

ATTACHMENT STYLES OF ADOLESCENTS: CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

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ABSTRACT

The Study was designed to explore the attachment styles of adolescents in relation to the parenting styles. The sample of the study was 179 (81 females and 98 males) respondents. A demographic sheet, adult attachment scale, and parental authority questionnaire was used to collect data. Collected data was analyzed by using mean and t-test. It was found that there is no significant difference in attachment styles of adolescents. Adolescents prefer avoidant attachment style. Authoritative paternal style and maternal styles was practiced by parents. Significant difference was found for father's authoritarian style and mother's authoritative and permissive styles. Father's were more authoritarian for male child. Mother's were more authoritative for female child and permissive for male child. It was concluded that the adolescent's age is the main factor of the study findings.

Keywords: Attachment style, parenting styles, adolescents

INTRODUCTION

Socialization is a universal phenomenon. Socialization is the process through which a person learns how to be a member of social group. Attachment is long term relationship between the members of the social groups. Attachment ties the social relations together. Passer & Smith (2007) defines attachment as a strong emotional bond that develops between children and their parents. The roots of attachment lay in Bowlby (1969) theory of attachment. He described attachment is a special emotional relationship that involves an exchange of comfort, care and pleasure. Attachment is a natural activity. It continues since infancy. The child attached with their parents and caregivers; as they provide comfort and care. Posada et al. (2002) observed the mother gives comfort and are more sensitive to their baby's needs the infants are more securely attached to her.

The way parents imparts values and beliefs to the child, is resulting in child's self-awareness and self-confidence while developing relations with others. The early experience of attachment in childhood influences the development and behavior in adolescences. Shaver & Milkulincer (2005) concluded the secure attachment in early life may help to foster a capacity for compassion and altruism that carries forward in to adulthood. The different ways behaving and responding in attachment relation are defined as attachment styles. Akhtar (2011) defines attachment styles as the typical ways of interacting in close relationships. Ainsworth et al. (1978) classified attachment styles in to main three categories: secure, anxious and avoidant.

Characteristics of attachment styles

Meyers & Landsberger (2002) described the attachment as the ways in which adults think, feel and interact in the context of their relationship. All attachment styles in adults correspond to the respective attachment style in childhood. The characteristics of each attachment style are described in following section.

Secure attachment style

Secure attachment style is associated with the warm response. Ainsworth, et al. (1978) describes secure attachment style in childhood means the parents specially mother is present, available, responsive and helpful for baby. In adulthood this style of attachment developed on the history of warm and responsive interaction with relationship partners.

People having secure attachment style are characterized as confident. They have positive views of themselves and their parents and peers and their relationship. They have greater satisfaction and adjustment in their life. They feel comfort on depending others. They make close intimate relations and they welcome if others want to make close relation with them. They are described as happy people. They perceive their parents have warm and close relations to each other and they have happy marriages.

Anxious attachment style

The people having anxious attachment style are conscious about their relations Hazan and Shaver (1978) observed these people demands high level of intimacy, warmth and dependency from their parents and peers. They are anxious about the presence and availability of their mothers. They are uncertain about their parents in childhood. The history of such feelings takes them in adulthood with this style.

They value high level intimacy and some time they become over dependent. Their high expectations and over dependence scare other people. They are afraid of losing relations. They think other people are reluctant to make close relations with them. They feel other peoples are not as warm towards them in their relations as they are. They have fear of rejection. Their relations are based on fear and abandonment. They don't stay longer with their relations. The adults with this style of attachment describe their parent's relationship less warmth and they feel their parents have unhappy marriages.

Avoidant attachment style

The characteristics of people having avoidant attachment style as defined by Collin & Reed (1990) these people feel uncomfortable in getting close to others. They want to make close relations but they found difficult to depend on others. They avoid close relations because they don't trust others. They possess mixed feelings at one hand they want to make emotionally close relations and on the other hand they become nervous when others make close relations with them. They suppress and hide their feelings because of their mixed feeling and un-trust to others.

This style has roots in repeated rejection in childhood. These people categories their parents as less warmth to each others and to the child. They form such perception because of cold and rejecting behavior of parents. Passer & Smith (2007) described avoidant children as angry, aggressive, isolated and disliked by their peers.

Contributing factors for attachment styles

Many factors contribute in developing attachment styles. The most important is the parent child relationship. Parent child relation might predict the outcome of the child's future in the interpersonal relationships. In literature the parent child relationship is defined by parenting styles.

Baumrind (1967) described the parenting styles in four key dimensions. These dimensions were control, demands for maturity, clarity of communication and nurturance. Crider, et al. (1989) defined control as parental attempts to shape and modify expression of dependent, aggressive and playful behavior. By demand for maturity they mean pressure on children to perform up to their ability. The third dimension was clarity of communication. It means seeking out children's opinion and using reason when demanding compliance from children and last was nurturance; it was expressions of warmth towards children and pride in their accomplishments.

Baumrind (1976) observed that the parents behavior vary on these dimensions. This variation was categories in different parenting styles i.e. authoritative, authoritarian and permissive. Parental

behavior for each of these styles seems to parallel that of parental behavior for individual attachment pattern.

Authoritative parenting style

These parents are highly demanding and caring. They have good child-parent communication. According to Gleitman, Reisberg & Gross (2007) authoritative parents set rules of conduct for their children and enforce them, assign tedious tasks and accept mature behavior. Baumrind (1967) concluded that authoritative parents are sensitive to the children's needs; they don't use punitive discipline and reasons with the child in a loving and affectionate manner. They encourage independence and take care of child's point of view. These parents put less restriction on their on children when they become mature. This parenting style is associated with secure attachment style.

Authoritarian parenting style

The parents possessing this style set strict standards for children about how they should and should not speak and act. They don't allow children to talk on the rules set by them. They think the children should obey them without asking any question because it is their order. These parents have low acceptance and high control. These parents are demanding and unresponsive. They use punitive and harsh punishment for the wrong doings of their children. The outcomes of authoritarian parenting tend to overlap the characteristics of avoidant attachment style.

Permissive parenting style

Permissive parents set some specific do's and don't for their children. They don't assert their authority on children. They do not set restrictions or schedule of activities for children. They rarely use to punish for any action. They make few demands. Baumrind (1967) reported permissive parents have low self-control and self-reliance. The children of these parents are describes as anxious, immature (Karen, 1998) and show little initiative.

Child parent relationship remains under consideration for many years. The researchers have studied these variables in different context. Karthik (2009) concluded in his article that parents influence the lives of their children in every aspect and leave an impression which remains throughout their lives. Mother and father both play an important role in upbringing of their children. It is evident by many research studies that child's first attachment is developed with mothers as she gives comfort to the child. It does not mean father has no role in child development.

Passer & Smith (2007) and Broughton's (2002) research study showed the babies who had secure relationships with their fathers used more coping strategies then those who did not. Keeping these comments it can be concluded the mother and father both are important for child development. They influenced the child life. The way of interacting may differ but both effect children's personality differently. A study was conducted by Adam, Gunnar & Tanaka (2004) showed maternal emotional well-being and control moderate the associations between adult attachment and parenting behavior. The culture may affect the maternal and paternal roles and control as highlighted by Albert, Trommsdorff & Mishra (2004) maternal control gives the feeling of security and acceptance to Indian adolescents but not to German adolescents. The reason was cultural variation.

Another study was conducted by Dwairy, et al. (2006) about the parenting styles in Arab societies. They found the males possess authoritarian parenting style and female possess authoritative parenting style. Further the first born adolescent reported permissive parenting style of parents.

Komagata & komagata (2008) is against the different types of parenting styles. They said parents love is unconditional. They take care of their children. They have further highlighted unconditional parenting leads to secure attachment style. They said the parent's attachment style and they concluded secure attachment style parents grow a child with secure attachment style which helps to develop a balance personality.

Parents parenting styles not only effects the children in childhood and adolescence it also influence the marital and practical life. As shown by Hall (2009) the girls are well adjusted in their married life when they have higher levels of positive paternal influence from her childhood.

What type of paternal and maternal styles is normally practiced in Asia? Rai, Pandey & Kumar (2009) answer this question. They said the boys have significantly more rejection from father as compared to girls and girls have significantly better emotional warmth in comparison to boys from father. The similar results were shown by Stephen (2009) the father was more likely to be over protective of their female child as compared to male child.

Önder, Kırdök and Isık (2010) showed the child of authoritative and authoritarian parents is more decisive than the child's of neglectful and permissive parents. Many factors effect the parenting like psychosocial stress was a factor which contributed to determine the parenting style reported by Mills-Koonce, et al. (2011). It shows the parenting can be shifted from one style to another under some certain situation.

Talib (2011) studied the effect of parenting style on child development. He found authoritative parenting style of mother and father has positive effect on child behavior and school achievement.

Keeping in view the whole discussion it can be said if the finding of Hazan & Shaver (1978) is true that childhood attachment style can predict the quality of adult interpersonal relationships and if the parenting style has the influence on attachment styles then it may also predict the relationship outcome in adulthood.

OBJECTIVES

To investigate the attachment styles of adolescents and the effect of contributing factors (age, gender and parenting styles) on attachment styles present study was designed with following objectives:

- a. There is significant gender-wise difference in attachment styles of adolescents.
- b. There is significant gender-wise difference in paternal style of adolescents.
- c. There is significant gender-wise difference in maternal style of adolescents.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants of the present study were 200 adolescents with equal gender (100 male and 100 female). The age of the participants ranged from 15 to 18 years. The mean of their age was 16.78 years and SD (1.15). They were selected from summer camp class by using cluster sampling technique. 200 questionnaires were distributed to the participants out of selected sample. 98 male and 81 female participants filled and returned the questionnaire. Response rate was 90%.

Procedure

The researcher recruited participants from summer camp from academies. These participants were approached through their instructors. The administrators of academies were convinced and permission was obtained to conduct the study there. Participants were informed about the objectives of the study and their consent was taken before proceeding. Participants completed the study measures. Measures were counter-balance with the demographic sheet. The duration of completing the study measures ranges from 20 to 25 minutes.

Study Measures

Three different measures were used to collect data. The first was demographic sheet, second Adult Attachment Scale (AAS) and third Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ). The demographic sheet contains personal information designed by researcher keeping in view the research question. The AAS was developed by Collin & Reed (1990) to measure the adult attachment styles. The PAQ was developed by Buri (1991) to measure the parenting styles as perceived by adolescents. Both AAS and Paq were translated in urdu language through forward and backward translation. Two versions of PAQ

were used with appropriate gender to measure maternal perceived parenting and paternal perceived parenting. The mother was changed to father and she was changed to he to make different versions of PAQ for mother and father perceived parenting.

Demographic sheet

Demographic sheet was used to collect information about participant's gender, age, status in academy and previous success.

Adult Attachment Scale

Adult attachment scale (AAS; Collin & Reed, 1990) was used to measure the preferred attachment style of participants. The AAS was composed of three subscales measuring three types of attachment styles i.e. secure, anxious and avoidant. The measure consists of 18 statements. Each statement was scored on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The secure attachment style was reflected by the statements no 3, 4, 7, 13, 14, and 17. The anxious attachment style was supposed to measure by statement no 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12. Avoidant attachment style was described by statement no 1, 2, 5, 15, 16 and 18. Highest score on subscale determine the preferred attachment style. This distribution with respect each attachment style was recommended in original scale. It was kept same for the present study. The reliability co-efficient of the original questionnaire was ranged from .78 to .87. The value of cronbach alpha for the present sample ranged from .72 to .80.

Parenting Authority Questionnaire

The Parenting Authority Questionnaire (PAQ; Buri, 1991) was used to measure perceived parenting styles. The Buri constructed this questionnaire. PAQ consisted upon 30 statements. Each statement was rated on 5 point likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Each subscale was measured by 10 statements. The score on these statements was ranged from 10 to 50. The higher score indicated the type of parenting style perceived by the adolescents. The reliability co-efficient of the questionnaire was ranged from .72 to .80 for present sample. This value for original questionnaire was ranged from .74 to .87.

RESULTS

Table:1 Gender-wise difference in attachment styles

Attachment style	Gender of Child	N	Mean	t	df	p-value
Secure Attachment	Female	81	18.06	1.58	176.25	0.115
	Male	98	19.10			
Anxious Attachment	Female	81	17.35	1.860	175.63	0.065
	Male	98	18.50			
Avoidant Attachment	Female	81	19.57	1.016	176.76	0.311
	Male	98	20.12			

Table 1 indicates no gender-wise difference exists in attachment styles of male and female respondents. The mean value (19.57) and (20.12) of avoidant attachment style for female and male respondents respectively is higher than secure and anxious attachment style. This indicates the preference of female and males respondents for avoidant attachment style.

Table:2 Gender-wise difference in paternal parenting styles

Parenting style	Gender of Child	N	Mean	t	df	p-value
Authoritative style	Female	81	37.41	0.85	177	0.392
	Male	98	36.57			
Authoritarian style	Female	81	30.48	3.00*	169.1	0.003
	Male	98	33.44			
Permissive style	Female	81	31.14	0.86	177	0.392
	Male	98	31.88			

* Significant at $p > .01$

Table 2 depicts gender-wise difference in parenting style of father as perceived by respondents. The values in table show significant difference of authoritarian parenting style of father for his male and female children. The mean value (33.44) for male respondents is higher than the mean value (30.48) for female respondents. It implies father exhibit authoritarian parenting style towards their male children as compared to female children.

When the mean value against each parenting styles is compared it is found that the mean value as reported by male and female respondents of authoritative parenting styles of is higher. It shows father practice authoritative parenting style but the significant difference lies for authoritarian paternal style towards male adolescents.

Table:2 Gender-wise difference in maternal parenting styles

Parenting style	Gender of Child	N	Mean	t	df	p-value
Authoritative style	female	81	38.57	1.98*	177	0.05
	male	98	36.72			
Authoritarian style	female	81	30.48	0.57	177	0.566
	male	98	33.44			
Permissive style	female	81	29.44	2.62*	176.24	0.010
	male	98	31.95			

* Significant at $p > .01$

Table 3 highlighted significant difference of authoritative and permissive maternal style for her male and female child. The mean value (38.57) for perceived authoritative maternal style of female respondents is higher than the mean value (36.72) of male respondents. It shows mother's are more authoritative for their female child as compared to the male child. Similarly the significant difference for permissive maternal style for male and female respondents exists. The mean value (31.95) for male respondents is higher than the mean value (29.44) of female respondents. It shows mother's practice permissive parenting style for their male child as compared to female child. The mean values as reported by male and female respondents are higher for authoritative parenting style and lower for

permissive parenting style of mothers. Both were significantly different. Mother's are authoritative for female and permissive for male children.

Discussion and conclusion

The present study was aimed to explore the attachment styles of adolescents in the light of the contributing factors i.e. parenting styles. The findings of table 1 showed no significant difference was found in attachment styles of male and female respondents. By comparing the mean values it can be said that adolescents prefer avoidant attachment style.

The finding of the table 2 showed the gender-wise difference in paternal style. The significant difference was found in paternal styles towards male and female adolescents. Father's are more authoritative towards male adolescents. Table further highlighted the practicing style is authoritative because the mean value for this style is higher than the other styles. The reason of father's authoritarian style towards male adolescents may be the male spent more time out of home. Father likes to involve them in practical activities. In Pakistani situation parents trained their male adolescents for performing out of home tasks so they spent more time in out of home activities as compared to female adolescents. The father's strictness forces them to avoid and not to indulge themselves in wrong activities. The other reason may be the genetic. Because of this natural tendency of genes and chromosomes repulsion for male children and attraction for female children, father favor female child and keep strict check for male child.

The findings table 3 indicated the gender-wise difference in maternal styles. The mother's authoritative and permissive styles were significantly different. Mothers were more authoritative towards female adolescents and permissive towards male adolescents. The mean value showed that the mother practicing style is authoritative. The findings of table 2 and 3 confirmed that fathers and mothers are responsive, sensitive and caring for their children as they exhibit authoritative parenting style. The difference is because of their different roles. Mothers are more authoritative for female adolescents because they spend more time at home with them. Mothers know their activities and keep themselves involved with them and same is reported by female adolescents where as male spend more time out of home mother's are not aware of their activities so they were permissive towards them and they do not interfere their activities.

The findings of table 2 supports the findings of the Rai, Pandey and Kumar (2009) and Stephen (2009) they have concluded that fathers are authoritative towards male child. The findings were somewhat similar and support the Talib's study which highlighted that father and mother are more authoritarian towards male child and father and mother exhibit authoritative style towards female child. It also supports the findings of Dwairy, et al. (2006) and Komagata & Komagata (2008). They reported father's authoritarian and mother's authoritative parenting style.

The finding of the study is different and alarming. The parents exhibit authoritative parenting style which is characterized as sensitive and caring towards children needs but the adolescents practice avoidant attachment style. The reasons of this finding are many. The first and most visible is the age of the adolescents. The age of selected sample lies between 15 to 18 years. The mean of which was 16.78. The adolescents of this age group have their interests out of home. They want to be independent in their decisions. They want to experience newness in every aspect of life so they feel less attachment to family.

The second reason may be the social environment around them. Although the parents are responsive to the needs of adolescents they are conscious about the career of their children. For their better future they exert maximum efforts and provide every opportunity to improve their status and provide them comfort. In the result of all the efforts parents demands good performance in educational activities which keep them busy like going college/school, and academies. In the remaining time the adolescents remain busy with internet for searching and chatting. They don't have social life. They don't found

time to spend with parents and peers. They don't feel the level of intimacy and closeness with them. In the result they possess avoidant attachment style.

This finding is very logical when adolescent's has access to internet, I phone; laptop/computers and mobile remain busy in activities outside the home. If they are present at home it is only physically, actually they may be busy in some activities some where else. Such activities are not good for them. They do not trust others as they prefer avoidant attachment style. This situation unbalances their personality. Keeping this finding it is recommended that parents may plan and organize such activities which can stimulate their relationships with parents and peers.

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