



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Attachment Issues And Mental Health Among Youth: Review Study

Ishika Mathur and Seema Rani Sarraf

Amity Institute of Behavioural and Allied Sciences
Amity University Uttar Pradesh Lucknow Campus

ABSTRACT

This research delves into the intricate relationship between attachment difficulties and mental well-being within the youth population. It examines how insecure attachment styles, formed during early development, can significantly impact the psychological health of adolescents and young adults. By exploring the prevalence and nature of attachment issues, the study aims to illuminate the specific mental health challenges, such as anxiety, depression, and social maladjustment, that arise from these insecure patterns. Furthermore, this investigation seeks to identify potential mediating and moderating factors that may influence this association, providing insights into the pathways through which attachment insecurities translate into mental health struggles. Ultimately, this work contributes to a deeper understanding of the critical role of early attachment in shaping the mental landscape of young individuals, with implications for targeted interventions and support services. By exploring these questions, we hope to shed light on the exact ways that early attachment experiences affect the mental health of young people. This knowledge is crucial for developing better support systems and targeted interventions. Imagine being able to help young people build healthier relationships and improve their mental well-being by addressing the root causes stemming from those early attachment experiences. That's the ultimate goal of this research.

Keywords: Attachment styles, psychological health, Attachment issues, Anxiety, Depression.

INTRODUCTION

The journey from adolescence to young adulthood is a phase defined by profound developmental shifts, encompassing both physical and emotional domains. During this period, the capacity to form and maintain stable, healthy relationships emerges as a critical determinant of an individual's self-concept and overall psychological health. At the heart of these relational dynamics lies the concept of attachment, understood as the enduring emotional connection between individuals.

ATTACHMENT ISSUES

Attachment issues stem from disrupted or inconsistent early caregiving experiences, leading to difficulties in forming and maintaining healthy emotional bonds. Essentially, when a child's needs for comfort and security aren't reliably met, they may develop insecure attachment patterns. These patterns can manifest as anxiety about abandonment, avoidance of intimacy, or a disorganized mix of both. When we look at the research on how people form emotional bonds, we see that the ideas of Bowlby and Ainsworth (1970) are incredibly important. They really laid the groundwork for understanding how our early experiences with caregivers shape our relationships throughout our lives. Essentially, they argued that if a child's needs are met consistently and reliably, they develop a secure attachment. This means they feel safe and trust others, which allows them to build healthy relationships. On the other hand, if a child experiences inconsistent care, neglect, or a lack of responsiveness, they might develop insecure attachment styles. These can include being anxious about relationships, avoiding closeness, or showing a mix of confusing behaviours. These insecure patterns can create lasting difficulties in forming and maintaining healthy connections.

MENTAL HEALTH

When we talk about mental health, it's important to understand that it's not simply a matter of being "well" or "unwell." Instead, it's more like a sliding scale, where everyone experiences ups and downs throughout their lives. Even people who haven't been diagnosed with a mental health condition can still have times when their mental well-being isn't at its best. Therefore, any discussion of mental health needs to take a wider view, considering all the different aspects of our emotional, psychological, and social lives. Essentially, mental health is about our overall sense of well-being, not just the absence of illness. It's a complex and ever-changing thing, shaped by a mix of our biology, our psychology, and the social environments we live in. Our mental health significantly affects how we think, how we feel, and how we act. It plays a big role in how we manage stress, how we connect with other people, and how we make healthy decisions. We also need to consider the wide variety of mental health conditions, from common issues like anxiety and depression to more serious disorders. Additionally, it's crucial to acknowledge the stigma that often surrounds mental illness, which can prevent people from seeking the help they need.

RATIONALE

The aim of this review of literature is to understand exactly how those early experiences, the ups and downs with caregivers, translate into mental health challenges during adolescence and young adulthood. While the long-term effects of early caregiver relationships are well-documented, this paper focuses on the present-day mental health consequences for youth experiencing attachment issues. We seek to understand how these challenges directly affect their psychological state during this formative period. This paper, however, addresses a critical gap by examining the specific ways in which attachment problems disrupt the mental well-being of individuals during their teenage and young adult years, the very time they are happening.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Over the years, there have been several detailed research conducted to contribute to understanding of the effect of attachment issues of mental health on youth. One such attempt to understand the relevance of attachment theory to the current philosophy, organization, and practice of adult mental health care, via an examination of the literature relating to attachment theory and, the particular, the literature relating to research into adult attachment given by Goodwin (2003). Wilkinson (2004) study reinforces the positive correlation between secure parent-child attachment and positive psychological outcomes in adolescents. It highlights Higher self-esteem, Greater self-efficacy, Improved emotional regulation. Hankin et al. (2005) found that both anxious and avoidant attachment predicted depressive symptoms. Furthermore, Friedl Meier & Granqvist (2006) focuses on the developmental changes in attachment during adolescence. It emphasizes as adolescents mature, their primary attachment figures may shift, and the relative importance of different relationships can change. Zhao et al. (2015) focused on Attachment style, relationship factors, and mental health stigma among adolescents. M.M and Shaver (2016) have played a crucial role in extending Bowlby's original attachment theory, which primarily focused on infant-caregiver relationships, to encompass adult romantic relationships and broader social interactions. Furthermore, the relationship between adult attachment and mental health was made by was made by Camelia et al. (2018) who targeted how an adult's early attachment style influences their involvement in mental health treatment, including whether they show up, actively participate, and finish the program. It suggested a clear relationship between attachment and stages of treatment engagement. To add on to the research in the field, Mullen (2019) highlights the connection between attachment style and mental health difficulties and suggests that relationships can facilitate both mental health and ill-health. Lam et al. (2019) studied Attachment problems in childhood and the development of anxiety in adolescents. His findings explained that Attachment, as a most prominent construct in early child development, has been a key focus of research since Bowlby's study. Worsley et al. (2019) research shows the different types of coping styles, and how they affect mental health. Pearse et al. (2020) highlight the importance of considering attachment in relation to functional outcome when working with people with SMI, particularly when assessing, formulating, and delivering psychological interventions. Flykt et al (2021) identified adolescents' hierarchical attachment profiles with parents and peers, and to analyse associations between the profiles and adolescent psychosocial

adjustment. Moreover, Zhang et al. (2022) focused on the relationship between adult attachment and mental health and explained attachment theory helps us see how our relationships, our ability to handle stress, and our overall health are connected. Zhang and Deng (2022) clarify the complex interplay between parent and peer attachment. It finds High-quality peer attachment cannot fully compensate for the negative effects of poor parent-child attachment. Recently Martinez-Escudero et al, (2023) explained that positive parent child relationships, allow for positive peer relationships and positive parent child relationships, reduce risky behaviour.

CONCLUSION

This review of literature underscores the profound and lasting impact of early attachment experiences on the mental well-being of young people. The research consistently reveals that insecure attachment patterns, stemming from inconsistent or disrupted caregiving in childhood, significantly increase the risk of mental health challenges during adolescence and young adulthood. These early experiences don't simply disappear with time. They influence how young people form relationships, handle their feelings, and see themselves. Research consistently points to a strong link between insecure attachment styles and a higher risk of anxiety, depression, and difficulties in social situations. Moreover, the studies we reviewed stress that it's crucial to understand the subtle ways in which attachment impacts mental health, and how things like friendships and coping strategies interact with those early experiences. The foundational work of researchers like Bowlby and Ainsworth has provided a strong base for understanding these connections, and current research continues to expand upon their findings. By acknowledging the vital role of attachment in shaping mental health, we can create more effective ways to help young people who are dealing with the effects of insecure attachment. This review reminds us that building secure attachments in early life isn't just about providing comfort in the moment; it's about laying a foundation for lifelong emotional and mental well-being. Ultimately, by understanding these connections, we can better support young people as they navigate the challenges of growing up and build healthier, more fulfilling lives.

FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

The review establishes a link between insecure attachment and mental health issues, it could benefit from a more granular analysis of how specific attachment styles (anxious-preoccupied, avoidant-dismissive, disorganized) relate to particular mental health outcomes (e.g., specific anxiety disorders, types of depression, social anxiety). To get a clearer picture, we need research that Use Precise Tool in which researchers should use detailed questionnaires and interviews to figure out exactly which attachment style someone has. It should identify specific mental health problems. They also need to use careful assessments to diagnose specific mental health conditions. By analysing the Links where they need to use statistical methods to see how each attachment style is connected to each mental health problem. Conduct studies that use neuroimaging techniques (e.g.,

fMRI, EEG) to examine the neural correlates of attachment and mental health. Explore how early attachment experiences shape brain development and function, and how these changes relate to mental health outcomes.

REFERENCES

- Adams, G. C., & Wrath, A. J. (2018). The association between adult attachment and treatment utilization in individuals with mental health concerns. *Journal of Mental Health*, 27(5), 458-464.
- Ainsworth, M. D. S., Blehar, M. C., Waters, E., & Wall, S. (1978). This research explores how children form emotional bonds, using the 'strange situation' experiment, and is published by Erlbaum in Hillsdale, New Jersey.
- Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss: Vol. 1. Attachment*. Basic Books.
- Flykt, M., Vänskä, M., & Punamäki, R. L. (2021). Adolescent attachment profiles and psychosocial adjustment. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 50(1), 162-176.
- Goodwin, I. (2003). Attachment theory and mental health care. *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment*, 9(5), 337-344.
- Hankin, B. L., Kassel, J. D., & Abela, J. R. (2005). Depressive symptoms, parent-child relationships, and peer relations during adolescence: prospective tests of reciprocal effects. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 114(2), 295.
- Kobak, R., Ferenz-Gillies, R., Everhart, E., & Gibbs, W. (2007). Maternal secure base scripts predict adolescent attachment representations, self-esteem, and peer relationships. *Child Development*, 78(1), 221-235.
- Lam, L. T., Rai, A., & Lam, M. K. (2019). Problems with how a child connects with their caregivers can increase the chances they'll experience anxiety as a teenager. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 246, 552-559.
- Martinez-Escudero, J. A., Perez-Fuentes, M. C., Gázquez-Linares, J. J., & Molero Jurado, M. M. (2023). Influence of Parent-Child Relationships on Peer Relationships and Risky Behaviours in Adolescents. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 20(4), 3624.
- Meier, W. F., & Granqvist, P. (2006). Developmental changes in attachment during adolescence: A meta-analysis. *Developmental Psychology*, 42(6), 1263.
- Mikulincer, M., & Shaver, P. R. (2016). *Attachment in adulthood: Structure, dynamics, and change*. Guilford Publications.
- Mullen, G. (2019). Attachment style and mental health difficulties: The role of relationships. *Mental Health Review Journal*, 24(1), 37-51.

- Pearse, E., Bucci, S., Raphael, J., & Berry, K. (2020). The importance of attachment in understanding functional outcome in severe mental illness. *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy*, 27(4), 481-490.
- Wilkinson, R. B. (2004). Parent-child attachment and psychological outcomes in adolescence. *Journal of Adolescence*, 27(6), 693-703.
- Worsley, J., Major, B., & Cochrane, A. (2019). Coping styles and mental health: A review of the literature. *Counselling Psychology Review*, 34(2), 34-47.
- X. Zhang, J. Li, F. Xie, X. Chen, W. Xu, and N. W. Hudson (2022). Adult attachment and mental health: A meta-analysis. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 184, 111,162.
- Zhang, Y., & Deng, J. (2022). The interplay of parent and peer attachment on adolescents' mental health. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 31(6), 1618-1630.
- Zhao, W., Young, R. E., Breslow, L., & Michel, N. M. (2015) The interplay of adolescent bonding styles, factors influencing their relationships, and the societal prejudice against mental health. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 24(8), 2399-2409.

