

RESEARCH REPORTS

Parent-Child Attachment and Romantic Relationship: Is There a Relationship Between Parent-Child Attachment and Young Adults' Romantic Relationships?

AISHATH SHANOORA, HANINA HALIMATUSAADIAH, HASLINDA BINTI ABDULLAH, & AZLINA MOHD KHIR

The Maldives National University

ABSTRACT *Many researchers have found that the key to future adaptations or maladaptations of children is the attachment they form with their parents (Davies & Sturge-Apple, 2007; Marvin & Britner, 2008). Early research on attachment has highlighted the impact of parent-child attachment continuing across life (Bowlby, 1982). Recent research has shown that insecure attachment during childhood impacts young adults' attachment with their parents and in turn, impacts different aspects of their lives. However, no or limited studies have explored the direct relationship between attachment styles and young adults' romantic relationships among Maldivian young adults. This study aimed to fill this gap by assessing the relationship between young adult's parent-child attachment, and the quality of romantic relationships among young adults in Higher Education Institutions in the Maldives. A cross-sectional survey was conducted among 463 students aged 18 to 28 in higher education institutions in the Maldives. The data were collected using the Perceived Relationship Quality Scale by Fletcher et al. (2000) and the Attachment to Parent/Caregiver Inventory by Hu (2009). The data were analyzed using IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and PLS-SEM software. The results showed high levels of avoidant attachment with both mother and father among the participants, which was negatively associated with their current romantic relationship quality. In addition, it also showed an association between mother-child anxious attachment, father-child anxious attachment, and the romantic relationship quality of young adults. Hence, a direct connection between insecure attachment styles (avoidant attachment and anxious attachment) and low levels of relationship quality was established.*

Keywords: Parent-child attachment, romantic relationship, Maldives, PLS-SEM, young adults

Introduction

The quality of the romantic relationships between the offspring is affected by several factors. Kochendorfer and Kerns (2017) found that the quality of romantic relationships in young adults is closely linked to the attachment they had with their parents during childhood. According to a study carried out by Hashim et al., (2018), even though parent-child relationships aren't chosen, they can influence the actions, cognitive processes, and psychological patterns of future romantic relationships (Collins & van Dulmen, 2015). The bond between parents

and children acts as a blueprint for the way children form intimate connections in their future. According to Toro (2012), the bond between a parent and child serves as a blueprint or basis for future relationships, like friendships and romantic partnerships. Prototypes are formed in individuals depending on the responses they receive from their parents during their youth (Griffith, 2004). Research suggests that people's romantic relationships can differ from one another in terms of trustworthiness and how long they last. These differences can be influenced by factors such as past experiences within their family and the formation of mental frameworks for relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). According to Toro (2012), when parents and children have strong attachments and trust in each other, it leads to positive and healthy attachment patterns in romantic relationships among young adults. Nevertheless, this connection has not yet been investigated among the people of Maldives. Therefore, the objective of this study is to examine the impact of parent-child attachment styles and the quality of romantic relationships among young adults in university students of Maldives.

Parent-Child Attachment

Attachment theory is a prominent psychological framework that explores the deep emotional bonds and relationships formed between individuals, primarily focusing on the bonds between children and their caregivers. In the 1950s, Bowlby developed the fundamental concepts of attachment theory. Bowlby (1969) suggested that children are biologically predisposed to form strong emotional bonds with their primary caregivers, which he called "attachment figures." These bonds serve as a secure base from which children can explore the world, seek comfort and safety in times of distress, and develop a sense of trust in the world around them. Bowlby's ideas emphasized that these early attachments have a profound impact on an individual's emotional and social development throughout their life.

Ainsworth (1989) proposed that attachment theory explains how children develop a long-lasting emotional connection with a caregiver through their attachment-related actions (Bowlby, 1982). According to Bowlby (1982), attachment behavior refers to any action that seeks to establish or sustain proximity with another person who is more capable of dealing with the challenges of the world. The individual feels a greater sense of safety and comfort knowing that the person they are attached to is easily accessible. The attachment system supports the idea of being close to the primary caregiver during a child's early years, creating a secure and protective space for the child in times of danger or unease. In this stage, children venture out into their surroundings without their main caregiver or a safe place to rely on and interact with a wide range of individuals, such as friends and unfamiliar individuals (Ainsworth, 1989). According to Ainsworth (1970), a secure attachment between caregivers and children is formed when the child feels confident in the caregiver's ability to provide both a safe place to turn to and a stable base to depend on.

As children grow older, the attachment system undergoes development. In middle childhood, how children form attachments shifts from relying on emotional closeness to valuing the availability and approachability of their attachment figures. As children develop self-regulation skills, they become much less dependent on parental assistance. Nevertheless, it remains crucial for children to have awareness and assurance that their caregiver is present and accessible whenever they require their support (Kerns et al., 2011). According to Rosenthal and Kobak (2010), the attachment patterns seen by individuals during adolescence and adulthood are comparable. According to Buist et al., (2002), studies have indicated a decrease in the strength of the emotional bond between mothers and their daughters, as well as fathers and their sons, during the adolescent years.

Insecure attachment patterns develop in children whose parents are overly busy

and do not consider their children's needs. The actions of the parents can cause the children to feel scared, unsure, and puzzled, and they may also face feelings of being unwanted or dismissed. According to Behrens, Hesse and Main (2007), children who have an insecure anxious-avoidant attachment style do not rely on their attachment figures for either physical or emotional support. Even when facing difficult situations, they don't actively try to connect or reach out to their primary caregivers (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Children who experience anxious ambivalence display uncertainty and demonstrate indecisive behaviors in their interactions with their primary caregivers (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970). These children display clingy behavior and struggle to develop a sense of security with their primary caregiver. It can be difficult for these children to separate from their primary caregiver and venture into unfamiliar environments. Inconsistent responses from parents are responsible for such behaviours. According to Young et al. (2019), if secure attachment patterns are not formed during early life, it can lead to adverse effects during later childhood and maybe even in adulthood.

Despite earlier studies demonstrating the impact of father-child attachment on children's cognitive, psychological, and social growth, the majority of research on attachment has mainly focused on the attachment between mothers and children. As a result, there is a lack of investigation into the attachment between fathers and children (Mohd et al., 2018). A recent meta-analysis highlights this distinction. According to Tan et al. (2018), in a meta-analysis including 24 studies, half of them (12 studies) examined the impact of attachment security with fathers, while the vast majority (22 studies) focused on only mothers' attachment security. Frequently, the role of the primary caregiver is attributed to the mother figure, while the father figure is seen as having a less significant role in raising children. Attachment theory primarily emphasized the formation of a strong bond between the infant and their primary caregiver, which resulted in limited exploration of the specific dynamics of attachment between fathers and children.

Hazan and Shaver (1987) utilized Ainsworth's (1970) attachment styles and applied them to romantic relationships, relating them with people's emotional connections to their partners. The adult attachment has two dimensions, depending on individual differences. Attachment anxiety refers to a form of anxiety where individuals worry about their partners rejecting or excluding them. Campbell and Stanton (2019) suggest that one's level of attachment avoidance can be observed through their level of comfort in depending on a partner for support and reassurance, as well as their willingness to provide the same for their partner. Previous studies have also investigated the connection between parent-child attachment and the passing down of marital satisfaction across generations. These studies have discovered that the quality of the parents' marriage, is linked to the attachment between parents and children and ultimately affects children's romantic relationships.

Attachment and Romantic Relationships Linked

The level of attachment a person has towards their parents and romantic partners is connected to the overall quality and contentment of the romantic relationship (Crowell, Treboux & Brockmeyer, 2009; Steinberg et.al, 2006). According to Alexandrov, Cowan, and Cowan (2005), individuals who have secure attachment orientations tend to experience greater levels of satisfaction in their romantic relationships when compared with those who have insecure-anxious or insecure-avoidant attachment orientations. Individuals with a secure attachment style exhibit a greater display of positive emotions along with a reduced expression of negative emotions when compared with those who have an insecure attachment style.

According to Hazan and Shaver (1987), individuals that had a secure bond with

their parents described their feelings of love as amicable, joyful, and reliant. On the other hand, individuals who stated that they had avoidant attachment expressed a sense of apprehension towards forming emotional connections with their partners. Individuals with anxious or ambivalent attachment styles expressed experiencing fluctuating emotions in their relationships, feelings of mistrust, and a longing to seek new partners. When individuals have secure attachments, their relationships tend to be characterized by higher levels of trust, commitment, and durability (Hazan & Shaver, 1994).

Attachment is also linked to relationship stability. According to Young et al. (2019), individuals vary in their capacity to establish and sustain stable relationships and deal with emotional circumstances, which ultimately affects their ability to form close bonds with others. Research on relationship stability has found that various attachment patterns play a role in maintaining long-lasting romantic relationships, regardless of gender or relationship duration (Kirkpatrick & Davis, 1994). Secure attachments have been found to decrease the likelihood of divorce or separation in relationships (Feeney & Noller, 1990)

Recent studies have looked at the links between insecure attachment styles and various emotional states within romantic relationships, including both negative and positive aspects. Affective states and the quality of romantic relationships are negatively linked to insecure attachment patterns. For example, insecure attachment patterns have a negative impact on the quality of relationships and the experience of positive emotions in individuals (Meyer et al., 2015) Based on the findings of Crowell et al. (2009), individuals who enter into new marriages without a strong bond with their parents tend to have negative emotions related to closeness, engage in verbal arguments and aggression, and also are far more prone to divorce within the initial years of their marriage compared to those who have a secure parent-child attachment. Furthermore, insecure and anxious attachment patterns are linked to negative emotions, while avoidant attachment does not exhibit this association (Crowell et al., 2009). This research involved individuals involved in a wide variety of romantic relationships, ranging from those casually dating or even in non-committed partnerships to those who were fully committed and married. Additionally, the study included participants across a wide range of age groups, with some participants being quite advanced in age. The range varied between 18 and 78.

In a study conducted by Mikulincer and Shaver (2005), they found that people who have secure attachments have stronger positive emotional responses and enhance the overall quality of their romantic partnerships. People with a secure attachment style can overcome challenges in their relationships and restore emotional balance and stability as needed. Securely attached individuals also promote the personal growth of their partner, according to their findings.

However, individuals with insecure attachments displayed a limited range of emotions, which were affected by either an overly defensive or inactive attachment system. Individuals who had avoidant attachment styles displayed hostility, anger, self-pity, and malicious jealousy. While individuals with anxious attachment were surprised by the intense emotions they experienced in distressing situations within their relationships.

People with avoidant attachment struggle with getting close to others and are hesitant to form deep connections with their partners. The combination of these factors worsens the adverse consequences, leading to reduced quality within the relationship and a lack of communication both within and outside of the relationship (Stanton, Pink & Campbell, 2017). Furthermore, those who have avoidant attachment styles employ strategies that limit their ability to seek support from their partners and distance themselves from them (Campbell & Stanton,

2019). Individuals with an avoidant attachment style frequently perceive other individuals as being unreliable and unresponsive in their personal relationships. However, individuals with anxious attachment tendencies employ hyper-activating tactics to seek closeness and capture the attention of their partners and make use of comparable methods to capture the interest of their significant others (Chris Fraley, Hudson, Heffernan, & Segal, 2015). Individuals with anxious attachment styles experience fear and distress when they are separated from their romantic partners, and they have a strong desire for love and affection from their partner. Additionally, they tend to rely heavily on partners for emotional support and reassurance. (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005) They often attribute low self-worth to their partners' bad behavior and undermine the relationship.

In addition, attachment has been associated with the ability to resolve conflicts during early adulthood. According to Tastan (2013), there was a notable positive correlation between the bonding of fathers with their children and the ability to resolve conflicts positively and productively. How conflicts are resolved can have an impact on the quality of romantic relationships among young adults. Lopez, Brisson, and Yoder (2016) discovered that some aspects of the relationship between fathers and their children, including expressions of anger, trust levels, and the quality of communication, were significant indicators of delinquent behaviors exhibited by adolescents. Delinquency is often accompanied by learned conflict behaviours.

The connection between attachment and romantic attachment continues to be recorded in literature, but certain scientific studies have suggested that attachment styles may not be correlated with romantic relationships. In 2010, Furman and Winkles conducted a study comparing different aspects of romantic experiences such as friendships, physical attractiveness, cognitive factors, relational techniques with friends and parents, and how these factors are related to romantic relationships. The results of this study showed no correlation between attachment to parents and romantic relationships among adolescents.

The study conducted by Kobak and Rosenthal (2010) didn't find any link between parent-child attachment and young adults' romantic relationships. According to the authors, teenagers who were preoccupied at the age of 15 were more inclined to view a romantic partner as someone they could emotionally depend on. These findings may suggest that parents do not exert significant influence on the romantic relationships of children until late in young adulthood when relationships become much more stable (Connolly & McIsaac, 2011).

Cassidy (2001) suggested that when parents empathetically and consistently meet their children's needs, it can lead to the development of positive romantic traits like intimacy. Nevertheless, it is plausible to consider that attachment and relationship closeness may not have a strong connection in early adolescence. This is because, during this stage, romantic attachment may primarily revolve around companionship rather than deep emotional intimacy (Cassidy, 2001).

The Current Study

The present study aimed to investigate the interaction between parent-child attachment and romantic relationship quality of young dating adults. Informed by John Bowlby (1982)'s attachment theory and based on the reviewed literature, we hypothesized that:

H1. Young adults with avoidant attachment patterns with their mothers will have low relationship quality levels with their romantic partners.

H2. Young adults with avoidant attachment patterns with their fathers will have low relationship quality levels with their romantic partners.

H3 Young adults with anxious attachment patterns with their mothers will have

low relationship quality levels with their romantic partners.

H4 Young adults with anxious attachment patterns with their fathers will have low relationship quality levels with their romantic partners

It was hypothesized that insecure parent-child attachment; both anxious attachment and avoidant attachment will have a negative impact on their romantic relationship quality. Attachment theory suggests that attachment behaviours developed in childhood persist throughout life impacting their adult relationships.

Method

Participants

The research included a combined group of 463 individuals, specifically students, who were enrolled in 2 universities and 4 colleges located in the Maldives. The age range of the participants was between 18 and 25 years old. The study included only those participants who had been in a relationship for a minimum of three months. Excluded were participants that were divorced or not in a relationship at the time of data collection. From the total sample, there were 353 females (76.2 %) and 110 males (23.8%). The average age of the participants was 21.02 years. Out of the total 463 participants, 166 individuals were married or in a marital relationship, accounting for 35.9 % of the sample. On the other hand, 297 participants, making up 64.1 % of the sample, were involved in committed dating relationships.

Procedure

The study utilized a quantitative approach a questionnaire was used to collect data. The study employed a multi-stage cluster sampling method to select participants. As soon as the individuals involved in a romantic partnership had been verbally identified, they were provided with information about the research and then asked to give their consent by signing a form. Afterward, they were provided with a set of questions regarding their parents and themselves, a measure of parent-child attachment, and a scale assessing perceived relationship quality. The data that was gathered was subsequently examined by using the IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and also the SmartPLS 3.0 software. SmartPLS is a software program that employs the technique of structural equation modeling using partial least squares, as described by Hopkins, Sarstedt, Hair and Kuppelwieser (2014).

Measures

The Perceived relationship quality Component (PRQC) Inventory was used to measure the romantic Relationship Quality of the participants. Fletcher et al. (2000) developed PRQC, a tool composed of 18 questions that are rated on a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 indicates “not at all” and 7 represents “extremely.” The tool consists of six elements: Trust, Satisfaction, Dedication, Affection, Enthusiasm, and Devotion. Three items were used to measure each element using questions such as “how dedicated are you to your partner?”, “what is the level of your affection for your partner?” etc. The responses to these questions were calculated to generate a score, with higher scores indicating a more positive romantic relationship. The scale’s alpha coefficient was recorded as 0.88.

The Attachment to Parent/Caregiver Inventory (APCI) is comprised of 27 questions that assess the present level of attachment that emerging adults have towards their main parent or caregiver, as outlined by Hu (2009). This rating scale

is known as a Likert scale, where individuals are required to provide ratings ranging from 1 (“Strongly disagree”) to 7 (“Strongly agree”). There are two subscales within the APCI: the APCI Avoidance subscale and the APCI Anxiety subscale. The Avoidance subscale assesses the level of unease individuals experience regarding the proximity between the offspring and their parent or caregiver, and it comprises a total of 20 items. Items 1, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, and 16 were reverse-coded and totaled to get an overall avoidant attachment score. This subscale suggests that higher scores indicate a greater tendency towards avoidance attachment. The Attachment Avoidant subscale’s alpha coefficient was recorded as 0.98.

The anxiety subscale consisted of seven questions that assessed the level of distress experienced as a result of the caregiver’s absence and the caregiver’s ability to fulfill attachment-related responsibilities. The total score for anxious attachment was determined by summing the responses on the items within this specific subscale. The higher subscale scores indicate greater anxious attachment. The Attachment anxiety subscale’s alpha coefficient was recorded as 0.84.

Results

The respondents’ relationship statuses were diverse. Two hundred and ninety-seven people (64.1 %) were in a dating relationship, while 166 individuals (35.9 %) were married to their partner. Each participant in the research has been in a dedicated romantic partnership for more than 3 months. Approximately 39 % of participants were in a romantic relationship for less than one year. Participants were on average 21.02 years old. Results also revealed that 64 (13.8%) respondents’ parents have never been divorced. However, the larger proportion, 399 (86.2%) of the parents have been divorced one or more times. The analysis shows that the majority of the participants in this study have experienced their parents’ divorce at least once before they reached 18 years.

As seen in Table 1, three hundred ninety-six (85.5 %) participants had a low level of relationship quality with their present partners. In comparison, 51 individuals (1.0 %) expressed that their relationship quality was satisfactory, while 16 individuals (25.9 %) stated that their relationship quality was exceptional (with an average score of 1.18 and a standard deviation of 0.466).

Furthermore, 48.4 % of the participants exhibited minimal levels of anxious attachment to their mothers, which amounts to 224 individuals. In contrast, a total of 150 participants (32.4 %) reported having a moderate degree of anxious attachment with their mothers, whereas 89 participants (19.2 %) reported having a high degree of anxious attachment with their mothers. Most of the respondents indicated experiencing moderate to high degrees of insecure anxious attachment with their mother. The majority of respondents, 300 participants (64.8 %), indicated that they have a minimal anxious attachment to their fathers. Hundred and fifty-one (32.6 %) individuals exhibited a moderate degree of anxious attachment to their fathers, whereas only 12 individuals (2.6 %) displayed a high level of anxious attachment to their fathers.

The analysis of the mother’s level of avoidant attachment with their children revealed that most participants reported moderate 199 (43.0%) to high 177 (38.2%) levels of avoidant attachment with the mother and 87 (18.8%) participants reported low levels of avoidant attachment with the mother. Similarly, the analysis of avoidant attachment levels with the father also showed that most participants had moderate 181 (39.1%) to high 162 (35.0%) levels of avoidant attachment with the father, and 120 (25.9%) participants reported low levels of avoidant attachment with the father.

Table 1

Summary of levels, the mean and standard deviation of perceived relationship quality, anxious attachment (father and mother), and avoidant attachment (father and mother)

Levels	Frequency	%	Mean	SD
Perceived Relationship Quality			1.18	0.466
Low	396	85.5		
Moderate	51	11.0		
High	16	3.5		
Anxious Attachment (Father)			1.38	0.536
Low	300	64.8		
Moderate	151	32.6		
High	12	2.6		
Anxious Attachment (Mother)			1.71	0.770
Low	224	48.4		
Moderate	150	32.4		
High	89	19.2		
Avoidant Attachment (Father)			2.09	0.776
Low	120	25.9		
Moderate	181	39.1		
High	162	35.0		
Avoidant Attachment (Mother)			2.19	0.730
Low	87	18.8		
Moderate	199	43.0		
High	177	38.2		

Measurement Model

We examined the measurement model before analyzing the structural model. Two models were run; model one was run for attachment with mother and model two was run for attachment with father. Table 2 and Table 3 present the reliability of the constructs and also the extent to which they converge with each other, as measured in this research. Table 2 shows that the constructs of Relationship Quality (RQ) Anxious Attachment with Mother (ANX-M) and Avoidant Attachment with Mother (AVO-M) have strong internal consistency, as indicated by their high composite reliability values of 0.788, 0.861, and 0.794, respectively. Table 3 shows the constructs of Relationship Quality (RQ) and Anxious Attachment with Father (ANX-F) and Avoidant Attachment with Father (AVO-F) show strong internal consistency, as indicated by their high composite reliability values of 0.788, 0.817, and 0.749, respectively.

Table 2

Internal consistency and convergent validity of the full measurement model 1 (Mother)

Construct	Item	Loading	AVE	CR
Relationship Quality (RQ)	Satisfaction	0.953	0.788	0.957
	Commitment	0.898		
	Intimacy	0.917		
	Passion	0.834		
	Love	0.906		
	Trust	0.813		
Anxious Attachment with Mother (ANX-M)	APCI_M2	0.941	0.861	0.969
	APCI_M4	0.945		
	APCI_M8	0.860		
	APCI_M10	0.949		
	APCI_M12	0.942		
	APCI_M3	0.849		
APCI_M5	0.900			
APCI_M7	0.900			
APCI_M9	0.914			
APCI_M11	0.883			
APCI_M13	0.907			
APCI_M15	0.889			
APCI_M16	0.921			
APCI_M17	0.903			
APCI_M18	0.749			
APCI_M19	0.910			
APCI_M20	0.792			
APCI_M21	0.906			
APCI_M22	0.926			
APCI_M23	0.910			
APCI_M24	0.902			
APCI_M25	0.917			
APCI_M26	0.907			
APCI_M27	0.919			

Table 3

Internal consistency and convergent validity of the full measurement model 2 (Father)

Construct	Item	Loading	AVE	CR
Relationship Quality (RQ)	Satisfaction	0.953	0.788	0.957
	Commitment	0.898		
	Intimacy	0.917		
	Passion	0.834		
	Love	0.906		
	Trust	0.809		
Anxious Attachment with Father (ANX- F)	APCI_F4	0.926	0.817	0.947
	APCI_F8	0.913		
	APCI_F12	0.878		
	APCI_F14	0.898		
	APCI_F1	0.729		
Avoidant Attachment with Father (AVO- F)	APCI_F3	0.873	0.749	0.983
	APCI_F5	0.833		
	APCI_F7	0.891		
	APCI_F9	0.890		
	APCI_F11	0.890		
	APCI_F13	0.832		
	APCI_F15	0.848		
	APCI_F16	0.888		
	APIC_F17	0.776		
	APCI_F18	0.885		
	APCI_F19	0.837		
	APCI_F20	0.892		
	APCI_F21	0.889		
	APCI_F22	0.886		
	APCI_F23	0.871		
APCI_F24	0.895			
APCI_F25	0.898			
APCI_F26	0.901			
APCI_F27	0.880			

Similarly, every construct attains a minimum level of 0.5 for the extracted average variance (AVE), which indicates satisfactory convergent validity. This implies that over 50 % of the constructs' variance is accounted for by the items (Hair et al., 2014). Tables 4 to 7 display the evaluation of discriminant validity, using the Fornell and Larcker (1981) and HTMT criterion (Henseler, & Sarstedt, Ringle, 2015).

Table 4
Fornell-Larcker Criterion for Model One (Mother-Child Attachment)

	ANX (M)	AVO (M)	RQ
ANX (M)	0.928		
AVO (M)	0.136	0.891	
RQ	- 0.345	- 0.41	0.888

Notes: Diagonal elements represent the square root of AVE. Off-diagonal elements are simple bivariate correlations between the constructs. ANX (M) =Anxious Attachment (Mother), AVO (M) =Avoidant Attachment (Mother), RQ= Relationship Quality

Table 5
Fornell-Larcker Criterion for Model Two (Father-Child Attachment)

	ANX (F)	AVO (F)	RQ
ANX (F)	0.904		
AVO (F)	0.005	0.865	
RQ	- 0.286	- 0.392	0.888

Notes: Diagonal elements represent the square root of AVE. Off-diagonal elements are simple bivariate correlations between the constructs. ANX (F) =Anxious Attachment (Father), AVO (F) =Avoidant Attachment (Father), RQ= Relationship Quality

Table 6
Heterotrait Monotrait Ratio (HTMT.90) for Model One (Mother)

	ANX (M)	AVO (M)	RQ
ANX (M)			
AVO (M)	0.131		
RQ	0.356	0.406	

Notes: ANX (M) =Anxious Attachment (Mother), AVO (M) =Avoidant Attachment (Mother), RQ= Relationship Quality

Table 7
Heterotrait Monotrait Ratio (HTMT.90) for Model Two (Father)

	ANX (M)	AVO (M)	RQ
ANX (F)			
AVO (F)	0.040		
RQ	0.303	0.402	

Notes: ANX (F) =Anxious Attachment (Father), AVO (F) =Avoidant Attachment (Father), RQ= Relationship Quality

According to Tables 4 and 5, the square roots of AVE for every construct are greater than the predicted correlation of the construct, suggesting that there are differences between all of the constructs. It can be inferred that each construct within the model represents a distinct phenomenon that is not duplicated by any other constructs (Hair et al., 2014). Moreover, the correlation values between the constructs don't exceed the minimum HTMT_{0.90} criterion (Tables 6 and 7), indicating that they are within an acceptable range.

Structural Model - Hypothesis Testing

Both structural models were collinearity tested before assessment. The VIF values for all constructs were below the threshold of 3.3, indicating that there have been no problems with collinearity. (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2006). The direct relationships between the variables are shown in Table 5.

Table 8
Direct Relationships

Hypothesis	Relationship	Direct Effect (B)	Standard Error (SE)	T-Statistics	P-Values	Relationship Established
H1	AV(M)-> RQ	- 0.102	0.026	4.670**	0.000	Yes
H2	AV(F)-> RQ	- 0.153	0.028	5.532**	0.000	Yes
H3	AX(M)-> RQ	- 0.169	0.024	7.071**	0.000	Yes
H4	AX(F)-> RQ	- 0.184	0.023	7.975**	0.000	Yes

* $P < 0.05$ ** $P < 0.01$

RQ = Relationship Quality, AVO (M) = Avoidant Attachment (mother) AVO (F) = Avoidant Attachment (Father), ANX (M) = Anxious Attachment (Mother), ANX (F) = Anxious Attachment (Father)

Table 8 summarizes the findings of the research suggesting that there is a direct correlation between the quality of romantic relationships in young adults and mother-child avoidant attachment (AV (M)) ($B = -0.102$, $t = 4.670$, $p < 0.000$). The findings also indicate that there is a correlation between father-child avoidant attachment (AV (F)) ($B = -0.153$, $t = 5.532$, $p < 0.000$) and the quality of the romantic relationship of young individuals. These findings suggest that the high level of avoidant attachment to both parents among the participants is related to their present romantic relationship quality.

Furthermore, as seen from Table 6, anxious attachment with mother (AX (M)) ($B = -0.169$, $t = 7.071$, $p < 0.000$) also showed an association between mother-child anxious attachment and romantic relationship quality of young adults. Likewise, anxious attachment to the father (AX (F)) ($B = -0.184$, $t = 7.975$, $p < 0.000$) was also associated with the romantic relationship quality of young adults, implicating high levels of anxious attachment with both parents, contributing to poor romantic relationships among young adults

Discussion

The present research investigated the link between parent-child attachment and the quality of romantic relationships during early adulthood. After reviewing the current literature, we put forward the notion that the attachment between parents and their children, known as parent-child Attachment, would influence the quality of romantic relationships among young adults. This hypothesis which was driven by attachment theory was supported by the results of this study. Anxious attachment to the mother, as well as the father, has a significant correlation with the quality of romantic relationships in young adults. Furthermore, the results also showed a significant association between avoidant attachment with mother and as well as father and the quality of romantic relationships of young adults.

Attachment securities or insecurities are usually used as the primary measure for assessing the quality of the parent-child relationship during infancy and childhood. According to Davies and Sturge-Apple (2007) and Marvin and Britner (2008),

having a secure attachment is seen as crucial for children's future ability to adapt or potentially develop maladaptive behaviors. As mentioned earlier, Bowlby's (1982) research has previously pointed out that the influence of parent-child attachment persists throughout one's life. According to Hazan and Shaver (1987), Parent-child attachment has a direct impact on the romantic relationships of young adults.

The findings of the current study implicate high levels of avoidant attachment with both mother and father among the participants, which has been associated with their current romantic relationship quality. These findings are somewhat consistent with Fraley, Roisman, and Haltigan, (2013) study where it was found that participants reporting insecure attachment styles with their parents also reported insecure attachment in their adult relationships. People with avoidant attachment styles experience more difficulty in establishing romantic relationships and are likely to have more negative feelings, lower satisfaction with their romantic relationships, and less likely to disclose personal information (Stanton et al., 2017).

Compared to anxious attachment, avoidant attachment is a stronger risk factor in determining the quality of a relationship. Having a higher tendency towards avoidant attachment significantly affects the quality of romantic relationships among young adults, particularly in terms of how connected they feel to their partners, the level of support they receive, and their overall satisfaction in the relationship Chan (2012). An interesting factor highlighted by Fraley et al. (2013), is that individuals who experience their parents' divorce during their childhood are more prone to display unhealthy attachment styles, during childhood as well as in their young adulthood. Since divorce is extremely high in Maldives and many children experience divorce as children (Shanoora et al., 2020), it may be a factor that may have contributed to unhealthy attachment style with their parents, which is being reflected in the quality of their current romantic relationship as well.

People who have an avoidant attachment style often fear getting close to their partners because they feel alone in their relationship. They may also perceive their relationship as unequal, leading them to adopt a dismissive attitude, which impacts the quality of their romantic relationship.

The present research did not demonstrate a significant distinction between mother-child avoidant attachment and father-child avoidant attachment and the relationship it had with the quality of romantic relationships with their romantic partners. The findings show that when there is high levels of avoidant attachment there is an impact on the quality of romantic relationship.

Another interesting finding of the study is that similar to avoidant attachment with mother and father, anxious attachment with parents also has an impact on the quality of young adults' romantic relationships. Ainsworth and Bell (1970), reported that children who are anxiously attached to their parents are increasingly clingy due to their lack of trust in their parents. Feeney and Noller (1990) suggest that when these children grow up, they might notice similar patterns of insecure and anxious attachment to their partners, leading to a lack of strong desire and commitment to the relationship, which ultimately impacts the overall quality of the romantic relationship.

Individuals with anxious attachment experience fluctuating emotions, feelings of jealousy, and a desire to switch partners. Individuals with insecure attachment styles have a negative impact on the quality of their romantic relationships, as they tend to experience a lot more conflicts, (Li & Chan's, 2012).

Interestingly, the romantic relationship quality of young adults was directly influenced by both avoidant attachment and anxious attachment despite which parent it was. This highlights the importance of building secure attachments with children at a younger age. The foundations that are laid during their childhood shape the relationships they have when they grow older. In Maldives, due to

several reasons, sometimes, parents are not able to give the time to build healthy relationships with their children. Often leading the children to avoid the parents and not able to build the trust or the attachment that they need to secure future relationships.

Limitations

When interpreting the results, it is important to recognize the limitations of this study. Initially, this study relied on retrospective self-reports as the means of measurement, with participants reporting on both their parent-child attachment and the quality of their romantic relationships. This could potentially have an exaggerated connection between concepts. Furthermore, the study's sample size was only 463, which means it lacks sufficient magnitude to draw powerful generalizations. Additionally, the sample used in the study had a significant gender imbalance. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies include larger samples that better reflect the overall population, with a more equal representation of both genders.

Implications

The negative impact of having a low-quality relationship due to insecure attachment styles extends beyond just the individuals who are part of it. Society is also negatively impacted by it. People experiencing a challenging period in their relationship endure significant levels of pressure and worry, which impacts their daily existence. Moreover, it affects their work efficiency and, possibly the most crucial, their loved ones - comprising their offspring and intimate acquaintances. They are exposed to stress. To reduce the chance of a detrimental effect on the quality of a relationship, it is important to recognize and comprehend the elements that enhance its quality.

This research did not look into the reasons behind an insecure attachment, but it is feasible that unsatisfactory relationships could have played a role, as indicated by earlier studies (Cui et al., 2008). For example, parental divorce has a direct impact on the children of the parents involved. The period before and after divorce is frequently marked by multiple disputes.

The couple is so involved in the conflict and complicated divorce process that it can sometimes affect the bond or attachment between parents and children. The entire procedure causes the children to feel bewildered, and they frequently hold themselves responsible for the separation. These experiences may be carried over to their adult relationships building a cycle that may be difficult to break. The results of this study indicate a negative correlation between parent-child attachment and the quality of romantic relationships. Hence, individuals might benefit from this. They may find it useful to apply these to their relationships to minimize the risks of unhealthy relationships.

Conclusions

Despite the constraints, this study expands upon and enhances prior research regarding the connection between parent-child attachment and the quality of romantic relationships. The results indicate that there is a correlation between parent-child attachment and the overall quality of their romantic relationship. However, it is important to note that these findings didn't differentiate between the attachment between the mother and child as opposed to the attachment between

the father and child. Any insecure attachment bond, whether it is a father or mother directly impacts the romantic relationship quality of the young adult.

Declaration

This article is centered around two factors that were explored in my doctoral dissertation: the attachment between parents and children, and the quality of their romantic partnership.

References

- Ainsworth, M. D. S. (1989). Attachment Beyond Infancy. *Am. Psychol.*, 44(4), 709-716.
- Ainsworth, M. D. S., & Bell, S. M. (1970). Attachment, Exploration, and Separation: Illustrated by the Behaviour of One-Year-Olds in a Strange Situation. *Child Development*, 41(1), 49-67. doi:10.2307/1127388
- Ainsworth, M. D. S., Blehar, M. C., Waters, E., & Wall, S. N. (1978). *Patterns of Attachment: A Psychological Study of the Strange Situation*: Oxford, England: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Alexandrov, E. O., Cowan, P. A., & Cowan, C. P. (2005). Couple attachment and the quality of marital relationships: Method and concept in the validation of the new couple attachment interview and coding system. *Attachment & Human Development*, 7(2), 123-152. doi:10.1080/14616730500155170
- Behrens, K. Y., Hesse, E., & Main, M. (2007). Mothers' Attachment Status as Determined by the Adult Attachment Interview Predicts Their 6-Year-Olds' Reunion Responses: A Study Conducted in Japan. *Developmental psychology*, 43(6), 1553-1567. doi:10.1037/0012-1649.43.6.1553
- Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss*. Harmondsworth, Mddx.: Harmondsworth, Mddx., Penguin.
- Bowlby, J. (1982). Attachment and loss: retrospect and prospect. *The American journal of orthopsychiatry*, 52(4), 664-678. doi:10.1111/j.1939-0025.1982.tb01456.x
- Buist, K. I., Dekovic, M., Meeus, W., & van Aken, M. (2002). Developmental patterns in adolescent attachment to mother, father and sibling. *J. Youth Adolesc.*, 31(3), 167-176.
- Campbell, L., & Stanton, S. C. (2019). Adult attachment and trust in romantic relationships. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 25, 148-151. doi:10.1016/j.copsyc.2018.08.004
- Cassidy, J. (2001). Truth, lies, and intimacy: An attachment perspective. *Attachment & Human Development*, 3(2), 121-155. doi:10.1080/14616730110058999
- Chris Fraley, R., Hudson, N., Heffernan, M., & Segal, N. (2015). Are Adult Attachment Styles Categorical or Dimensional? A Taxometric Analysis of

- General and Relationship-Specific Attachment Orientations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 109. doi:10.1037/pspp0000027
- Collins, W. A., & vanDulmen, M. (2015). "The Course of True Love(s) . . ." In A. Booth, A. C. Crouter, & A. Snyder (Eds.), *Romance and sex in adolescence and emerging adulthood : risks and opportunities* (pp. 63-86): London, England : Routledge.
- Connolly, J., & McIsaac, C. (2011). Romantic relationships in adolescence. In M. K. Underwood & L. H. Rosen (Eds.), *Social development : relationships in infancy, childhood, and adolescence* (pp. 180-203). New York: New York : Guilford Press.
- Crowell, J. A., Treboux, D., & Brockmeyer, S. (2009). Parental divorce and adult children's attachment representations and marital status. *Attachment & Human Development*, 11(1), 87-101. doi:10.1080/14616730802500867
- Cui, M., Fincham, F. D., & Pasley, B. K. (2008). Young Adult Romantic Relationships: The Role of Parents' Marital Problems and Relationship Efficacy. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 34(9), 1226-1235. doi:10.1177/0146167208319693
- Davies, P. T., & Sturge-Apple, M. L. (2007). Advances in the formulation of emotional security theory: An ethologically based perspective. In *Advances in child development and behaviour*, Vol. 35 (pp. 87-137). San Diego, CA, US: Elsevier Academic Press.
- Diamantopoulos, A., & Sigauw, J. A. (2006). Formative Versus Reflective Indicators in Organizational Measure Development: A Comparison and Empirical Illustration. *British Journal of Management*, 17(4), 263-282. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8551.2006.00500.x
- Feeney, J., & Noller, P. (1990). Attachment style as a predictor of adult romantic relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 58(2), 281-291.
- Fletcher, G. J. O., & Simpson, J. A. (2000). Ideal Standards in Close Relationships: Their Structure and Functions. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 9(3), 102-105. doi:10.1111/1467-8721.00070
- Fletcher, G. J. O., Simpson, J. A., & Thomas, G. (2000). The Measurement of Perceived Relationship Quality Components: A Confirmatory Factor Analytic Approach. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 26(3), 340-354. doi:10.1177/0146167200265007
- Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. (1981). Evaluating Structural Equation Models with Unobservable Variables and Measurement Error. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18(1), 39. doi:10.2307/3151312
- Fraley, R. C., Roisman, G. I., & Haltigan, J. D. (2013). The legacy of early experiences in development: formalizing alternative models of how early experiences are carried forward over time. *Developmental psychology*, 49(1), 109-126. doi:10.1037/a0027852

- Fraley, R. C., & Shaver, P. R. (2000). Adult Romantic Attachment: Theoretical Developments, Emerging Controversies, and Unanswered Questions. *Review of General Psychology*, 4(2), 132-154. doi:10.1037/1089-2680.4.2.132
- Furman, W., & Winkles, J. K. (2010). Predicting romantic involvement, relationship cognitions, and relationship qualities from physical appearance, perceived norms, and relational styles regarding friends and parents. *Journal of Adolescence*, 33(6), 827-836. doi:10.1016/j.adolescence.2010.07.004
- Griffith, B. A. (2004). The structure and development of internal working models: an integrated framework for understanding clients and promoting wellness. *Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education and Development*, 43(2), 163. doi:10.1002/j.2164-490X.2004.tb00016.x
- Hair, J., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C., & Sarstedt, M. (2014). *A Primer on Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling*.
- Hair, J., Sarstedt, M., Hopkins, L., & Kuppelwieser, V. (2014). Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM): An Emerging Tool for Business Research. *European Business Review*, 26, 106-121. doi:10.1108/EBR-10-2013-0128
- Hazan, C., & Shaver, P. (1987). Romantic Love Conceptualized as an Attachment Process. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 52(3), 511-524. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.52.3.511
- Hazan, C., & Shaver, P. R. (1994). Attachment as an Organizational Framework for Research on Close Relationships. *Psychological Inquiry*, 5(1), 1-22. doi:10.1207/s15327965pli0501_1
- Henseler, J., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2015). A new criterion for assessing discriminant validity in variance-based structural equation modeling. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 43(1), 115-135. doi:10.1007/s11747-014-0403-8
- Hetherington, E. M., & Kelly, J. (2003). *For Better Or for Worse: Divorce Reconsidered*: W.W. Norton.
- Hu, C.-C. (2009). Construction and validation of attachment to parent/caregiver inventory (APCI). In C. Pistole, K. Kelly, H. Servaty-Seib, & S. Whiteman (Eds.): ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Kerns, K. A., Brumariu, L. E., & Seibert, A. (2011). Multi-method assessment of mother-child attachment: Links to parenting and child depressive symptoms in middle childhood. *Attachment & Human Development*, 13(4), 315-333. doi:10.1080/14616734.2011.584398
- Kirkpatrick, L. A., & Davis, K. E. (1994). Attachment style, gender, and relationship stability: a longitudinal analysis. (*Interpersonal Relations and Group Processes*). *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 66(3), 502.
- Kochendorfer, L., & Kerns, K. (2017). Perceptions of Parent-Child Attachment Relationships and Friendship Qualities: Predictors of Romantic Relationship

- Involvement and Quality in Adolescence. A Multidisciplinary Research Publication, 46(5), 1009-1021. doi:10.1007/s10964-017-0645-0
- Li, T., & Chan, D. K. S. (2012). How anxious and avoidant attachment affect romantic relationship quality differently: A meta-analytic review. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 42(4), 406-419. doi:10.1002/ejsp.1842
- Marvin, R. S., & Britner, P. A. (2008). Normative Development: The Ontogeny of Attachment. In J. Cassidy & P. R. Shaver (Eds.), *Handbook of attachment: Theory, research, and clinical applications* (pp. 269-290). New York, London: The Guilford Press.
- Mertler, C. A., & Charles, C. M. (2011). *Introduction to Educational Research: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon*.
- Meyer, D. D., Jones, M., Rorer, A., & Maxwell, K. (2015). Examining the Associations Among Attachment, Affective State, and Romantic Relationship Quality. *The Family Journal*, 23(1), 18-25. doi:10.1177/1066480714547698
- Mikulincer, M., & Shaver, P. R. (2005). Attachment theory and emotions in close relationships: Exploring the attachment-related dynamics of emotional reactions to relational events. *Personal Relationships*, 12(2), 149-168. doi:10.1111/j.1350-4126.2005.00108.x
- Mohd, H., Marshina, J., Mustafa, H., & Hashim, N. H. (2018). From Middle Childhood to Adulthood Attachment: Measuring Attachment Stability in the Context of Married Individuals in Penang, Malaysia. *The Family Journal*, 26(4), 444-454. doi:10.1177/1066480718806522
- Ringle, C. M., Wende, S., & Becker, J.-M. (2015). *SmartPLS 3*. Boenningstedt: SmartPLS GmbH, www.smartpls.com.
- Rosenthal, N. L., & Kobak, R. (2010). Assessing Adolescents' Attachment Hierarchies: Differences Across Developmental Periods and Associations With Individual Adaptation. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 20(3), 678-706. doi:10.1111/j.1532-7795.2010.00655.x
- Shanoora, A., Hamsan, H. H., Abdullah, H., & Khir, A. M. (2020). Which is Worse; Divorce or Conflict? Parental Divorce, Interparental Conflict, and its Impact on Romantic Relationship Quality of Young Dating Adults in the Maldives. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 10(15), 325-339.
- Stanton, S. C. E., Campbell, L., & Pink, J. C. (2017). Benefits of Positive Relationship Experiences for Avoidantly Attached Individuals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 113(4), 568-588. doi:10.1037/pspi0000098
- Steinberg, S. J., Davila, J., & Fincham, F. (2006). Adolescent marital expectations and romantic experiences: Associations with perceptions about parental conflict and adolescent attachment security. *J Youth Adolesc*, 35(3), 314-329. doi:10.1007/s10964-006-9042-9
- Tan, E. S., McIntosh, J. E., Kothe, E. J., Opie, J. E., & Olsson, C. A. (2018). Couple

relationship quality and offspring attachment security: a systematic review with meta-analysis. *Attachment & Human Development*, 20(4), 349-377. doi:10.1080/14616734.2017.1401651

Tastan, N. (2013). Effect of father-child bonding on conflict resolution during emerging adulthood. *Social Behaviour and Personality: an international journal*, 41(8), 1339. doi:10.2224/sbp.2013.41.8.1339

Toro, M. D. (2012). The Influence of Parent-Child Attachment on Romantic Relationships.

Yoder, J. R., Brisson, D., & Lopez, A. (2016). Moving Beyond Fatherhood Involvement: The Association Between Father-Child Relationship Quality and Youth Delinquency Trajectories. *Family Relations*, 65(3), 462-476. doi:10.1111/fare.12197