JDSS **Journal of Development and Social Sciences**
www.jdss.org.pk

RESEARCH PAPER

The Impact of Advisers Salience on Peace of Mind through the Mediating Role of Fear of Negative Evaluation

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the study was to examine the effect of advisers' salience on peace of mind via fear of negative evaluation as mediator between them. This paper expands the utilization of attachment research in organizational environments by offering attachment-based explanations for subjects that have not yet been investigated in the current body of literature. For this study, 205 bank employees from Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi, Quetta, and Peshawar were randomly selected. The data collection process employed the survey method. Structural equation modelling technique was used for hypotheses testing. Results of present study suggested that adviser's salience undermines fear of negative evaluation which consequently results in peace of mind. Advisers' salience a crucial construct. Thus, this study recommends the further exploration of the construct with other organizational outcomes.

| **KEYWORDS** | Advisers' Salience, Attachment Theory, Fear of Negative Evaluation, Peace of Mind |

Introduction

A person frequently consults others in order to consider potential alternative routes toward reaching his or her goals. (Lin et al., 2022). Capitalizing on other people's experiences is the goal of the advice search. Therefore, despite recent technological advancements, people still prefer to speak with others in order to acquire crucial information (Nebus, 2006).

People frequently seek advice when dealing with challenging situations or making crucial choices. (MacGeorge et al., 2016). Advice seeking has been extensively investigated across a variety of areas due to how prevalent it is in social life, including linguistics, business, communication, social psychology, and social networks (MacGeorge & Van Swol, 2018). According to a larger body of research on advice, people seek advice for personal, relational, task-related and cultural reasons. This can have a variety of consequences, from improved coping ability and interpersonal closeness at micro level to creativity and organizational productivity plus the advancement of economic policies that influence whole countries at macro levels (MacGeorge & Van Swol, 2018).

In this scenario, advisors hold a central role in the success of both organizations and individuals. They can provide knowledge that is lacking, assist in weighing the pros and cons of different solutions, or just act as a "sounding board." In a nutshell it seems that advisor input has a much higher impact on how decisions are made in real life and within organizations.

Salience measures how much weight managers assign to contending stakeholder claims (Mitchell et al., 1997). One such group of stakeholders is the company's advisors, whose study is crucial because not everyone has the knowledge, experience, or self-assurance to make all the right decisions at the right time on their own (Zhang et al., 2020). Thus, advisors aid in decision-making and the avoidance of costly errors. They provide the necessary insight when you need it. An experienced advisor may prove to be one of the most valuable assets on your list of gameplay resources and an indispensable advocate for your

success, regardless of the obstacles you face (Busulwa et al., 2020). Regardless of the fact that the source of advice has stayed at the forefront of the academic discourse on advice-seeking and its repercussions, the dialogue on the salience of advisers is profoundly missing from the literature. This is where the study makes a contribution by examining how the salience of advisers can have positive effects on employees, specifically reducing their fear of negative evaluation and thereby promoting their peace of mind. This is consistent with attachment theory (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991), whose use in management research has demonstrated that the quality of a person's relationships and attachments in the workplace can influence their career efficacy (S. L. Wright & Perrone, 2008), trust, and propensity for positive attitudes (Harms, 2011).

Literature Review

Attachment Theory

Humans are sociable creatures by nature. All stages of life benefit from social connections with others since everyone wants to fit in and be a part of relationships. According to Baumeister & Leary (1995), humans are motivated to establish and maintain positive, long-lasting, and significant interpersonal relationships.

Attachment theory is a widely recognized and significant psychological theory that pertains to human relationships (Finkel & Simpson, 2015). This theory emphasis the cultivation and pursuit of affectionate bonds with particular individuals (Bowlby, 1969). Although Bowlby (1969) primarily centered on the attachment between parents and children, yet studies on adult attachment have revealed that dynamics of attachment with relationships in organizational settings show a similar pattern (Hazan & Shaver, 1990). Being sources of social support and membership, it embraces relations with leaders, colleagues, mentors, and the organization.

The examination of organizational behavior can benefit from the unique relational perspective offered by attachment theory. Research has established a correlation between attachment dynamics in professional relationships and significant organizational outcomes such as the proactivity of followers (Wu & Parker, 2017), decision making that is ethical (Chugh et al., 2014), negotiation behavior that is effective (S. Lee & Thompson, 2011), and creativity in problem solving (Mikulincer et al., 2011). Conversely, when an individual's attachment requirements are not met, negative outcomes typically ensue. In the workplace, this includes, among other undesirable outcomes, augmented stress (Schirmer & Lopez, 2001), burnout (Littman-Ovadia et al., 2013), and more turnover (Tziner et al., 2014). In essence, a variety of organizational phenomena have been informed by insights from attachment theory, but there's more—attachment theory is also having a bigger impact on organizational scholarship. For instance, the number of peer-reviewed studies on attachment research in the workplace has steadily increased. Considering the substantial inputs of the attachment theory into the organizational literature, the objective of this paper is to give input to current attachment research that has a focus on the workplace. In doing so, we attempted to find out that how adviser's salience affects a person's fear of negative evaluation and in turn how fear of negative evaluation impacts peace of mind.

Adviser Salience

People frequently rely on advice from others to assist them in making smart choices, whether they are managing staff, solving difficult problems, making purchases, or trying to maintain good health. Giving and receiving advice can help people make better judgment and decision-making (Bailey et al., 2022). How much advice helps decision-makers is largely dependent on how good the advice is. However, because the quality of advice is rarely evident, decision-makers have to assume it (Schultze & Loschelder, 2021). Furthermore, they claimed that a variety of adviser traits are taken into account by decision-makers when

determining the quality of advice. For instance, individuals are more prone to heed the advice of those who are recognized authorities (Sniezek et al., 2004) are aged, wiser, have more knowledge, or having greater experience than the receiver of the advice (Feng & MacGeorge, 2006) to whom they owe a high degree of trust (Tsai et al., 2006), contentment with prior requests (Gerstberger & Allen, 1968), and expectation of how the individual consulted will respond (Dewhirst, 1971). Individuals also tend to place greater emphasis on advice when the decision realm is complex (Gino & Moore, 2007) and when it is costly to obtain the advice (Patt et al., 2006). All of these characteristics contribute to the advisor's salience.

Advisors are essential as they can direct the focus of members of organization and affect the transmission of information inside the organizations. In this regard, numerous scholars (e.g., Arendt et al., 2005), claimed that individuals in organizations are impacted by "issue sellers," "counselors," "sense-givers," "peer-advice networks," and "judge-advisor systems" and have encouraged scholars to look into the mechanisms that happen to take place behind the scenes. Although the literature has long recognized the significance of a wide range of source characteristics on attitude formation and persuasion (De Hooge et al., 2014) little prior research has examined how inner conditions like emotional states of the decision-makers, are being influenced by such characteristics.

Salient advisers may consist of both individuals who are similar to oneself, such as friends, as well as those who are dissimilar, such as non-friends. Obtaining opinions from acquaintances and individuals with similar backgrounds can offer individuals with primarily self-serving and immediate psychological advantages. This is achieved by fulfilling their need to create and maintain a subjective sense of certainty regarding their own viewpoints on the strategic challenges confronting their organizations. Consulting with individuals who are not part of one's social circle or who have different backgrounds can offer unique perspectives that may improve the objectivity of their strategic decisions, leading to an increase in their self-esteem. Thus, this study implies that salient advisers bring about positive consequences for the individuals by affecting their cognitive schemas. This is consistent with several studies in the management research (e.g., Feng & MacGeorge, 2006) demonstrating the benefits of close relationships and strong social ties.

According to a number of studies, undesirable consequences like depression, anxiety, substance use, delinquency, low self-esteem, and antisocial behavior are undermined by bonding (Maddox & Prinz, 2003), relatedness (e.g, Deci & Ryan, 2000) connectedness (Lohmeier & Lee, 2011). Thus, we postulate that the lack of these unfavorable characteristics would consequently result in higher peace of mind for example, it was discovered that anxiety and depression had a negative relationship with peace of mind. (Gittzus et al., 2020).

People have a fundamental urge for interacting with one another (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and this holds true in the work settings as well. Facilitating interpersonal connections within work environments can furnish individuals with crucial social support, a vital component in contemporary society where employees are often faced with multiple role expectations. This is because greater role expectations generate loneliness, which social support counteracts (Zumaeta, 2019). Social support is defined as the assistance, solace, direction, and knowledge that an individual obtains from their social circle (K. B. Wright, 2005). As a result, salient advisors have the ability to decrease feelings of loneliness. Research has shown that reduced levels of loneliness are associated with increased peace of mind. The explanation for this relationship can be viewed from the attachment theory perspective. Bowlby, (1982), posits that the initiation of the attachment behavioral system ensues when an individual is confronted with challenging, uncertain, or difficult circumstances. Upon activation of the attachment behavioral system, its subsequent deactivation can be observed upon receipt of social support. To put it another way, having

assistance in the face of stress causes a sense of "felt security" (Yip et al., 2018). It is argued that repeated positive support experiences can lead to the development of positive psychological states such as peace of mind over time. Thus, we hypothesized that there is a positive relationship between advisers' salience and peace of mind.

H1: Advisers' salience is positively associated to peace of mind

Peace of Mind

The significance of peace of mind is crucial in a society where stress, anxiety, haste, and restlessness are prevalent (Anjum et al., 2014). Owing from the theory of psychological well-beings (Ryff, 1989), Y.-C. Lee et al., (2013) proposed the notion of psychological capabilities, which includes a novel construct referred to as "peace of mind." This term encompasses one's inner state of harmony and peacefulness. The aforementioned construct pertains to the positive affect of individuals which aids in the establishment of equilibrium between pleasurable and unpleasant experiences (Peterson, 1999). Thus, people with peace of mind strive to maintain equilibrium in their lives by actively seeking out pleasurable experiences and avoiding unpleasant ones (Y.-C. Lee et al., 2013).

The significance of discussing peace of mind lies in its ability to complement conceptualization and measure well-being (Sikka et al., 2018). The reason for this is that having peace of mind can inhibit, avert, or diminish aggressive behavior. As the stress levels of individuals are elevated by aggressive behavior (van Gink et al., 2018), therefore the development of a peaceful mindset can subdue, inhibit, or decrease their aggressive behavior (Saputra et al., 2021). Empirical research on peace of mind (POM) is currently limited, despite its significance. As a result, previous studies have provided only limited understanding of the factors that contribute to the emergence of peace of mind (Røgild-Müller & Robinson, 2022). According to (Datu et al., 2018) various social, psychological, and contextual factors can act as catalysts for the phenomenon of Peace of mind. Fear of being judged negatively is a psychological factor that can make it hard to have peace of mind. According to (Maner et al., 2007) the experience of freedom and inner peace can be achieved by an individual who successfully overcomes their fear of negative evaluation. They tend to prioritize their own thoughts and emotions over the viewpoints of others. The aforementioned outcome can result in enhanced self-acceptance, improved mental well-being, and more gratifying interpersonal relationships, ultimately culminating in having peace of mind. Additionally, a meta-analysis revealed that interventions aimed at addressing fear of negative evaluation were successful in decreasing symptoms associated with social anxiety (Acarturk et al., 2009) consequently, a decrease in anxiety levels could result in an increase in overall peace of mind. The correlation can be elucidated by drawing upon attachment theory. Attachment theory posits that individuals with an insecure attachment style exhibit diminished levels of trust in others and harbor a pessimistic self-image. Individuals who experience fear of negative evaluation are characterized by decreased levels of trust and increased levels of self-doubt. The aforementioned factors contribute to emotional instability, which can ultimately compromise an individual's peace of mind. Thus, we hypothesized;

H2: Fear of negative evaluation is negatively related to peace of mind

Fear of Negative Evaluation

Fear of Negative Evaluation refers to an individual's apprehension regarding the assessment of others. This can manifest as stress or anxiety in response to the possibility of negative evaluation, avoidance of situations that may involve evaluation, and a belief that others are likely to evaluate them negatively (Watson & Friend, 1969a). Hence, the thoughts, feelings, and actions of individuals who experience fear of negative evaluation are influenced by the opinions of others in socially evaluative situations (Ezer, 2020). This refers to a state of concern and discomfort resulting from unfavorable evaluations by other individuals (Ali

& Zia-ur-Rehman, 2021). Individuals with high levels of Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE) tend to avoid situations where they may be evaluated and often anticipate negative evaluations of their performance, even when their performance is objectively good (Stopa & Clark, 1993). FNE, can manifest in various social evaluative situations such as job interviews, public speaking, dating, conversing with authority figures, and taking tests (Watson & Friend, 1969b). Individuals who experience fear of negative evaluation may perceive situations involving social interaction, performance display, and assessment as potential risks. Thus, in any socially evaluative setting, the primary emotion experienced by individuals is the fear of negative evaluation. This feeling can emerge in every situation where there is an audience (Rapee & Heimberg, 1997). Hence, it is not imperative for an individual to induce apprehension of unfavorable assessment solely in face-to-face social encounters. The presence of fear is evident not only in the potential for social engagements, but also in the act of observing others. However research suggests that the existence of a supportive individual can alleviate the adverse effects of fear of negative evaluation on an individual's social functioning and overall well-being (Alden & Bieling, 1998). A comparable finding was put forth by Weeks & Howell, (2012) who reported that that the presence of a supportive friend during a social interaction reduces the likelihood of negative emotions and self-doubts in individuals. Another study by Feeney & Collins, (2001) revealed that individuals who reported a secure attachment to their romantic partner exhibited a reduced likelihood of experiencing negative emotions and fear of negative evaluation in social situations. It is suggested that advisers who are salient and influential can potentially alleviate the fear of negative evaluation by offering assistance and input that enhances an individual's confidence and sense of security in their social interactions. In addition, research has shown that receiving constructive feedback and guidance from salient advisors can potentially enhance an individual's self-efficacy and self-esteem. These factors have been found to have an inverse relationship with fear of negative evaluation (Bandura, 1997). Moreover, the existence of a salient advisor who belongs to the individual's in-group can enhance the individual's perception of identity and social attachment, which can potentially diminish the individual's apprehension of fear of negative evaluation. (Jetten et al., 2014). The aforementioned arguments find support in Attachment theory, which suggests that individuals with a secure attachment style, marked by a feeling of trust and a favorable self-image, exhibit enhanced emotional stability, including reduced levels of anxiety and apprehension regarding negative evaluation. Thus, we hypothesize that;

H3: Adviser's salience is negatively related to fear of negative evaluation.

Various maladaptive outcomes are associated with fear of negative evaluation (Jackson et al., 2002). The fear of negative evaluation is a psychological phenomenon that arises from an individual's past experiences and fundamental beliefs about others. This fear can have a significant impact on an individual's ability to cope with daily life situations (Gill et al., 2018). Consequently, the lack of the coping abilities would drain an individual's psychological resources which would result in destroying the peace of mind.

Due to the fact that individuals with a greater fear of negative evaluation tend to feel significantly worse when receiving negative evaluations (Leary, 1983), having a salient advisor may provide unique benefits. A salient adviser would furnish the individual with necessary information and social support to the individual while making critical decisions. This will act as a buffer against anxiety while making critical choices and will boost an individual's self-confidence. This will in turn result in lower levels of fear of negative evaluation. Hence, in presences of salient advisers people might not develop the fear of negative evaluations from others which would result in peace of mind. Attachment theory posits that people have an inherent need for social connection, and that the quality of these connections, or attachments, can have a substantial effect on mental health and well-being. A salient advisor provides a person with attachment security. People with secure attachment styles have a larger sense of self-worth and relationship confidence. They are less likely to

interpret social feedback as threatening or negative, and they are prone to look for toward and receive positive feedback and social support, which may lower their fear of negative evaluation. In addition, individuals with a high degree of fear of negative evaluation might experience difficulty entrusting and relying on other people, which may damage feelings of attachment security, resulting in experiences of anxiety and distress, which in turn negatively impact peace of mind. Therefore, we hypothesized that fear of negative evaluation may mediate the relationship between advisers salience and peace of mind.

H4: Fear of negative evaluation mediates the relationship between advisers' salience and peace of mind.

Material and Methods

Participants and Procedures

The study group comprised 205 employees who consented to take part. The individuals were employed in various departments across different banks in five main cities of Pakistan i.e., Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi, Quetta and Peshawar. The sample population comprised of 147 males (71.7%) and 58 females (28.29%) with an age range of 23 to 50 years. The study followed established protocols for approaching participants, which included implementing measures for volunteering participation, obtaining informed consent, ensuring participant privacy, and maintaining anonymity. The study procedures have been granted approval by the relevant authorities and adhere to the ethical standards outlined in the latest version of the Declaration of Helsinki (Association, 2018). The scales were completed by the participants using both printed forms and online surveys via various social media applications such as WhatsApp. Data that was either inappropriately or insufficiently filled, which amounted to 12 cases, was excluded from the analysis. Additionally, multivariate outliers were identified using Mahalonobis scores and 2 cases were excluded as a result.

The study's independent variable was the salience of advisers. The dependent variable, was the level of peace of mind. Additionally, the potential mediator variable, was the fear of negative evaluation. Correlations and descriptive statistics amongst key variables were computed with the help of SPSS 20.0. The data underwent analysis through a two-step method as prescribed Anderson & Gerbing (1988). Initially the measurement model was tested to evaluate the degree to which the indicators accurately signified each of the latent variables. Subsequently, after the acceptance of the measurement model, the testing of the structural model underwent through maximum likelihood estimation utilizing Amos 18.0. The study employed the bias-corrected bootstrapping technique to evaluate the statistical significance of the indirect effect (Hayes, 2017). The 95% confidence intervals for the indirect effect were generated using a method that involved conducting 1000 data resamples. When the confidence intervals for the parameter estimate do not include zero, it indicates that the indirect effect has achieved statistical significance at a p-value lower than .05. As per the recommendation of Hu & Bentler (1999), an acceptable model fit is determined by evaluating the values of the goodness-of-fit index (GFI) and the comparative fit index (CFI), which should both be greater than 0.90. Additionally, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) should both be less than 0.08.

Measures

The questionnaire utilized in the current study contained measures that were well-established. It was responded by employees within the banking sector. The questionnaire was administered in the English language, which is widely comprehended by the banking sector employees. To measure the salience of advisers, we utilized items from the scale developed by Agle et al., (1999). It is a three items scale for which Cronbach's alpha of 0.92

was obtained. The 12-item Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (Leary, 1983) was utilized to assess fear of negative evaluation. The scale yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.89. The Peace of Mind Scale (Y.-C. Lee et al., 2013) is a 7-item scale which was used in the current study. The cronbach's alpha of 0.91 was obtained for this scale. The Likert scale was used to record the responses of the participants, ranging from one to five, with one indicating "Strongly Disagree" and five indicating "Strongly Agree."

Results and Discussion

Preliminary Analyses

Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations among the variables included in the model. The variables exhibited significant correlation with each other in a manner that aligns with one another in conceptually expected way.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations

Variable	Mean	SD	Advisers Salience	Fear of negative evaluation	Peace of mind
Advisers salience	2.63	1.54		-0.42	0.31
Fear of negative evaluation	3.51	0.70	-0.42		-0.26
Peace of mind	3.16	0.45	0.31	-0.26	

Measurement Model

The measurement model comprised of three latent variables, namely advisers' salience, fear of negative evaluation, and peace of mind, along with 22 observed variables. The statistical analysis yielded the following results: $\chi2/df$ value of 3.13, a RMSEA value of .070, a SRMR value of .063, a CFI value of .97, and a GFI value of 0.98. These values indicate a good fit between the data and the model. The statistical analysis indicated that the factor loadings for each indicator on its respective factor were significant at a significance level of $p < .001$. This indicates that the indicators effectively represented the latent variables.

Structural Model

Subsequently, a structural model was constructed to evaluate the validity of our hypotheses. Overall, the proposed model demonstrated a good fit to the collected data: $\chi2 /df = 3.01$, RMSEA = .073, SRMR = .060, CFI = 0.97, GFI = 0.96. All the standardized path coefficients exhibited significance at a level of $p < .001$. The standardized indirect effect of advisers salience on peace of mind ($\beta= 0.48$) was more significant than the standardized direct effect of advisers salience on peace of mind ($\beta= 0.16$) which indicates the presence of partial mediation between advisers salience and peace of mind owing to the fear of negative evaluation as mediator between them. The study found that the fear of negative evaluation partially mediated the relationship between advisers' salience and peace of mind. The mediation effects were confirmed by utilizing bootstrapping procedures to evaluate the significance of the different paths in the mediation model. According to Table 2, all paths, including the mediating path, exhibited statistical significance with a p-value of less than .001. The results obtained from the study provide support for hypotheses 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Table 2
Results of hypothesis testing

Model pathways	Estimates	S.E	LLCI	ULCI

Advisers salience→ Peace of mind **(H1)**	0.16	0.26	0.20	0.37
Fear of negative evaluation→ Peace of mind **(H2)**	-0.22	0.08	-0.21	-0.26
Advisers salience→ Fear of negative evaluation **(H3)**	-0.25	0.05	-0.24	-0.33
Advisers salience→ FNE→ Peace of mind **(H4)**	0.48	0.04	0.36	0.45
Total Effect **(H1 +H4)**	0.64	0.12	0.39	0.47

The application of attachment theory in elucidating work-related relationships and behavior has emerged as a noteworthy advancement in the field of organizational behavior literature. However, Attachment-based organizational studies have been restricted to a limited number of subjects, including leadership and group dynamics (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2017; Yip et al., 2018). Although Attachment theory's predictions have been tested in the context of work relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1990), empirical researchers have only recently begun to focus on this topic. The purpose of this paper is to broaden the theoretical scope of attachment research in organizational settings by providing attachment-based explanations for topics that have not yet been explored in the existing literature.

This paper has viewed organizational outcomes through the lens of attachment theory. The study of attachment theory can be beneficial for managers and human resources leaders. It can aid in supporting employee development and relationships within an organization (Blome et al., 2010). The present study has examined the influence of attachment theory on organizational outcomes. The study of attachment theory can be beneficial for managers and human resources leaders. It can aid in supporting employee development and relationships within an organization. By familiarizing themselves with Attachment Theory, managers can gain insight into the behaviors of their employees, which may be indicative of secure, preoccupied, dismissing, or fearful attachment styles. By gaining a better comprehension of their employees' attachment preferences, managers can potentially enhance the effectiveness of employee communications, teamwork, and motivation. In addition, through self-administered assessments, employees have the opportunity to reflect and engage in a discussion regarding how their attachment styles may influence their chosen professional relationships. By engaging in an in-depth examination of Attachment Theory, both managers and employees can acquire a heightened sense of self-awareness and an increased understanding of the needs of those around them. In order to improve their capacity to recognize individuals who exhibit secure, preoccupied, dismissive, or fearful attachment behaviors, it would be advantageous for managers and human resource professionals to possess a comprehension of attachment theory. Through an understanding of an employee's perceptions of relationships, a manager can provide guidance and support to promote the employee's self-actualization. This approach avoids the dismissal or termination of a potentially valuable employee who may be uncertain about the level of trust within the organization.

Conclusion

The study revealed that the Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE) acts as a partial mediator in the association between the salience of advisers and the state of peace of mind. There is a negative association between the fear of negative evaluation and the salience of advisers. Specifically, higher levels of adviser salience are associated with lower levels of fear of negative evaluation, which ultimately leads to higher levels of peace of mind. Thus, advisers' salience plays a dominant role in the progression of the peace of mind, which

makes advisers' salience a crucial construct, especially from attachment theory perspective. The findings contribute to the related literature in research and practice.

Recommendations

The present study offers some recommendations, which are outlined below:

It is advisable for future researchers to employ methodological strategies for data collection, such as utilizing peer-reported data instead of relying solely on self-reported measures. This is important as self-reported measures used in the current study may be prone to common method bias.

Additionally, it is recommended that forthcoming studies utilize cross-sectorial data with a substantial sample size to augment the generalizability of their results.

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