



**Attachment beyond Humans: Examining the Role of Human-Pet Attachment
and Its Relationship with Empathy, Altruism and Psychological Distress**

**A Research Project Presented to
School of Professional Psychology
Bahria University Islamabad, E-8 Campus**

**In Partial Fulfilment of the requirement of the Degree of Bachelor
of Science
BS. Psychology**

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DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICATION

We certify that the research work presented in this research project, to the best of my knowledge, is our own. All the sources used, and any help received in the preparation of this thesis have been acknowledged. We hereby declare that we have not submitted this material, either in whole or in part, for any other degree at this or any institution.

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DEDICATION

We dedicate this work to all those who find healing and companionship in the innocent love of animals—a reminder of the tenderness that Islam teaches us to extend to all of creation. To Angbeen’s adorable cats, Sushi and Ash—thank you for the purrs, the chaos, and the cuddles that made even the toughest days better. And to all of Aimen’s pets whose names are too funny to mention—thank you, too. (Yes, we know you can’t read this, but if you could... we’d be slightly concerned.)

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THESIS REVISION CERTIFICATE

It is to clarify that Aimen Kamran and Angbeen Karim, Enrolment No. 01-171212-075 and 01-171212-093 respectively, session Fall 2021 from School of Professional Psychology, Bahria University Islamabad conducted their undergraduate thesis entitled “Attachment beyond Humans: Examining the Role of Human-Pet Attachment and Its Relationship with Empathy, Altruism and Psychological Distress” under my supervision. They have revised their thesis in the light of the examiners’ suggestions, and to my satisfaction and to the best of my belief, its standard is appropriate for acceptance. Moreover, this thesis is an excellent work in terms of scope and quality for the award of the degree of BS psychology.

Dated: 19th May 2025

Ms. Saba Zahid Hayat

Supervisor

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List of Abbreviations and Symbols

Abbreviation/Symbol	Description
M	Mean
SD	Standard Deviation
LL	Lower Limit
UL	Upper Limit
CI	Confidence Interval
N	Sample Size
α	Reliability Coefficient
β	Standardized Coefficient
SE B	Standard Error of the Unstandardized Beta Coefficient
SE	Standard Error
p	Level of Significance
d	Cohen's Measure of Sample Effect Size
t	Standard Difference
f	Frequency
%	Percentage
R²	Coefficient of Determination
F	F Ratio
ΔR^2	R ² Change
LAPS	Lexington Attachment to Pets Scale
IRI	Interpersonal Reactivity Index
EC	Empathic Concern
FS	Fantasy Scale
PT	Perspective Taking
PD	Personal Distress
SRA	Self-Report Altruism Scale
DASS-21	Depression Anxiety Stress Scale for Psychological Distress

Abstract

Introduction: The human-animal relationships are being recognized as meaningful and psychologically impactful. The emotional connection that human beings form with their pets may influence core social behaviors such as empathy, altruism as well as levels of psychological distress. **Purpose of the study:** The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between Human-Pet attachment and three psychological constructs which include Empathy, Altruism and Psychological distress among pet owners in Pakistan. **Method:** Cross-sectional design was employed in this study in which data were collected from 114 participants (36.8% male, 63.2% female) aged 10 to 35 years, residing in Islamabad and Rawalpindi through purposive and convenient sampling techniques. Participants completed the Lexington Attachment to Pets Scale (LAPS), Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) for empathy, Self Report Altruism Scale and DASS-21 to measure psychological distress. Data was collected online and in-person at universities and pet clinics. Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS v27. **Key Results:** It was found that Pet attachment to be positively associated with Empathy and surprisingly with Psychological distress as well. However, it was not a significant association with Altruism. Females reported significantly higher empathy scores compared to males. **Conclusion and Implications:** The findings suggest that strong Pet attachment contributes to increase in Empathy as well as Psychological distress. These results hold promises for developing pet-assisted interventions and therapeutic models to foster social and emotional well-being. **Keywords:** Human-Pet Attachment, Empathy, Altruism, Psychological Distress