings of nervousness or uneasiness), behavioral level (inability to react appropriately), and cognitive level (negative thoughts about one's own self) and at physiological level such as increased heartbeat, etc. It can be prompted by different situational events. One distinction defined here is that introversion is not the category of shyness. Introverts, like extroverts, do not have the fear of facing social situations they like to work alone or prefer unaccompanied activities. While the shy persons

want to be the part of social setting but they are restricted by their shy behavior because shyness causes uneasiness when the person is in the social situations (Crozier, 2001).

The researchers have found that most of the referrals of shyness fulfill the criteria of generalized social phobia i.e. they generally have trouble in starting conversations in the social settings and also feel difficulty in maintaining such conversations. Some referrals are also found to meet the criteria for avoidant personality disorder in which they are over sensitive to be rejected by the others. Many other disorders are also found to be present as the co-morbid factors of shyness such as dysthymia, generalized anxiety disorder (having free floating anxiety), phobias related to specific situations and with specific things and in some cases also have dependent and paranoid personalities (Henderson & Zimbardo, 2001).

Research findings have revealed that the individuals with chronic shyness are usually not concerned or well informed about their resentment or aggression thus it is not expressed properly. Hence in the treatment of shyness this is one of the major goals to make the individual learn how to express their concealed anger in more constructive and helpful ways (Henderson & Zimbardo, 2001).

**Factors affecting shyness.** There have been insufficient research on the exact causes of shyness but according to some shyness experts, who have studied and researched it well, the probable causes of shyness are (a) genes making a person prone to shyness, (b) unhealthy attachment between the child and his parents, (c) inadequately learnt social skills, or (d) the harsh treatment or excessive criticism, by the family members or peers, faced by the child. Shyness causes a child to avoid social settings in which they have to interact with others and they are thus shy because they are over conscious about what others might think about them (Butt, Moosa, Ajmal, & Rahman, 2011).

Bullock (as cited in Butt et al. 2011) presented the factors that lead to shyness in children involve changing school or residential area, loss of a friend, facing the parental conflict like divorce, death of loved one, peer rejection, insufficient learnt social skills, anxiousness and low self esteem that ultimately lead to difficulty or

trouble in making social ties like friendships etc. Furthermore, it is argued that one's family and cultural background also plays a role in making child learn shyness.

**Cultural influences on shyness.** The cross cultural researches have shown the universal prevalence of shyness. The participants of different shyness researches belonging to different cultural backgrounds have reported experiencing shyness to some extent. Cultural differences play a very important role in developing shyness. Collectivistic cultures promote the group norms; working in groups and prefer group esteem over the individual esteem, thus it promotes the individuals to become self-conscious in expressing their thoughts and to think collectively according to the group norms, therefore such individuals are more shy than those in the individualistic cultures which promote the individual esteem thus give more space to them for self-expression. Also, the cultural differences in taking credits for success and blame for the failures play a role in shyness as in collectivistic cultures success is usually credited to the whole group whereas in individualistic culture the individual enjoys the whole credit of the success alone (Henderson et al., 1999).

When shyness is observed across the cultures, it appeared that the collectivistic cultures usually promote the reserved and restrained behaviors as compared to the individualistic cultures which are more open and expressive. And due to such hard and inflexible norms of the society, the social anxiety and shyness is higher in such cultures (Henderson & Zimbardo, 2009).

**Shyness ruining one's life.** Shyness affects several areas of an individual's life; it affects an individual's self-esteem, peer and other relationships and the negative internalizations (Gazelle, 2008; Koydemir & Demir, 2008).

The affects of shyness on academic performance are well studied. The researchers who studied shyness among school children found that shy children score very low when are tested orally on vocabulary as compared to their non-shy classmates, while no differences were found on their written tests. This shows that how shyness hinders the career achievements of such children (Crozier & Hostettler, 2008).

The research literature also shows the association of shyness with shame and negative internal attributions which ultimately leads to pessimistic social outcomes which are unhelpful for the individual (Henderson, 2002).

Research shows that shy individuals usually face difficulty in forming productive relations with their teachers which affects their performance in studies. Because such children find it too difficult to ask for help to the teacher, hence they remain behind and face serious academic issues. No one can assess that their main issue is shyness and not their inertness (Rydell, Bohlin, & Thorell, 2005).

The coping skills are found to be linked highly with shyness. The individuals who are found to be high on shyness or anxiousness are usually found to have decreased or reduced coping skills (Westenberg, Gullone, Bokhorst, Heynel, & King, 2007). Also, the studies have found that the individuals with chronic shyness do blame themselves as well as other people for their acts, they perceive others as harmful and refusing thus they do not trust anyone (Henderson & Zimbardo, 2001).

The research says that shyness is something that is faced by everyone at few stages of life. And most of the time, it is considered to be normal as it is for the time being. For children, some shyness is considered to be the normal thing, particularly when they are 5 to 6 months old and again when they are near 2 years of age. At these stages of life, shyness is considered to be normal and a part of developmental stage. It only becomes a problem when it interferes with the normal functioning of a child as when it interferes with relationships formation, with social gatherings, in school routine and other important phases of the child's life (Butt, Moosa, Ajmal, & Rahman, 2011).

Research findings also show that the shyness has very bad impact on the social adjustment of the individuals, especially the children; they usually face low confidence, are socially anxious and have very low voices while speaking. According to Henderson and Zimbardo (as cited in Butt et al., 2011) shyness is basically characterized by the feelings of being reserved, dwindling back from the life, lessen the social ties and breaking the bonds with others. This all leads to lowering the self esteem that ultimately has very negative impacts on the individual's life.



Murray (2000) concluded from the results of different psychological surveys that a considerable population view themselves as being shy. But shyness becomes troublesome only when it leads to problematic behaviors such as inhibition to face social gatherings, uneasiness and having negative concepts associated with social settings. Researchers suggest that repeated exposure to very different social settings makes the child confident, avoidance to such situations make them shy and creates problems later in life (Butt et al., 2011).

**The consequences of shyness on social life.** It has been observed in a number of studies that the results of shyness are very troublesome for the individual. Shy individuals hesitate to get the advantages from the opportunities provided to them, they usually avoid such social situations and thus they may lose good opportunities (Henderson et al., 1999). It has been seen that the shy individuals not only blame themselves for their acts (failures) but also the other people surrounding them, which has very bad consequences for them. It results in damaging their interpersonal relationships and causes aggression and feelings of bitterness towards the self and others (Henderson & Zimbardo, 2001). They are rarely seen to be expressive, are more isolated and thus experience more loneliness than the non shy individuals. Research results show that shy individuals do not have stable relationships especially their marriages are very unstable. They have less career achievements because of their inhibited behaviors, they think that they cannot socialize well and view the social interactions passively and this behavior becomes their justification for predicted or forecasted failure and a self handicapping strategy. Extreme shyness causes many future problems like terrible loneliness and the related psychological problems for the individual. Researches on shyness have found that genetics do play its part in shyness as the 15 to 20% of new born babies show insecure or reserved temperaments; they are highly reactive, over crying and strong head and limbs movement are observed even on slight stimulations. In their childhood, such children are often found to be shy in their behaviors like play etc (Henderson et al., 1999).

**Ways to overcome shyness.** A research suggested some ways to overcome shyness. These are: never label a child as “shy”, take a child to unknown and new situations, encourage the child to talk to new and strange persons, promote them to

express their emotions verbally and in case of excessive shyness consult any counselor (Malouff, 2008).

**Categories of shyness.** There are different types of shyness and these are categorized according to the severity of the symptoms faced by the individual. Zimbardo (1990) viewed shyness as something that varies along the continuum ranging from mild situation to more severe chronic shyness that prolongs for a time. According to him, shyness varies depending on its influence on the individual. Some of the types of shyness are:

***Situational shyness.*** It is defined as the state of shyness that is dependent on the situation, the symptoms of shyness are experienced in specific social settings but the individual does not view such shyness as the component or the part of his self-concept. Zimbardo argued that the individuals who are at the end of the shyness continuum usually avoid social interactions and would choose to work separately and at the other extreme are those who are chronically shy where they become so uncomfortable that it disturbs their social life. In the middle of the continuum are those who feel shy with certain people or situations (Zimbardo, 1990).

***Chronic shyness.*** The most severe form of shyness is chronic shyness in which the person has the strong feelings of being negatively evaluated by others along with the emotional stress that ultimately hinders the participation of the individual in desired social activities (Henderson, 2002). Chronically shy individuals find it too difficult to work in front of others and sometimes their anxiety becomes very difficult to control (Zimbardo, 1990).

***Love shyness.*** This is the type of shyness which is specifically felt by the individual towards the person of opposite sex. It usually leads to uncommunicativeness and reservation from the opposite sex person. Such individuals usually don't get into the marriages and are observed to avoid family formation roles. Love shyness serves sufficiently to make such individuals remain single and never to marry. Biologically it is viewed as the result of genetic transmission and is also learned from experiences with the friends and family members (Zimbardo, 1990).

***Temperamental shyness.*** Temperamental or trait shyness has been defined as the shyness which affects an individual's behavior across a number of situations

and is considered as a stable/persistent internal trait of the person (Crozier, 2001). Also, Crozier (2001) gave certain characteristics for any construct to be considered as a temperament. For temperamental shyness, four characteristics have to be considered which includes its early appearance in life, stability with regard to time, predictability regarding behavioral consequences and finally being biological in nature.

**Behavioral and emotional correlates of temperamental shyness.** There are different psychological and social factors that are observed to be associated with extreme shyness. Different theoretical evidences show that temperamental shyness is associated with behavioral and affective problems and its relation has also been observed with some psychological disorders.

**Behavioral problems.** The roots of shyness have been observed to be embedded in the early childhood of the individual. The shyness appears to affect the individual not only in the childhood but also has marks in the later life of the person. Such individuals are observed to be socially reserved and aloof as compared to their non shy age fellows. Shy individuals are usually found to be less assertive and do not have good coping strategies (Coplan, Findlay, & Nelson, 2004). As these individuals are not good in social get togethers, therefore they avoid facing unfamiliar situations and they usually have fears about them (Schmidt & Buss, 2010).

**Affective problems.** Shyness has been observed to affect the emotional life of the individual. The dispositional shyness mostly leads the individual towards internalizing problems like negative or faulty emotions, isolation and low self esteem which eventually causes low self worth. Because such people usually fail in their attempts to mingle in social gatherings, they develop negative feelings and evaluate themselves incorrectly. Their repeated failure in the attempts to overcome their hesitation causes them to carry impaired feelings and low self worth. Such people are also observed to be highly concerned about themselves which becomes a basis for many psychological issues (Jones, Schulkin, & Schmidt, 2014).

**Theoretical perspectives about shyness.** There are different theories that give different explanations about the development of the shyness. Some of these are given below.

***Bowlby's attachment theory.*** This theory basically emphasized the role of the emotional bond formed between the child and his caregiver. The theory emphasized that the type of bond formed between the child and caregiver not only displays the quality of the relationship but it also becomes a stable internal characteristic of the child. Crozier (2001) argued that the certain type of child-caregiver interactions result in the development of shyness in the child. The different factors like family conflicts, irresponsible parenting and unfriendly child-parents relationship along with many other factors lead to the development of certain type of attachment patterns. These attachment styles make the child avoidant and reluctant in his life.

It has been observed that shyness has negative relationship with parental love, acceptance, care and warmth. Certain researches show that as parental negligence increases it results in the increase in shyness in the children. The studies have also found that there is a significant relationship between maternal parenting and adjustment of the children. Research shows that the personality traits of the mother and her parenting style directly contribute to the social adjustment of her children. Authoritative parenting style is considered to have significant positive effects on the social adjustment of the shy children (Coplan, Arbeau, & Armer, 2008). Also, the positive link has been observed between shyness and insecure attachment, and negative relationship between shyness and secure attachment (Terblanche, 2011).

***Social phobia and shyness.*** As per the DSM-IV-TR social phobia has been defined as “a marked and persistent fear of social or performance situations in which embarrassment may occur. Most often, the social or performance situation is avoided, although sometimes it is endured with dread” (American Psychiatric Association, 2000).

The most obvious symptom of social phobia is experiencing extreme social anxiety. In social anxiety there are some very obvious defining features such as accelerated heartbeat, sweating, avoiding social gatherings, fear of being negatively evaluated by others and negative preoccupations. Shyness has some very similar symptoms of social anxiety. As in chronic shyness the individual tries to avoid the social settings as much as he can and has uncontrolled anxiety in some situations (Zimbardo, 1977). When such conditions prolong, the shyness may turn into social

phobia as it causes an individual to become over reserved. And this is observed as the symptoms of chronic shyness and social phobia are highly similar as they both cause the individual to carry the feelings of worthlessness, lower self esteem and reservation from social interactions (Oakman, 2005).

***Self esteem and shyness.*** Shy individuals have been seen to be very reserve, passionless and even in some situations they are seen as indifferent. Shy individuals have very negative self image, they view themselves less positively and due to this nature they are observed to be aloof and have very restricted social circle. The major contributing factor for their small social ties is their negative thought pattern and less positive views about themselves. Also they do not have correct attitude towards others. They view others as insulting and making fun of them. This ultimately becomes a handicapping behavior that further prevents them from approaching the social gatherings. They usually use the self defeating statements like ‘I am shy, I am not good in social dealings’ etc. Such thoughts and statements become a hurdle and further make them handicapped and helpless to overcome this incorrect attitude. This repetition of self defeating statements makes them more vulnerable towards isolation; it becomes a vicious cycle that ultimately leads to an unavoidable fear. They become hopeless and eventually cease making efforts. And one of the awful facts about such people is their reluctance to ask others for help. Generally such people have low self esteem that gives them the feelings of worthlessness (Butt et al. 2011).

***Introversion and shyness.*** The concept of shyness has initially emerged from the view that shyness results from the varying interaction of two personality traits i.e. neuroticism and extraversion. According to this view the individuals low on extraversion and high on neuroticism were considered to be shy. From this view a distinction has been made between introverts and individuals who are dispositionally shy. As it is seen that there are some features common to both introverts and shy individuals; they prefer to work alone, they are not very comfortable in social gatherings and even in their childhood they prefer to play alone. But the important and a significant difference between them are the signs of social anxiety displayed by the shy individual. The shy individuals experience anxiety and stress when they have to enter any social setting and they have difficulty in interacting with others (Jones, Schulkin, & Schmidt, 2014).

According to Zimbardo (1977), 90% of the people experience shyness at some stages of their lives but some people have shyness as a personality disposition that appears during the early period of infancy. It appears in the form of extreme shyness with social avoidance. But the important point here is that the percentage of people having temperamental shyness is only ten to fifteen percent. This shows that there are many other factors that majorly contribute to the development of shyness in the individuals (Jones, Schulkin, & Schmidt, 2014). Some theorists posit that shyness has biological causes too and then it appears in the individual's temperament (Kagan, 1994).

**Psychological disorders associated with shyness.** Researchers have shown the relationship of shyness with other psychological problems. Some of them are discussed here.

***Social anxiety disorder.*** The relationship of temperamental shyness has been observed with social anxiety. It has been observed that approximately 20% of the new born babies are found to be shy. Almost one-third of the children born with temperamental shyness develop social anxiety later in their lives. And this social anxiety when persists for a long time may ultimately leads to more severe situation leading to social anxiety disorder (Jones, Schulkin, & Schmidt, 2014).

***Substance use and shyness.*** Research findings suggest links between shyness and substance abuse. Researchers argue that the individuals who are shy and those who are socially anxious both have the same perception about the use of illegal substances to cope with their stress. These tendencies have been observed in the adolescents as well as in the adults as a way to better manage the stress (Santesso, Schmidt, & Fox, 2004). The individuals having social anxiety disorder are usually found to have alcohol problems. Similarly, the shy individuals are observed as using forbidden substances to overcome or reduce their social anxieties (Jones, Schulkin, & Schmidt, 2014).

***Eating disorders.*** A number of studies of clinical samples have explained the links between shyness and eating disorders (Troop & Bifulco, 2002). This is because such individuals have problems in taking any kind of risk, they usually avoid novel situations and have problem with impulse control. A research conducted on

relationship of socially anxious personalities with eating problems has clearly shown that shyness leads to a number of eating pathologies among such individuals (Jones, Schulkin, & Schmidt, 2014).

### **Perceived Social Support**

It has been defined by Gottlieb (2000) as “a process of interaction in relationship which improves coping, esteem, belonging and competence through actual and perceived exchanges of physical or psychosocial resources” (p. 200). Perceived social support is considered as an important asset that an individual thinks to be present or that is truly provided to the individual both by recognized support groups and by the intimate relationships. Furthermore, social support is also considered as the kind of feedback which a person receives through the contact with significant others. It is also viewed as the support that is attainable or achievable for an individual through his relationships with other individuals and groups (Cohen, Underwood, & Gottlieb, 2000).

An important distinction, explained by Wills and Shinar (2000), needs to be addressed between the perceived and received social support as the support which is thought to be present and which is actually provided to the individual. Uchino (2009) also defined this distinction between perceived and received social support. Perceived social support is defined as an individual’s prospective (probable) approach to social support and is more related to intrapersonal (within the person) approach. While the received social support is defined as the support reported by the individual after utilization of the support resources and is more closely linked to interpersonal approach i.e. it is about between two individuals.

A long debate went to explain which type of support is more important for the individual. With reference to health behaviors, Cohen and Wills (1985) found that the perceived social support is more effective than the actual/received social support because they thought that if the existing resources, of support, are not perceived by the individual they cannot be used effectively. And this point has been confirmed by many researches that the perceived social support is more powerful than the actual support provided to the person (Feldman, Dunkel-Schetter, Sandman, & Wadhwa,

2000). Thus both the types of social support have their own significance and place in an individual's life.

The role of perceived social support has been extensively studied in relation to physical and psychological health as the studies on depression, happiness and life satisfaction have found that emotional component of social support is more beneficial as in this a person feels to be loved and accepted by others (Walen & Lachman, 2000). Also, the researchers have explored that the perceived social support increases one's physical as well as psychological health as the findings show that the large and effective social networks hinder one's risk taking behavior and prevent the individual from negative considerations (Ozbay, Johnson, & Southwick, 2007). Also a number of researchers have pointed out that perceived social support is considered to be the most crucial and effective constituent in building confidence and bringing out positive academic results in the receiving individuals (Gillard, 2011).

Social networks have been extensively studied in relation to perceived social support and an enormous amount of researches have pointed out the positive consequences of the social ties. But some researches also have the assumption that the social networks or links have both the pros and the cons (Walen & Lachman, 2000). The importance of social networks can be illustrated from the fact that researches have clearly shown that the person's positive perception about his social links or networks can enhance one's health and also reduce the impact of stress on the individual. The researches also show that the actual received social support is as important as the perceived social support in anticipating the outcomes of the health (Cornman, Goldman, Weinstein, & Lin, 2001).

There are four determinants of perceived social support. These are: demographics variables (like age, gender and socioeconomic status etc), social involvement properties of the person, attribute of one's social network and the personality characteristics of the individual. Almost all the researches on these variables have been carried out in Western cultures (Cornman, Goldman, Weinstein, & Lin, 2001).

**Types of social support.** Social support has been seen to be effective only when it is provided appropriately according to the characteristics of the receiver and



the demands of the situation (Stice, Ragan, & Randall, 2004). This shows that social support varies in its forms. Cohen et al (2000) identified three main categories of social support: emotional support, informational support and tangible/instrumental support (Israel, Farquhar, Schultz, James, & Parker, 2002).

***Emotional support.*** Emotional support is being defined as the support which is provided to the person in form of love and care, giving a sense of acceptance and warmth to the person receiving it. It increases the self-worth of the receiver.

***Informational support.*** It is the support provided to the person in the form of informational assistance, by providing facts or particular details about any event or thing, needed to the person in the time of need. It is helpful for the person in certain situations as its nature is to practically solve the individual's problems. It can also be provided in the form of feedbacks.

***Tangible/Instrumental support.*** It is the support in which practical assistance is provided to the person. In this the person receives the practical help; the other person does the work for him and the receiver gets the work done by the supporter (Cohen, Underwood, & Gottlieb, 2000).

***Esteem support.*** Some researchers also explain this type of support which is shown in the form of encouragement and confidence by the therapists. Therapists offer this type of support as its purpose is to give information, to the clients, in the form of recognition and feedback. This support can also be provided by the family, friends and coworkers (Barnett, 2007).

It has been noticed that the type of social support depends on the receiving individual. The ideal source of social support varies with the developmental stage of the individual. As, for example, in the early adolescence parental support seems to be more effective source of perceived social support than in the late adolescence of the individual (Stice, Ragan, & Randall, 2004). Also, the perception about the social support is linked with the degree of one's social interactions and it varies with age, as the instrumental support is more important for younger adults than the elder ones for whom emotional support seems to be more important (Lynch et al., 1999).

Furthermore, theoretical models explain two basic aspects of perceived social support. These are: The structural aspect which includes one's social circle size and the number of social interactions a person has. The second aspect is functional one which includes two components: an emotional component i.e. being loved and understood by others, and the other instrumental component, in which a person receives practical assistance such as money, getting work done by others etc (Charney, 2004). Although both the aspects are important for a person but most of the researches show that the functional aspect (emotional and instrumental components) is more effective indicator of better health than the structural aspect i.e. the quantity of relationships (Southwick, Vythilingam, & Charney, 2005).

**Factors affecting perceived social support.** The previous researches show that the gender, ethnic background and the qualification of the individual are the most important demographic variables in relation to perceived social support.

**Gender.** There are varying results of the researches related to sex and perceived support. There are different findings of the researches conducted on these variables as one study shows that women perceive more social support as compared to men, men rely more on their partners or the spouses for the support. As the females usually take care of the whole family, provide support to their kids as well as to the other members, so in return they get more support from the family as compared to men. Researches also show that as females are more deeply surrounded in social networks, so they perceive to get more support in return. Apart from this, some researches also show that females perceive social support to be less satisfactory. Whereas some say that there are no gender differences in the perception of support (Cornman, Goldman, Weinstein, & Lin, 2001). This perceived social support, in return, has been found to have significant positive effects on the health as one of the research shows its link to lower mortality rate also. As the perceived social support increases it leads to decrease in the mortality rate apart from other demographic factors (Uchino, 2009).

**Ethnicity and socioeconomic status.** A research conducted on social support found significant results of race and ethnic background in relation to the social support. The research findings suggest that the cultural background and

socioeconomic status greatly effects a person's perception of social support (Cornman, Goldman, Weinstein, & Lin, 2001).

In short, perceived social support has been defined as an essential component in an individual's life. The support when given in the form of praise and recognition and is shown through other positive gestures, it acts as a positive reinforcer for the individual thus enhances his ability to be resilient in stressful situations (Gillard, 2011). Also, the relationship of perceived social support has been studied with the healthy life practices and it yielded positive outcomes i.e., it showed that having social support in one's life make him more adapted to positive health practices like regularly exercising, taking nutritious food and taking safety measures etc. (Roth, 2004).

**Theoretical perspectives about perceived social support.** There are number of theories on perceived social support. Each theory explains a different perspective and explains how social support is linked to so many other variables. Some of the theories are as follows:

***Stress and coping perspectives.*** One of the perspectives related to perceived social support comes from the stress and coping theory (Cohen & Lakey, 2000). According to this theory, stress occurs due to one's negative interpretation of the events and this negative interpretation leads to stress which becomes a major cause of many health related problems. This theory suggests that the perceived social support acts as a supportive agent for the individual in conditions when he is facing extreme stress and is unable to respond or react appropriately according to the demands of the situation. The theory proposes that stressful conditions start a chain of negative feelings which greatly affects one's health condition, but this condition can be revert back by providing social support to the individual (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). Hence social support acts to prevent the individual from the adverse effects of the stress i.e. it has buffering effects (Cohen & Wills, 1985). The theory further suggests that the social support needs to be given to the individual in a manner that it should act to modify one's health condition, enhances his coping abilities and make him better able to deal with stress according to the demands of the situation. Thus the theory gives an "optimal matching hypothesis" i.e. the social support provided to the

individual should match the demands of the situation (Cohen & Hoberman, 1985; Cutrona & Russell, 1990).

The stress and coping model suggests that perceived social support is dependent on different factors like social integration, perceived support by the individual and enacted support role; these all play different and important roles in one's life. Thus the previous researches suggest that if one has effective social ties it increases one's chances of getting more social support (Uchino, 2009). Similarly, it is observed that the individual's perception about the support he is getting greatly affects his response towards stressor. .

***Social-cognitive perspective.*** This perspective emphasizes the important role of social integration in an individual's life. The model basically explains the link between the perceived social support and mental as well as the physical health of the individual. This model emphasizes the role that is played by negative emotions in making an individual tense effortlessly (Lakey & Drew, 1997). The social cognitive perspective suggests that negative emotions, negative self evaluations and evaluations about significant others, all are linked in a cognitive framework of the individual (Baldwin, 1992). This model suggests that people usually evaluate themselves and others negatively, because negative thoughts come to mind more easily, they are easily accessible and that is why such negative emotions are felt more often by the individual. This model suggests that only the negative life events do not make the individual more negative but the pessimistic thinking of the individual is adequate alone to make one feel negative emotions excessively. So this model emphasizes that if there will be social support available to the individual then it will make the negative thoughts less accessible to the individual and will make him experience the positive emotions as well.

**Stress and perceived social support.** There has been great research which shows how the stress and perceived social support are related to each other. The two major perspectives highlighting the relationship between stress and social support are the buffering hypothesis and the main effect hypothesis.

***Buffering hypothesis.*** This is one of the hypotheses which show the importance of perceived social support in an individual's life. According to this

hypothesis social support acts to protect the individual from the negative consequences only when he faces any stressful situation. Its basic emphasis is that social support will be supportive for the individual only when he is facing any crises or is experiencing any stressful event. That is why it is known as the “buffering hypothesis” because it proposes that the social support acts or buffers the individual from the harmful consequences of the stressful situation (Cohen, Underwood, & Gottlieb, 2000).

This hypothesis suggests that stress arises when a person considers himself unable to respond appropriately to the stressor. Stress arises when a situation or something is assessed as stressful and important to be responded but the individual finds himself incapable to cope with the stressor. Here the social support helps the individual, firstly, by attuning the way he assess the situation or attend to the stressor i.e. it helps the individual to perceive the stressor differently. Secondly, the social support plays its role in influencing the individual’s response to the stressful event. Here the social support can act in different ways e.g. it helps the individual by offering a solution to a problem or by reducing the perceived importance of the stressor to the individual. Thus the person becomes better able to cope effectively (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Roth, 2004).

***Main effect hypothesis.*** According to main effect hypothesis, social support is helpful for the individual regardless of his current situation i.e. whether he is in stressful situation or not, social support will act to play its positive role in the individual’s life (Cohen & Wills, 1985). This hypothesis has the view that having larger social networks help a person to experience more positive feelings and get more positive feedbacks that ultimately prevent the individual from falling into the negative experiences or feelings. This view has the major emphasis on the social support as the element of overall well being in the individual’s life as it gives a feeling of recognition, acceptance and self-importance to the individual (Roth, 2004).

### **Self Disclosure**

Self-disclosure has been defined as disclosing one’s personal information to another person and is considered to be the important feature of communication with someone in a close relationship like marital relations etc. Self disclosure has been

dealt as the attribute of the person himself and also as the feature of the relationship one has with the other person. Self disclosure is not a stable feature of the individual rather it is viewed as a process that changes or varies with the changing relationships and life of the individual (Sprecher & Hendrick, 2004). It is a process in which a person actively discloses his thoughts, emotions and feelings to the other person involved in the interaction (Derlega, Greene, & Mathews, 2006). When and how this disclosure occurs, between the individuals involved in the interaction, is influenced by the level of interaction and type of relationship between the prospective partners (Bavelas, Coates, & Johnson, 2000).

The research has also identified the characteristics of the individual that are highly related to the self-disclosure. An important demographic variable extensively studied with disclosure is the gender and the research findings have shown that women score high on self disclosure as compared to men and is also seen that female friends have greater self disclosure with each other as compared to male friends (Sprecher & Hendrick, 2004). Also, it has been observed that disclosure helps the adults to get to know each other by sharing and revealing the similar things, it helps the partners to develop the intimate relationship (Bazarova, Hancock, & Jiang, 2011).

Studies show that the individuals who have lower level of social anxiety are usually high on self disclosure. Another important personality trait that is found to be highly linked with disclosure is responsiveness i.e. the ability of an individual to evoke disclosure in the other person. The research findings show that the individuals high on responsiveness are usually more satisfied in their long term relationships as compared to others who are low on this variable. And the previous research has found the relationship between responsiveness and satisfaction in women to be effective (Sprecher & Hendrick, 2004).

Self disclosure is being defined as the intentional or purposive act of an individual that is aimed to unveil personal information, thoughts and emotions to the other person they are interacting (Greene, Derlega, & Mathews, 2006). It has been found that self disclosure is related to many qualities of the relationship like its positive relationship has been observed with love, relationship strength, and the pleasure or one's contentment with his relationships. The reason defined for this association between relationship qualities and the disclosure is that it is considered to

be the sign of relationship stability and continuation for a long time. Relationship preservation is something that starts with the relationship formation and continues till its end. Self disclosure is thought to be the contributory factor in maintaining one's relationship as it makes the partners satisfied with each other and thus makes their relationship sustain for a long time (Sprecher & Hendrick, 2004).

**Importance of communication in self disclosure.** All forms of communication either verbal or nonverbal are important in self disclosure as they both reveal some information about the partners. In verbal communication the partners actively reveal information about themselves while in non verbal communication the partners disclose information through gaze, body posture or gestures to show the intimacy with the other person. This affects their level of intimacy in the relationship that is going to build between them (Mashek & Aron, 2004).

**Factors affecting self disclosure.** There are number of factors that have been observed to influence the self disclosure between the prospective partners. These include cultural values and norms, prior expectations from the person, personality and the individual differences of the prospective partners. The researchers have argued that when people interact with new persons, they are observed that they share very polite topics, sharing only superficial information with each other and avoid getting into the topics that are considered as personal by the partners. And out of fear of social rejection, the prospective partners avoid to share information at very personal level (Chaikin & Derlega, 1974; Nakanishi, 1986; Petronio, 2002).

**Culture.** Cultural rules have been observed to hinder the self disclosure between the strangers or the prospective partners. But the researchers have found that cultural prototypes do play a role in promoting self disclosure between the two persons (Baxter, Dun, & Sahlstein, 2001; Hassebrauck & Fehr, 2002; Rose & Frieze, 1993). If the new person matches the template of one's important positive relation like parents and peer etc, then the person unconsciously becomes attracted towards the other person by the transference phenomenon which increases the liking and acceptance for the other person, hence increases the chances for self disclosure among these partners (Anderson & Adil-Saribay, 2005).

***Social ties.*** Whether the person already has a social network or not, it influences his relationship with the prospective partner. It affects how the partners will disclose themselves to each other. It is because if the person already has a very close or good relationship with another person, then he will be less likely to start and develop a new relationship, as compared to the person who does not have an already existing intimate relationship and wants to have it. And this lack of interest in starting a new relationship will definitely cause the person not to disclose himself to the prospective partner or even not to respond to the disclosure input by the other person (Mcpherson, Smith, & Brashears, 2006). Friends and family also play a role in different aspects of relationship formation. As it has been seen that those families who promote prospective relationships, it is surmised that their children develop close relationships with more disclosure.

***Individual differences.*** The individual differences have been observed to play a very important role. The traits of the individual are considered to be very important in establishing new relationships. It has been observed that those who have secure attachment have high self worth and are more likely to view the prospective partner as good. They consider the other person as trustworthy and thus are interested to start a close relationship with him. This trust of the prospective partners, having secure attachment, leads them to disclose themselves to each other and develop an intimate relationship (Mikulincer & Nachshon, 1991).

***Interpersonal skills.*** The individual differences have also been observed in interpersonal skills of the individuals. In a research it was observed that those individuals who are high openers are more likely to develop a relationship through self disclosure as compared to low openers because high openers, not only self disclose but, have the abilities to induce the other person to disclose himself (Miller, Berg, & Archer, 1983).

***Gender differences.*** Gender differences do play their role in self disclosure especially for those individuals who have never been in any romantic relationship with the opposite sex person. A survey in United States found that the adolescent boys find it more difficult to share their feelings with their prospective partners as compared to girls. This is because of the gender role stereotype, that boys should be the initiators of the relationship, the boys feel inadequate to fulfill the demands of this



role assigned by the society. Researchers argued that due to these feelings of inadequacy the males hesitate initially to start a relationship and disclose themselves to the partners (Giordano, Longmore, & Manning, 2006).

Gender has greatly been studied in relation to self disclosure as the researchers have very contradictory findings. A research by Dindia and Allen (1992) has shown that women are high in disclosing themselves as compared to men. However the investigators should not magnify the gender differences in self disclosure either at the beginning of a new relationship or during an already existing relation (Dindia & Allen, 1992). But the researches show that the self disclosure is thought to be more appropriate for the women in starting a new relationship (Chelune, 1976). There are certain studies which show the exception to this general belief that women are higher in self disclosure than man. Studies by Dindia and Allen (1992) have shown that men equally disclose themselves or even in some cases they exceed in disclosure than the women. The studies show that there is no specific gender role of initiator and reactor of the disclosure in starting a new relation, but it depends on the person who is interested to start and develop a relation. And it has been seen that when one is interested to build a relationship with someone of opposite sex, then men are commonly more observed to start a disclosure, to let the other partner know him so that she can be encouraged to disclose herself in reciprocity.

**Theoretical perspectives about self disclosure.** There are different theoretical perspectives regarding the self disclosure. Each theory holds a different view about how self disclosure occurs initially when a new relationship starts and how it varies when the relationship continues to prolong. Some of these perspectives are:

***Social penetration theory.*** The social penetration theory, proposed by Altman and Taylor (1973), provides a perspective about the self disclosure and also about how the relationships are formed. This theory explains that when a new relationship is formed, initially the prospective or the potential partners are reluctant; they act superficially with each other. But as time passes and the relationship proceeds, the partners are likely to share more personal information and the life activities thus getting closer to each other. The theory further says that the prospective partners form a positive or a negative image about one another based on their

experiences with each other and thus they undergo cost-benefit analysis and predict their future as either to continue the relationship or to quit at the point. The theory suggests that though the self disclosure is considered to be the most important aspect in the social penetration process, it also considers the actions that are at interpersonal level e.g. verbally disclosing one's self, or it can be non-verbal like smiles, hugging, kissing etc. or it can either be environmental cues e.g. liking to sit more closer to the person or dragging the chair away to sit apart, and it considers all other such behaviors that affect the formation of a relationship.

As this theory is about relationship formation so there is a link defined between self disclosure and relationship formation. Miller gave the view that self disclosure and relationship intimacy are linked to each other. He said that generally people like the person to whom they usually disclose their information. Also, a person discloses more to the person he likes. So there is an interaction between disclosure and intimacy (Vangelisti & Perlman, 2006).

Altman and Taylor (1973) had a view that relationships develop gradually over time in which the communication between the partners moves from the superficial level, shallow to deeper, more intimate levels. Initially the partners have so many layers around their actual beliefs like the prejudices they hold, their certain opinions and obsessions, but these layers shed down as the relationship develops and the partners become closer to each other. With the passage of time, the partners share more aspects of their personalities with each other, thus enhancing the depth as well as the breadth of their intimacy. The theory also maintains that only those relationships are retained in the end that are rewarding but those relations end up which are considered costly by the partners (Ogunleye & Balogun, 2013).

One important thing to be considered here is that the Altman and Taylor's theory has not considered many important variables that affect self disclosure like the gender, race, ethnicity and the age of the partners as all of these factors have great influence on how much the layers are shed while disclosing one's self in a relationship (Ogunleye & Balogun, 2013).

Intimate relationships are formed in very different ways but the theory argues that whatever patterns a relationship takes to form; self disclosure has a

peculiar importance because every relationship begins with the disclosure among the partners and is sustained by the continuous exploration and self sharing between those involved in that relationship. The theory suggests some important dimensions of self disclosure that are involved or linked with the development of close and intimate relationship bonds. These are: (a) topic breadth i.e. how many varying topics have been discussed and shared between the partners, (b) topic frequency that is related to the amount of information specifically shared about a particular topic, (c) topic time i.e. how much time the partners have shared talking about some specific points, themes or topics, how often they talked about something specific and (d) the topic depth that is about how much close or confidential the level of disclosure is between the prospective partners. It is more about the level of closeness or intimacy between the partners (Ogunleye & Balogun, 2013).

Social penetration theory outlines many predictions about the ways of disclosure among the partners as the relationship progresses. The theory gives a wedge (V) shaped curve between the disclosure and the relationship intimacy. It argues that initially when there is a superficial relationship between the partners, the lower level of disclosure is observed; it begins to increase when the relationship between the partners gets closer. As the intimacy increases there is an expansion in the areas being discussed and revealed between the partners. It is sometimes decelerated when the disclosure seems to be reduced as when the talk starts to get into the topics that are considered to be too personal, by the partners, to talk about such as family issues or secrets etc. At that point, there is relationship intimacy but still the disclosure decreases. V shape also explains that there is depth as well as breadth in the disclosure among the partners.

Taylor (1968) conducted a study to illustrate the concept of self disclosure in relationship formation based on the social penetration theory. He demonstrated that how self disclosure proceeds during the early stages of relationship formation. He took a sample of college students who were initially strangers at the start of the academic session. They were assigned as hostel roommates. During the session the self disclosure questionnaires were administered on them to know how much information they had shared with each other during that time. It showed interesting findings that the self disclosure increased during the different times of the session and

the breadth of disclosure was more about the superficial topics than the more intimate private topics among the roommates. This showed that people are very conscious and reluctant in revealing or discussing their personal information at the start of the relationship and even after long time the roommates still showed breadth of disclosure only for the superficial topics than the more intimate topics (Ogunleye & Balogun, 2013).

***The clicking model.*** The social penetration theory says that relationship formation is a gradual process in which self disclosure moves from the superficial level to the more intimate level as the relationship progresses. As opposed to this, Berg and Clark (1986) proposed an alternative view *the clicking model* about relationship formation and self disclosure. They argued that self disclosure and the formation of intimate relationships occur quickly over time. It does not occur gradually. This model assumes that the prospective partners soon after meeting each other assume that either the other person may or may not fit their template of a friend or of close partner. They assume that whether they can get well with each other or not. If the other person matches the prototype of one's partner, then this newly formed relationship soon converts into the intimate relationship leading to more intimate behavior patterns and activities between the partners.

The clicking model has been supported by the literature studies. Hays (1985) conducted a study on school students. He asked them to fill the questionnaires related to their interaction with the two friends of same sex to whom they did not know before the school but thought to have good friendship with them in future as the school time progressed. The responses were taken on number of behavior options; the depth and breadth of the topics discussed, feelings with the friends and intimacy etc. The results showed that the responses of those who initially, at the start of the school, thought to be good friends in future were different from the non- friends. In fact the intimacy between the partners, initially had a positive interaction was observed to be on its peak after the school time proceeded (Berg & Clark, 1986).

***Dialectical perspective and privacy theory about self disclosure.*** Self disclosure has been seen as the starting point in a relationship that accelerates quickly after an interaction, according to clicking model. The other view is of social penetration theory which suggests the gradual process of self disclosure along with

the relationship progression. But there is another view about the self disclosure in relationship formation. This view keeps the assumptions or points, of clicking model as well as the social penetration theory, together and suggests that there are different patterns of self disclosure depending on the nature of the relationship being formed. The prospective partners move between disclosing superficial information and sharing personal information, some partners do not move into very personal areas of each other's life, some may have a moderate level of disclosing personal information and some partners totally define limits and decide topics not to talk about. Altman and his colleagues (1973) suggested that the disclosure depends on the type of relationship formed and it depends on how open or close the partners have decided to be with one another. Thus, here, the privacy regulation theory by Altman suggests that at every stage of a relationship, there are different opposite forces that are affecting one's relationship. Some forces are keeping the two persons together while others may work to keep them apart. The forces that push the person to disclose information are care, getting social support or nurturance etc, while the opposite forces keeping the person not to disclose are the feelings of getting hurt, fear of rejection or being ridicule etc (Ogunleye & Balogun, 2013).

### **Shyness, Perceived Social Support and Self Disclosure**

Different researches have been done on shyness, perceived social support and self disclosure in different years. These variables have been studied together as well as in relation to other variables.

Shyness can be predicted from one's perception of availability of the social support. Literature shows that less perceived social support leads to shyness in the presence of low self esteem and loneliness. The findings suggest that perceived social support explains an alternate path for the development of shyness and hence has mediatory effects. Past researches suggest that there are no gender differences in the shyness and experience of subjective well being but the environment do have effects in the development of shyness (Zhao, Kong, & Wang, 2013).

Shyness also has a situational nature. Some researches show that some type of shyness is situational in nature and it varies with the changing environment of the person. A person can be observed as shy in one situation but not in the other. The

nature of the shyness also affects a person's level of self disclosure. Research findings suggest that those who are high on shyness are found to be less on self disclosure (Brunet & Schmidt, 2007).

Socioeconomic status has been found to have significant effects. The researches conducted on the children belonging to low socioeconomic status revealed that the internalizing problems of such children increase while externalizing problems decrease over time. The most obvious internalizing problem found is fear/shyness which increases with time in both the genders. Maternal depression and lower family income predicted the increase in internalizing problems especially in the girls (Leve, Kim, & Pears, 2005). Also research findings consider low family income as the risk factor for the development of temperamental shyness (Elias & Haynes, 2008). In addition, research results prove that the low family income has significant effects on the children's behavioral outcomes e.g. the development of temperamental shyness (Mayer, 2002).

Social skills are very important for the effective self disclosure. Those individuals who have good skills of socialization are usually high on self disclosure. The research findings suggest that the lack of social skills usually lead the individual towards isolation. Due to lower interpersonal skills such individuals are shyer and hesitate to disclose themselves (Rumi & Kunio, 2000). Also, research showed that as shyness increases it leads to decrease in social support. The individuals who perceive less availability of social support are usually high on shyness (Joiner & Thomas, 1997).

There is a difference in how one perceives the availability of social support. This perception affects the level of self disclosure of the individual as the literature studies show that these two variables are highly related. Those who perceive less availability of social support are usually less on self disclosure to others. The individuals who have higher need of privacy are obviously less on disclosure that leads them to get less social support from others. The research findings suggest that those who are less on self disclosure are observed to be less satisfied with their life, they are not very true in their relationships and are observed to have more psychological issues than others. Usually such individuals are found to have less social ties with others (Trepte, Dienlin, & Reinecke, 2013).

Also, literature shows that there are gender differences in the level of self disclosure. Research shows that there are differences in the type of information shared by the males and females. Males share more about their daily life and activities while females disclose more about their intimate life and relationships. Men have more breadth of self disclosure while the women show more depth of disclosure. Overall, the amount of self disclosure is almost equal in both the genders (Paluckaitė & Matulaitienė, 2012). Also, some researches show that men are higher on self disclosure as compared to women (Dindia & Allen, 1992).

### **Rationale of the Present Study**

The present research is being designed to explore the relationship between the variables i.e. shyness, perceived social support and self disclosure which has been rarely studied together in relation to each other specifically in Pakistan. This study is aimed to explore how shyness hinders the adults in forming and maintaining relationships because relationships need self disclosure by the two involved partners and to see how perceived social support affects this relationship of the variables.

The cultural aspect of anything is very important and cannot be neglected. The cultural differences have been observed to impact the patterns of self disclosure, level of shyness and type of social support mostly offered or accepted by the individuals. So a purpose of this study is also to draw a narrower attention to view these variables in Eastern culture specifically. The Western culture, being individualistic, highlights autonomy and hence, leaves no room for developing shyness. They usually prefer to work at their own and embed this concept in their children as well. But in Eastern culture, being collectivistic in nature treats shyness differently. Especially shyness in women is treated very differently. In our culture shyness is considered to be the positive trait of a woman, so is promoted intentionally. Collectivistic cultures usually promote the esteem of the group over the single individual's esteem thus it makes the single individual more self conscious and shy. The individualistic culture promotes the individual's esteem hence giving them more space to express their individual selves. Hence one goal of this research is to study shyness in the context of eastern culture. Though the cross cultural researches show that shyness is a universal trait being experienced by almost everyone, but the research findings show the cultural impacts on it.

Another purpose of the study is to observe the effect of adolescence transition phase on these variables i.e. to observe how an individual's level of self disclosure, his perception of social support and the level of shyness is affected by this transitional phase of life, because there is research evidences which shows that adolescence is a major transitional phase in which, in addition to other changes, there is a shift in the life of the individual e.g. from parents to peers for support, with the later influencing the behavior of the individual more. This study also focuses on exploring the variables in this transitional period and how it may be affected.

This study also aimed to investigate how social support provided by the different persons in an individual's social network, have influence in enhancing self disclosure and reducing shyness. As the researches show that there are different types of social support and every situation/person demands for a different type of support depending on the person's needs and circumstances. The appropriate type of social support depends on the present circumstances faced by the individual, just taking care or giving love or support to someone is not enough, it would only be fruitful when it will be helpful for the receiving individual in the present scenario.



## **METHOD**

### **Objectives**

The major objectives of this study are as follows.

1. To determine the relationship among shyness, perceived social support and self disclosure among university students.
2. To explore the role of various demographic variables (gender, parental education and income level) in relation to shyness, perceived social support, and self-disclosure.

### **Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses are made for this study.

1. Shyness will be negatively related with perceived social support.
2. Shyness will be negatively related with self disclosure.
3. Self disclosure will be positively associated with perceived social support.
4. Perceived social support will moderate the relationship between shyness and self disclosure.
5. Male students will be more likely to self disclose, report more perceived social support and lesser shyness.
6. Female students will be less on self disclosure, report less perceived social support and more shyness.
7. Respondents with low family income will reflect more shyness while less perceived social support and self disclosure.
8. Respondents with high maternal education will express less shyness and more self disclosure and perceived social support.

9. Respondents with high paternal education will express less shyness and more self disclosure and perceived social support.

### **Operational Definitions of the Variables**

**Shyness.** Shyness is temperamental trait that is characterized by excessive self focus especially in the situations of self evaluations (Henderson, Zimbardo & Carducci, 1999). For the present study, Henderson and Zimbardo Shyness Questionnaire (2002) was used to assess shyness among university students. High score on the scale shows that the shyness may be interfering with meeting the goals of the individual and low score shows that it is not affecting the normal functioning of the individual.

**Perceived Social Support.** It is the perception that one is cared for and has assistance available in the times of need (Walen & Lachman, 2000). In the present study, perceived social support is measured by using Perceived Social Support Scale (Gul & Najam, 2008). The high score on the scale shows that the person has good awareness of the available social support and perceives that social support is always available in the times of need. While low score on the scale shows that the person does not view his social support positively and perceives lack of social support.

**Self Disclosure.** Intentionally disclosing one's personal information to the other person is considered as self disclosure. For the present study Self Disclosure Scale (Magno, Cuason, & Figueroa, 2008) was used to assess self disclosure among university students. Respondents rated the degree to which they disclose the information to the other person. The high scores on the scale shows that the person discloses more information, and is highly disclosing to the others, where as the low score shows that the person does not disclose much information with the partner or the other person involved in the communication.

### **Sample**

The sample for the present study consisted of 380 university students. The sample consisted of both the male ( $n = 171$ ) and female ( $n = 209$ ) students. The age range of the sample was 18 to 32 years ( $M = 18$ ,  $SD = 9.5$ ). Sample was collected from both the working and non working students belonging to the different

departments of natural sciences, social sciences and Arts. Purposive sampling was done. The sample was collected from both the private and public sector universities of Islamabad that is, Iqra University ( $n = 33$ ), Bahria University ( $n = 49$ ), Comsats Institute of Information Technology ( $n = 41$ ), Islamabad Model College for Girls ( $n = 15$ ), Air University ( $n = 15$ ), FAST University ( $n = 51$ ), Quaid-e-Azam University ( $n = 115$ ) and Hamdard University Islamabad ( $n = 51$ ). A small proportion of the sample was collected from different institutes including Poly Technical College for boys, CASE University, Shifa International Medical College and PIDE ( $n = 10$ ).

### **Instruments**

The description of the scales used in the present study is as follows.

**Shyness Questionnaire.** The Henderson and Zimbardo Shyness Questionnaire (2002) was used. Originally it had 100 items but later on they developed a new scale with 35 items. It was a 5 point likert scale with 1= *not at all characteristic of me*, to 5= *extremely characteristic of me*. The four items were reverse scored (item no. 10, 29, 30 and 35) for those items 1 meant *extremely characteristic of me* and 5= *not at all characteristic of me*. The high score on the scale showed high level of temperamental shyness while the low score showed the inverse. The scale was found to be highly reliable i.e.  $\alpha .92$ .

**Perceived Social Support Scale.** The Perceived Social Support Scale (Gul & Najam, 2008) was used to assess perception of available social support. It consisted of 31 items. It had two parts. First part had 11 items measuring how much the family members and others remained supportive in an individual's life. The second part had 20 items which measured different aspects of social support. It was a 5 point likert scale ranging from 1= *strongly disagree* to 5= *strongly agree*. The scoring for the items 1, 6, 8, 11 and 12 was reversed as 1 for *strongly agree* and 5 for *strongly disagree*. It had five subscales. The subscale of *Nurturance* included (3 items: item no. 3, 10 and 11); *Attachment* had 5 items (item no. 1, 4, 8, 13 and 15); the subscale of *Reassurance of Worth* had 2 items (14 and 17); *Reliable Alliance* was measured by the 7 items (2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 12 and 16) and the subscale of *Social Integration* had 3 items (18, 19 and 20). The first 11 items of the scale measured social support provided by the family members and others in the social network of the individual. The high score

on the overall scale reflects high level of perceived social support. The reliability of the scale was .89 (Gul & Najam, 2008).

**Self Disclosure Scale.** Modified version of Self Disclosure Scale was used (Magno, Cuason & Figueroa, 2008). The scale had 21 items. The score range of the scale was 21 - 105. Its cut off score was 52. It had five response categories ranging from N (*never encountered, done or felt the situation*) =1, R (*rarely encountered, done or felt the situation*) =2, S (*sometimes encountered the situation*) =3, O (*when you have encountered, done or felt the situation most of the time or often*) =4, and A (*when you have encountered, done or felt the situation all the time or always*) =5. There was no reverse scored item in the scale. The reliability of the scale was .93. High score on the scale reflected the high level of disclosure and low score indicated that the person did not disclose information openly.

### **Procedure**

For the purpose of study, data was collected from the public as well as the private sector universities of Islamabad. First of all official permission was taken from the respective universities. The students were approached in their respective institutions to collect the data. Students were informed about the purpose of the research. They were assured that their personal identities would not be revealed, their information would be kept confidential, and it would be used only for the research purposes. Then the informed consent was taken from the participants before administering the questionnaires. Brief instructions were given about how to respond the items. Then the questionnaires were handed over to the respondents. In the end, respondents were thanked for their cooperation and participation in the research.

## RESULTS

The present study was conducted to find out the role of shyness and perceived social support in self disclosure among university students. Descriptive statistics were tabulated to establish the basic psychometrics of the measures used in the study. It also helped in identifying the direction of the relationship between the variables of study. The descriptive statistics were found followed by their frequencies and reliabilities. Correlation analysis was applied to shyness, perceived social support and self disclosure to study the relationship among them. Simple linear regression analysis was to find the variance explained by the predictor variables in explaining the outcome variable that is, self disclosure. In the study, hierarchical multiple regression analysis was done for predicting self disclosure from shyness and perceived social support. Independent sample t-test and one way ANOVA was conducted to determine the group differences across gender, income level and parental education.

**Table 2**

*Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Estimates of the Scales (N = 380)*

Variables	No. of Items	$\alpha$	$M$	$SD$	Score Range		Skew	Kurtosis
					Actual	Potential		
Self Disclosure	21	.81	10.60	2.69	21 - 105	4 – 15	-.45	-.29
Shyness	35	.84	18.50	3.54	35 - 175	7 – 25	-.53	-.11
PSS	28	.83	8.12	1.47	28 – 140	2 – 10	-.32	.72

*Note.* PSS = Perceived Social Support

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics for all the variables used in the study. Mean for self disclosure is 10.6 and standard deviation is 2.69. Mean for shyness is 18.5 and standard deviation is 3.54. The mean for social support is 8.12 while its standard deviation is 1.47. The  $\alpha$  values show that the reliabilities of the scales are in the acceptable range, i.e. above .70, to be used in the study.

**Table 3***Correlation Matrix among Study Variables (N= 380)*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1- Self Disclosure	-	-.12*	.24**	.13**	.20**	.03	.18**	.20**	.12*
2- Shyness		-	-.19**	-.10	-.19**	-.10	-.18**	-.21**	-.01
3- PSS			-	.59***	.76***	.46***	.80***	.59***	.54***
4- Nurturance				-	.39***	.18**	.42***	.18**	.16**
5- Attachment					-	.36***	.57***	.35***	.18**
6- RW						-	.34***	.32***	.17**
7- RA							-	.37***	.20**
8- SI								-	.21**
9- Family									-

*Note.* PSS = Perceived Social Support, RW = Reassurance of Worth, RA= Reliable Alliance, SI = Social Integration.

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

Table 3 indicates the correlation between shyness, perceived social support and self disclosure. Self-disclosure is significantly negatively related with shyness, while it has significant positive relation with perceived social support. Self disclosure is significantly positively related with nurturance, attachment, reliable alliance, social integration and with the family. However non significant association was found between self disclosure and reassurance of worth (dimension of perceived social support). Shyness is significantly negatively related with perceived social support, attachment, reliable alliance, and with social integration. However non significant negative relation of shyness was found with nurturance, reassurance of worth and with family. Perceived social support has significant positive relation with nurturance, attachment, reassurance of worth, reliable alliance, social integration and with family. This also indicates the construct validity of the scale.

**Table 4**

*Linear Regression Analysis Predicting Self Disclosure through Shyness and Perceived Social Support.*

Shyness and Perceived Social Support					
Variables	B	S.E	B	95% CI	
				L.L	U.L
Constant	57.30	3.28		50.80	63.70
Shyness	.08	.03	-.12	.01	.14
R <sup>2</sup>	.01				
F	5.20*				
Constant	43.17	4.54		34.25	52.09
PSS	.22	.05	.24	.13	.31
R <sup>2</sup>	.06				
F	22.80***				
Constant	58.64	2.39		53.95	63.33
Nurturance	.56	.22	.13	.14	.99
R <sup>2</sup>	.02				
F	6.73**				
Constant	52.51	3.07		46.46	58.55
Attachment	.66	.16	.20	.34	.98
R <sup>2</sup>	.04				
F	16.17***				
Constant	62.65	3.31		56.14	69.16
RW	.24	.40	.03	-.54	1.03
R <sup>2</sup>	.00				
F	.37				
Constant	52.86	3.36		46.26	59.47
RA	.44	.12	.18	.20	.69
R <sup>2</sup>	.03				
F	12.60***				
Constant	54.13	2.71		48.81	59.46
SI	.92	.23	.20	.47	1.38
R <sup>2</sup>	.04				
F	15.80***				
Constant	57.15	3.19		50.87	63.43
Family	.33	.14	.12	.06	.60
R <sup>2</sup>	.02				
F	5.69**				

*Note.* CI = Confidence Interval, PSS = Perceived Social Support, I = social integration, R A= Reliable Alliance and R W = Reassurance of Worth.

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

Results presented in the table 4 indicated the effect of various predictors i.e. shyness, perceived social support and dimensions of the perceived social support in predicting self disclosure. It has been found that shyness explained -12% variance in self disclosure whereas perceived social support indicated overall 24% variance in predicting self disclosure. Similarly individual dimensions of perceived social support also contributed significantly in predicting self disclosure. Nurturance explained 13% variance, attachment 20%, reassurance of worth 3%, reliable alliance 18%, social integration 20% and family explained 12% variance in self disclosure.



**Table 5**

*Hierarchical Regression for Moderating Role of Perceived Social Support in Predicting Self Disclosure (N = 380).*

Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta R^2$
Constant	30.26				
Shyness	.28	.05	.25**		
PSS	.19	.07	.16**		
Shyness X PSS	.18	.11	.17**	.31	.29

*Note.* PSS = Perceived Social Support

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

The above table shows moderating role of perceived social support in explaining the relationship between shyness and self disclosure. Findings indicated interaction effect of shyness and perceived social support collectively explained 29% variance in predicting self disclosure among university students.

**Table 6**

*Gender Differences on Shyness, Perceived Social Support and Self Disclosure (N= 380)*

Variables	Men (n = 171)		Women (n = 209)		T	p	Upper	Lower	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD					
Self Disclosure	68.35	9.23	60.75	8.11	6.05	.00	3.44	-1.58	.42
Shyness	90.54	8.19	98.72	8.40	5.87	.00	2.14	-6.33	.51
PSS	98.19	8.23	92.69	9.62	4.64	.01	3.72	-2.73	.38

*Note.* PSS = Perceived Social Support

Table 6 shows the comparison of men and women university students on the three study variables i.e. shyness, perceived social support and self disclosure. The results show that there are statistically significant differences on shyness, perceived social support and self-disclosure among men and women. The results show that male university students are low on shyness while high on perceived social support and self disclosure as compared to women. Women are found to be low on self disclosure and perceived social support but are high on shyness.

**Table 7**

*Differences on Family Income on Shyness, Perceived Social Support and Self-Disclosure (N = 380).*

Variables	Group 1 (n = 81)		Group 2 (n = 227)		Group 3 (n = 72)		F	p	i-j	M (i-j)	UL	LL
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD						
Self Disclosure	65.21	12.62	64.79	11.14	63.49	11.16	.49	.62				
Shyness	94.73	17.53	97.25	16.70	89.19	17.52	6.14	.00	2 > 3	8.05*	2.51	13.59
PSS	94.35	12.13	97.89	12.93	100.4	10.38	4.74	.01	3 > 1	6.04*	1.25	10.84

*Note:* PSS = Perceived Social Support, Group 1 = 50,000 & Below PKR, Group 2 = 50,001 - 100,000 PKR, Group 3 = 100,001 & Above PKR

Table 7 shows the comparison of three groups of family income with the variables of study. The table shows that there is no significant difference in the level of self disclosure between the three income groups. But significant differences have been found on shyness and perceived social support experienced by the students belonging to three income groups. Results revealed that the students belonging to upper income group has better perception of social support. On the other hand, shyness is highly indicated by the middle income group as compared to students from high income group.

**Table 8***Differences along Maternal Education on All Study Variables (N= 380)*

Variables	Undergraduates (n = 220)		Graduates (n = 101)		Postgraduates (n = 59)		F	p	i - j
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD			
Self Disclosure	64.72	11.53	63.75	10.68	65.85	12.49	.63	.53	
Shyness	98.27	8.13	92.14	8.66	88.25	9.82	3.24	.01	1 > 2, 3 2 > 3
PSS	86.27	8.22	90.37	9.36	98.37	8.44	5.63	.00	3 > 1, 2 2 > 1

*Note.* PSS = Perceived Social Support

Table 8 is showing the comparison of three groups of maternal education and their effect on the shyness, perceived social support and self disclosure of the children. The results show significant differences among the three groups of maternal education on shyness and perceived social support. The results show that those whose mothers are postgraduate are low on shyness as compared to the other students whose mothers are graduates and undergraduates. The students whose mothers are undergraduates are found to be highly shy as compared to others. The results are also significant for perceived social support. Findings suggest that the students whose mothers are highly qualified i.e. postgraduates have more perceived social support as compared to the other two groups of maternal education. Similar to shyness, the students whose mothers are undergraduates perceive less social support as compared to the others having more maternal education. No significant findings have been observed on self disclosure among the students belonging to the three groups of maternal education.

**Table 9***Differences along Paternal Education on All Study Variables (N= 380)*

Variables	Under graduates (n = 114)		Graduates (n = 91)		Postgraduates (n = 175)		F	p	i-j
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD			
Self Disclosure	58.62	7.66	64.69	8.39	71.23	7.54	4.46	.01	3 > 1, 2 2 > 1
Shyness	94.68	15.20	94.34	18.69	95.95	17.8	0.33	.72	
PSS	86.34	9.57	92.18	8.72	98.45	9.44	5.16	.00	3 > 1, 2 2 > 1

*Note.* PSS = Perceived Social Support

Table 9 shows the effect of paternal education on shyness, perceived social support and self disclosure in their children. The results show that the varying levels of father's education have significant effect on the self disclosure and perceived social support of their children. The students whose paternal education is high are found to high on self disclosure and perceived social support as compared to those whose paternal education is low. The results show that the students whose paternal education is high (postgraduate) are high on self disclosure. Those whose paternal education is low (undergraduate) are less on self disclosure as compared to students belonging to other two groups of paternal education. Similarly, the students having highly qualified fathers (postgraduates) are high on perceived social support. The students whose paternal education is low (undergraduate) are low on perceived social support as compared to the students belonging to the other two groups. No significant findings have been observed on shyness i.e. results suggest that the paternal education has no significant effects on the level of shyness experienced by the university students.

## DISCUSSION

The present study was aimed to find out the relationship between shyness, perceived social support and self disclosure among university students. It was also tried to see the effect of shyness, perceived social support and self disclosure on some of the demographic variables. The sample for the study consisted of university students. The following measures were used in the study: Shyness Questionnaire (Henderson & Zimbardo, 2002), Perceived Social Support Scale (Gul & Najam, 2008) and Self Disclosure Scale (Magno, Cuason & Figueroa, 2008) to measure shyness, perceived social support and self disclosure respectively. The measures and their psychometric properties were found to be internally consistent. The values of skewness and kurtosis showed that the data was normally distributed.

The results showed that the shyness is significantly negatively related to perceived social support, hence, supports our first hypothesis. Similar findings have been shown by the prior literature. Shyness has been found to be negatively related with perceived social support. Shyness is also negatively related to the subscales of perceived social support. A research showed that non supported individuals or those having less social support available from social networks are usually found to be high on shyness as compared to others having high social support (Joiner & Thomas, 1997). As per social penetration theory, self disclosure between individuals leads to the formation of new relationships like friendships or marital relationships etc, but as for shy individuals this initial interaction is difficult thus they are not good in forming new relations. These relationships are the source of social support for the individual in the times of need. Hence shyness leads to limited disclosure which results in getting less social support (Ogunleye & Balogun, 2013).

Results showed that shyness is also found to be negatively related to self disclosure, thereby supporting the second hypothesis. It has been found that individuals who are seen high on shyness are low on self disclosure. The literature shows that the individuals who are shy usually restrict their disclosure to others because of the fear of negative assessment by others (Bradshaw, 2006). The shy individuals limit their self disclosure; they usually do not respond openly to their

partners and thus limit their opportunities for the better development of the relationships (Terblanche, 2011). The researches show that the shyness sometimes make the individuals shy to even certain situations and conditions and limit their self disclosure (Brunet & Schmidt, 2007). The literature studies also reveal that the individuals who are high on shyness usually have problem in making first interaction with others because it usually requires some degree of self disclosure between the interacting individuals. Hence shyness hinders their self disclosure and makes interaction difficult (Sprecher & Hendrick, 2004). Due to hesitation to engage in social interactions, shy individuals are usually found to be less on self disclosure (Rumi & Kunio, 2000). Shy and quiet people are usually less on self disclosure as compared to confident and social people (Terblanche, 2011).

Present study results revealed a significant positive relationship between self disclosure and perceived social support, which supports our third hypothesis. These findings are in alignment with the prior studies. The privacy regulation theory by Altman suggested that the relationship formation needs self disclosure by the partners and one of the forces that causes the partners to disclose more is getting social support and nurturance from each other (Altman & Taylor, 1973). The research results also show that there is a positive relationship between self disclosure and perceived social support, as the individual's need for privacy decreases it leads to more self disclosure and hence it increases the social support of the individual (Trepte, Dienlin & Reinecke 2013). The previous literature shows that those who have the ability to evoke self disclosure in others are usually good in forming long term relationships. Such individuals usually have large social networks so in return get more social support in the times of need. Studies also show that such individuals, having high disclosure, are found to be less on social anxiety and can easily socialize (Sprecher & Hendrick, 2004).

Study results show that the shyness and perceived social support effect the self disclosure. Results show that shyness explains -12% of variance in self disclosure. This shows that the self disclosure of a person is 12% reduced by the shyness. While 24% of variance in self disclosure is explained by perceived social support, which shows that the presence of social support increases ones self disclosure. These results are in exact alignment with the literature findings. Researchers have found that those

who are high on shyness are usually low on self disclosure (Brunet & Schmidt, 2007). Researches also show that shy individuals are hesitant in their self disclosure; they are mostly reserved and thus restrict their disclosure (Rumi & Kunio, 2000). The study results also show that the perceived social support contributes greatly in the self disclosure. It shows that those who have high perceived social support are more on self disclosure. The literature also shows that the individuals, who have more perceived social support or the actual support available, are high on self disclosure as the support provides strength to the person. One's perception about availability of social support makes him able to show more disclosure (Trepte, Dienlin, & Reinecke, 2013).

Findings of the present study indicated buffering effect of perceived social support in relationship between shyness and self disclosure, there by supporting our fourth hypothesis. The study findings are also supported by the literature which shows the moderating effect of perceived social support. Research findings suggested that one's perception about the availability of social support has a buffering effect which causes him to show more self disclosure (Martins et al., 2013). Literature also shows that the presence of perceived social support makes the person better adjusted to the life stressors, feel less shy and to show more disclosure to the support groups (Frese, 1999). Individuals who are shy but who may have high perceived social support may not fear being negatively evaluated, which is one of the main factors due to which shy people do not share with others. Hence, they may be more likely to disclose with significant others.

The research results show significant gender differences on the study variables. The results show that male university students are high on self disclosure, report more perceived social support and are less on shyness as compared to female university students, thereby confirming our fifth and sixth hypotheses. The literature gives the similar findings. It shows that there are significant differences in the level of self disclosure by the males and females. Men disclose breadth of information while women disclose their intimate information more deeply. Literature shows that the themes of the information shared by the men and women differ. Women share more personal information like things about family, personal likes and dislikes etc. Men do not share their personal information deeply especially with their male friends. They



tend to share more about their daily life. Men disclose their more intimate information with the female friends but not with the males (Paluckaitė & Matulaitienė, 2012). To strangers, men are found to be more disclosing than the women who disclose more to whom they know very well (Dindia & Allen, 1992). The reasons for these gender differences in self disclosure are gender role expectations and the way they are socialized (Sheldon, 2013). Literature also suggests that men disclose topics in wider range because they can easily talk about a number of topics than women (Paluckaitė & Matulaitienė, 2012).

Our research results reveal that men have higher perceived social support as compared to women, it supports our fifth and sixth hypotheses. The literature also shows that men have more perceived social support as compared to women because men perceive almost equal social support from all of their social groups as compared to women. Therefore men have more social ties and a balanced number of social support groups available in the times of need. Also men are found to be more contented with the available support (Tam, Lee, Har, & Pook, 2011). Findings suggest that men avoid or do not take emotional support from other males. Whenever they need emotional support they prefer their female family members or female friends for it. Men offer the instrumental support more than women (Liebler & Sandefur, 2002).

Significant gender differences are found on shyness which supports our fifth and sixth hypotheses. For shyness, it has been found that it is less socially acceptable for boys as compared to girls. It is treated differently in both the genders. In girls shyness is considered normal but for boys it is unacceptable as it fails to comply with the masculine gender norms of being assertive and self sufficient. So the girls are usually high on shyness as compared to boys (Doey, Coplan, & Kingsbury, 2014).

Significant findings have been found among the university students belonging to the three income groups. The research results show that there are significant differences in the perception of social support and in the level of shyness experienced by the students belonging to three family income groups, hence, supporting our seventh hypothesis. However, no significant differences have been observed in the self disclosure. Students from low family income group are high on shyness and have less perceived social support as compared to those belonging to higher family income

group. Previous literature shows the similar findings. It has been found that low family income causes a number of behavioral problems in the children. One of the obvious outcomes of low family income is the shyness in the children (Mayer, 2002). Low family income has been considered as a risk factor for the development of temperamental shyness (Elias & Haynes, 2008).

On perceived social support, previous literature reveals the significant findings i.e. the students belonging to low family income groups perceive less social support as compare to others having high family income, hence supporting our seventh hypothesis. The people belonging to minority, underrepresented groups or those from low income families perceive less social support as compared to others (Almeida, Molnar, Kawachi, & Subramanian, 2009). Research findings have shown that those belonging to high income families are high on perceived social support and self disclosure as they are exposed to a number of varying environments by their parents. They have access to good schools and also to more social gatherings which gives them a sense of perceived social support in the times of need (Goldstein, Kean, & Eccles, 2005).

However, nonsignificant findings were observed on self disclosure along the three income groups therefore the seventh hypothesis failed to get the support. It might have some cultural impacts. According to social penetration theory people disclose information when they want to strengthen their relationships and build intimacy with the other person (Ogunleye & Balogun, 2013). We have collectivistic culture where there is greater emphasis on building and maintaining relationships which requires self disclosure by the involved partners (Vangelisti & Perlman, 2006). Hence in our culture self disclosure is not as such related to family income. Regardless of the low monthly income there is no difference in the level of self disclosure. In collectivistic culture, people disclose their personal as well as their daily life information with others, because building relationships is an important need of the individuals that must be satisfied.

Significant differences have been observed on shyness and perceived social support among the students belonging to the three groups of maternal education, which supports our eighth hypothesis. Respondents with high maternal education are found to be less on shyness while high on perceived social support. The study

findings show that the students whose maternal education is high are high on perceived social support while those whose maternal education is low are found to be high on shyness. However, non significant findings are found on self disclosure as it is more related to paternal education. Past researches support these findings. Research findings suggest that the children with high maternal education are high on perceived social support as compared to those whose mothers are less educated. The educated mothers usually have good jobs, handsome earnings and good residential area, which affects their children in the way they are socialized and brought up. Such children have more exposure to the environment and social gatherings. Thus they perceive more social support. Also, it affects their level of confidence (Eccles & Kean, 2005). Such children are so much exposed to the outside world; they usually face the novel and different situations that it does not leave room for the development of shyness in them. Studies have also found that the less educated parents usually have so many unresolved problems and unmanaged stress in their lives which becomes an obstacle in their interaction with the children. Thus the children remain unattended which ultimately leads to the development of shyness along with many other behavioral problems (Gratz, 2003). Moreover, the prior studies show that shyness is more related to the attachment of the child with the mother. As per Bowlby's attachment theory, insecure attachment leads to the development of shyness in the children ((Terblanche, 2011). The mothers who are educated and are well aware about the physical as well as the psychological needs of their children are better able to satisfy these needs timely. Hence they are more confident and assertive in their dealings with others (Hastings, Nuselovici, Rubin, & Cheah, 2010).

Significant differences have been found along paternal education on the three study variables. The results show that the university students whose paternal education is high are high on self disclosure and perceived social support as compared to students with low paternal education, thus it supports our ninth hypothesis. While non significant differences are found on the shyness, as it is more related to the child's attachment with the mother. The previous literature supports our findings. It suggests that the paternal education, similar to maternal education, also affects the children perception of the social support. As the father's education influences to whom he marries, the job he opts and the area he resides. All these factors give opportunities to the child to develop certain abilities. High paternal education results in the availability

of resources to the children and makes their access possible to the opportunities required to groom their personalities. Such children have more access to others and have more perceived social support (Eccles & Kean, 2005). The literature also shows that the educated parents are more likely to make their children social as compared to parents who do not have educated background (Gratz, 2006). Previous literature on self disclosure suggests that the educated parents usually have more involvement in the life of their children. The educated parents know well how to handle their children; they give trust and are supportive for them. Such environment makes the children more open to their parents and are therefore high on self disclosure as compared to others whose parents do not address the issues of their children due to lack of knowledge (Kreider, Caspe, Kennedy, & Weiss, 2007). Also, literature shows that the fathers, who are well educated, are usually more sensitive and receptive to the needs of their children. The fathers' way of socializing their children adds enormously to the development of shyness and socially withdrawn behaviors in the children (Hastings, Nuselovici, Rubin, & Cheah, 2010).

### **Limitations and Suggestions**

The following are some limitations and suggestions about the present study.

In the present study, students were acquired from the universities of Islamabad only. Therefore it may limit the generalizability of the results. For more generalizable results, a comprehensive sample could be acquired from the different cities of Pakistan.

The respondents of the present study consist of the students only. It would be more appropriate to include other segments of the population like employees, and businessmen etc.

The sample for the present study consisted of adults only. In future, sample can also be taken from children and adolescents to make a comparison and see how the transitional phases affect the study variables.

In the study only self report quantitative techniques were used. In future studies, qualitative measures like interviews etc can also be included to get more in depth details about the sample.

## **Implications of the Study**

The present study is conducted on the university students. It explored how shyness, perceived social support and self disclosure affect the adults' life. This study reveals that the children who are not attended properly in their childhood, develop shyness in their adulthood, they do not trust others and therefore show less self disclosure and perceive less social support which causes them stress in most situations. This study can help the parents to overcome the issues related to their parenting and family involvement which later on pose so many behavioral problems for their children. The students can also get awareness that how much shyness can hinder their achievements; they can get the idea about the importance of self disclosure in building and maintaining relationships and also in relieving their stress. This study can also be a good source of information about the importance of perceived social support especially in adults' life, how they can build social ties and how they can be best utilized in the times of need.

## **Conclusion**

The present study was conducted to explore the role of shyness and perceived social support in self disclosure among university students. Results showed significant positive relationship between perceived social support and self disclosure while significant negative relationship of shyness with perceived social support and self disclosure. Different demographic variables were also considered along with the study variables. The study findings have also shown the significant positive moderating role of perceived social support in predicting self disclosure from shyness. The findings revealed that there were significant gender differences in the study variables i.e. men were low on shyness, while high on perceived social support and self disclosure as compared to women. The results also exhibited that those belonging to low family income group were high on shyness and low on perceived social support, while non significant differences were found on self disclosure among the students from the three groups of varying income level. Parental education had been found to have significant findings. High maternal education was found to be associated with low shyness and high perceived social support while high paternal education was seen to be linked with high perceived social support and high self disclosure in the children.

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