



Forms of Parent-Child Attachments Possessed Among Grade 10 Learners in South Africa

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Abstract

The study aimed to investigate forms of parent-child attachments possessed among Grade 10 Learners in Sedibeng West Township schools, South Africa. A multiple case study research design was utilized. The sampling frame comprised 6 Life-Orientation teachers, 18 grade 10 learners, and 3 deputy principals from 3 selected secondary schools in the Sedibeng West district. Six Life-Orientation teachers, that is two from each school, were chosen using a purposive sampling technique. Data collection from all participants was conducted using semi-structured interviews. The data obtained from interviews was analyzed thematically. The findings revealed that learners exhibited both secure and insecure attachment types in their home environments. The findings also indicated that secure learners possess qualities such as self-assurance, respectfulness, confidence, active participation in class, and proficiency in both formal and informal assessments. The findings indicated that the learners exhibited diverse insecure attachment styles within their households. The study recommended training parents in effective parenting techniques and raising awareness in the community about creating secure homes.

Keywords: Forms, Parent-Child Attachments, Grade 10, Learners, South Africa

Introduction

Attachment is a crucial notion in the progression of children, and it aids in studying the growth of persons from infancy to adulthood. Attachment refers to the inclination of young children to actively seek out and establish a connection with one or more reliable caregivers, finding comfort in their interactions (Fearon & Roisman, 2017). Extensive research spanning several decades has demonstrated a strong correlation between attachment security and a wide range of long-term child outcomes, such as academic achievement and social competence. Simultaneously, attachment can have an impact on children's academic performance and social skills in school. Attachment is a significant developmental milestone in a child's life and continues to be an important issue throughout their entire lifespan (Duchesne & Larose, 2007). The term attachment refers to the tendency of humans to develop intense emotional connections with individuals upon whom they depend for safety, comfort, and support from early stages of life (Tomlinson & Murray, 2010). In this study, the term "attachment caregivers" refers to parents/guardians and instructors who provide care for learners, whether it be at home or at school. Attachment relationships in children are distinguished by particular behaviors, such as displaying a preference for or seeking comfort from the attachment figure when feeling frightened or unhappy, and utilizing the attachment figure as a solid foundation while exploring their surroundings.

Being attached to someone refers to having a strong inclination to seek closeness and interaction with a particular someone, especially when experiencing fear, fatigue, or illness (Bowlby, 1969/1982: 371). Moreover, attachment is a person's connection with their social network and the emotional bond they may have with one or more important individuals who are perceived as more powerful or knowledgeable. These individuals can provide protection from harm and a secure place to explore the surroundings, which contributes to personal development

in daily life (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). This study specifically examined the third aspect of Shulman's (1987) research, which is the understanding of learners and the process of learning. This part has been somewhat neglected throughout the years, in contrast to the other two components, namely (1) content knowledge and (2) general and specific pedagogical knowledge. Understanding learners and the learning process involves a deep understanding of diagnosing human learning, motivation, and child development. According to Nezhad and Vahedi (2011), it is crucial to train instructors to become proficient in identifying and analyzing learners and their learning processes. This is a necessary component in improving teacher education and ongoing professional growth.

The existing literature on social competencies presents inconsistent findings, with few material specifically pertaining to the South African setting. This PhD study aimed to address this research vacuum. Recent research conducted in South Africa has revealed that attachment types exert a substantial influence on several elements of learners' life, both within and outside of the school environment. Zaidman-Mograbi et al., (2020) conducted a study in South Africa that highlighted the need of taking local settings into account when examining attachment and maternal sensitivity. Similarly, a study conducted by Thandiswa et al., (2022) in South Africa found a substantial positive link between love types and attachment behavior. In a study conducted in South Africa, Ebere et al., (2022) proposed that there is a positive correlation between parent-child attachment and both self-efficacy and social skills. A recent study conducted by Schuitmaker et al., (2023) in South Africa emphasized the significance of taking into account the potential influence of insecure attachment styles on post-traumatic growth. This understanding could be valuable in guiding the treatment of individuals who have experienced trauma. Although there have been new efforts to study attachment, there is a lack of literature on social competency and how schools might serve as solid grounds for students with unfavorable attachments. The objective of this study was to investigate forms of parent-child attachments possessed among Grade 10 learners in South Africa.

Literature Review

Literature indicates that attachments patterns play key roles in the lives of learners. Secure attachment patterns produce beneficial outcomes, while insecure attachment styles lead to harmful repercussions (Kerns & Brumariu, 2014). Individuals with safe attachment patterns tend to have relationships that are marked by positivity and good mental and physical health. They have a profound sense of ease in forming intimate bonds with others and can trust them. Individuals that have stable attachment exhibit adept emotional regulation skills, which allow them to efficiently manage stress and conquer challenges with resilience. Cultivating a secure relationship cultivates a positive self-perception and enhances overall well-being and self-assurance (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2020). Stevenson-Hinde and Verschuere et al., (2006) propose that avoidant behaviour serves as a protective response to unresponsiveness and rage. The youngsters inhibit their adverse emotions when in the company of the unsupportive attachment figure, in order to avoid the possibility of being rejected or separated from them. In addition, individuals who are anxious or ambivalent may display certain characteristics such as emotions of jealousy and possessiveness inside their relationships. Individuals may exhibit heightened sensitivity towards perceived dangers to the relationship and display intense reactions towards actual or perceived rivalry for attention (Buunk & Massar, 2023). Individuals may exhibit a proclivity to excessively scrutinize relationships and construe confusing events in a pessimistic manner. Disorganized attachment commonly arises when the child's caregiver serves as both a refuge and a cause of peril or apprehension (Reisz, Duschinsky & Siegel 2018). On one side of the spectrum, this can manifest as violent family systems, but it can also arise in less severe contexts characterized by significant dysfunction, chaos, or high levels of stress. The youngster experiences inner anguish due to the unpredictability and volatility, as they feel torn between seeking safety from their parents and being uncertain about the response they will receive.

Methods

Research Design

The study employed multiple case-study research design. Creswell (1998), as referenced by Fouche (2005), proposed the concept of qualitative research as a study conducted inside a single environment or with a limited number of participants. This study consisted of a multiple case study with a limited and appropriate sample size of participants.

Participants

The sampling frame comprised 27 participants, including 6 life orientation teachers, 18 grade 10 learners, and 3 deputy principals from 3 specifically chosen secondary schools in the Sedibeng West district. Six Life-Orientation teachers, two from each school, were chosen using purposive sampling technique. The criteria for selecting teachers required a minimum of 3 years of teaching experience, preferably within the same school or in general.

The choice of the 6 teachers was made using purposive sampling technique, based on the belief that Life-Orientation teachers have a significant impact on the overall development of students.

A purposive sample strategy was used to pick 18 grade 10 learners, with 6 learners selected from each school. The participants were chosen based on their insecure attachment histories in their homes and their display of antisocial behavior in schools.

Data collection methods

Data from deputy principals and teachers were collected using semi-structured interviews. Walliman (2009) asserts that semi-structured interviews are a versatile instrument that can provide a more comprehensive and abundant dataset compared to other methods of data collection. Semi-structured interviews enable researchers to gain a perspective on the world through the participants' eyes and provide interviewers with an opportunity to express their perspectives (Cohen et al., 2011).

Data analysis

The data obtained from semi-structured interviews was evaluated thematically, using research questions as a framework (Cohen et al., 2011). Thematic analysis involves the process of recognizing and evaluating patterns of significance derived from collected data. The process of thematic analysis consists of several stages, including becoming acquainted with the data, coding, generating and searching for themes, reviewing the themes, defining the themes, and producing the final report.

Findings

The study explored the forms of parent-child attachments possessed among grade 10 learners in Sedibeng west township schools in South Africa. The data from learners, teachers, and deputy principals was analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings derived from the themes revealed that the types of parent-child attachments commonly observed among learners encompass secure, avoidant-dismissive, anxious, and disorganized/fearful attachment patterns. The themes are presented and addressed in the following manner:

Theme 1: Secure attachment style

Secure attachment pertains to children who depend on their caregivers to exhibit anguish upon separation and happiness upon reunion. Despite the child's distress, they have confidence that the caregiver will come back. Securely linked children, when experiencing fear, feel at ease in seeking reassurance from their caregivers. A caregiver who is sensitive demonstrates the ability to see and understand the signals given by the kid, empathizes with the child's point of view, and promptly and correctly meets the child's needs (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). Out of the eighteen learner participants, eleven of them hailed from homes with secure attachments. The interview findings indicated affection and a sense of safety. The following interview excerpts from participants who discussed secure attachments are provided below: *"The relationship that I share with my mother is very strong. I am never bored when I am with her. I share my personal experiences with her and even socialize with her."* (Learner participant 1). Similarly, another learner reported on secure attachment as follows: *"My family is caring and loving but at the same time they're strict and protective"* (Learner participant 2). Another learner reported on secure families as cohesive as follows: *"I can say my family relationship is cohesive. Which we stick together. This is something good for me as I am able to speak to my family about anything. We spend more time together and go to church together"* (Learner participant, 3). In addition, a learner from secure home reported on good communication and respect as follows: *"My family relationship is good, well we all have good communication and respect for each other."* (Learner participant, 4). In another aspect, a learner reported on supportive family as follows: *"My family relationship would be described as a happy family, a family with no secrets and a supportive family."* (Learner participant, 6). On the same vein, another learner reported on secure homes as that with strong love and bond with relatives as follows: *"My family relationship shows a strong love and bond we have built together over the years including our relatives. We come together as one family with an unbreakable bond with siblings, mother, sister's uncles and aunties."* (Learner participant, 12). Similarly, another learner also reported on love among their family members as follows: *"My family takes care of each other, they are loving people although we might squabble over small things at times at the end of the day we move and continue with our lives."* (Learner participant, 17). Moreover, another reiterate that their family has unconditional love as follows: *"The family is there for each other in times of need also my family doesn't just share family history as a family we supply one another we have unconditional love."* (Learner participant, 18).

On the bases of the interview findings above, it is evident that learners from secure attachment homes experience love, strong bond, good communication and support for all children in the family and this enhances positive development among them.

Three other learner participants 8, 14 and 16 also reported on secure attachment homes as those that have strong bonds, good conflict management mechanisms, open and supportive structures as follows:

"My relationship with my family is just fine, my family and I don't have a strong bond especially when it comes to my sister and I but I can say that my family is really supportive and loving. We do everything for one another. My family is the best and I thank God for them." (Learner participant, 8)

"My family relationship is healthy, we advise each other on things about life and even though we have our ups and downs and sometimes we get in a conflict but after a few minutes we would be in a nice conversation." (Learner participant, 14)

"We are a very close family we are open to each other and love one another my family is supportive and we have a very strong bond we share everything and we are always happy. We always wish each the best of life so I would say we have a very safe and healthy relationship." (Learner participant, 16)

Based on the information provided, learners exhibited favourable emotions stemming from their familial connections, including trust, affection, and the ability to resolve conflicts. This refers to a secure attachment style. Furthermore, the results obtained from teachers and deputy principals about secure attachment styles indicated that all three schools under investigation had learners with secure attachment styles. All six teachers identified learners with secure attachment styles, and two out of three deputy principals confirmed this. Below are extracts from interviews with teachers on secure attachment: *"At our school we deal with different personalities and our grade 10 learners possess different types of attachment and secure both negative and positive attachments such as dismissive attachments and secure attachments."* (Teacher participant, 2). Another teacher participant reported on secure learners that: *"We find secure learners, most learners possess high levels of confidence within the classroom in terms of participation, engagement with learning materials as well as assessments..."* (Teacher, participant, 5). Similarly, another teacher participant reported on dismissive attachment style as follows: *"From the top of my head, I can only think of dismissive and aggressive learners, insecure learners and confident learners..."* (Teacher participant, 6). In addition, two deputy principals participants also reported on various attachment styles as follows:

"Grade 10 learners tend to possess a number of the attachments ranging from disorganised, secure to avoidant. In spite of coming and growing up in the midst lack, most learners tend to be emotionally, mentally and physically fairly well balanced depending on the situations that might trigger a particular disposure in a learner." (Deputy principal participant, 3)

"In my experience I can positively say that I have seen all kinds of children. I have taught for more than 30 years in this school and I think most of our learners here are from poor homes and most of them lack confidence. Funny enough, we have learners who are confident in negative behaviours and are notorious around the school. We have a few confident learners who are respectful, performing and goal driven."

(Deputy principal participant, 2)

Based on the interview excerpts provided above, it is evident that the information provided by learners aligns with the data provided by teachers and deputy managers. All research participants successfully recognized secure attachment behaviours exhibited by their learners. Based on the statistics, secure learners are characterized as self-assured and courteous individuals who demonstrate extensive engagement in the classroom and possess a strong comprehension of both formal and informal assessments.

Theme 2: Avoidant-Dismissive attachment style

Children are inherently inclined to seek care and when their needs are unmet, they often exhibit behaviours that push away important caregivers due to their fear of rejection. Insecure avoidant behaviour serves as a defence strategy against unresponsiveness and rage, functioning as a means of self-protection. An avoidant attachment occurs when an infant develops the belief that their caregiver will not be responsive to their needs. In

summary, the interview excerpts provided below demonstrate the conversations of individuals who were raised in households with avoidant attachment styles. Out of the eighteen participants, only four believed that their family dysfunction and irregularity stemmed from a lack of support, anger, and closed communication within their immediate families. The following statements were provided by learners. *“There is not much respect for each other, there are a lot of fights and arguments but end up forgiving each other after sometime lack of communication and support.”* (Learner participant, 5). *“We have a strong bond as a family but we don’t communicate every time because each person does their own duty everyday so it is just hard to communicate with each other...”* (Learner participant, 13).

Furthermore, two more learners spoke about their home relationships.

“My family relationship is not balanced when it comes to me. I can communicate with the adults really well but when it comes to my cousins I can’t really talk to them that much. But the relationship I value the most is with my grandmother and aunt because they are always there for me.” (Learner participant, 7)

“... My father is the only person I would say I am not that close with compared to my mother and my sister and that is because of his swearing, it is constant and annoying but we are still very close, I want us to be close.” (Learner participant, 9)

In addition, a deputy principal classified pupils in grade 10 as having an avoidant-dismissive attachment style due to their inclination to seek care and dependence from their caregiver while simultaneously pushing them away. In addition, two teachers held the belief that dismissive learners experience a fear of rejection and have a strong want to be selected and liked.

“From my teaching experience, grade 10 learners still lack independence, they are unable to make their own decisions without the inputs of parents, They are mostly rebellious and would go against the parents advice and teachings, however the moment they are in trouble they require the parents bailout. They hardly take responsibility for their actions. From my experience I’ll categorise this type of attachment as avoidant dismissive. There’s dependency on parents but at the same time there’s rebellion.” (Deputy principal participant, 1)

“From the top of my head, I can only think of dismissive, aggressive learners and confident learners. Dismissive learners are usually angry at life and they are scared of being rejected by their teachers and peers. This then takes away their confidence first in themselves and then others.” (Teacher participant, 6)

“Grade 10 learners possess a few attachments in our school such as... dismissive, secure and avoidant dismissive styles and because as we have a large group of grade10 learners they possess different attachment styles. Dismissive learners always want to hide in class and more of peer pleasers. They do not enjoy being embarrassed in class and before their peers.” (Teacher participant, 1)

Based on the interview excerpts provided, it can be contended that insensitivity and lack of communication contribute to negative perceptions in children. As previously noted, children have a strong inclination to establish a connection with their caregivers. This demonstrates that despite being in challenging home environments, such as those characterized by avoidant attachment, some children nevertheless want to establish secure attachments in order to fulfil their emotional and inherent needs.

Theme 3: Anxious attachment style

Children with anxious insecure attachment may have a desire for contact, but they do not seem to find comfort in it. They may exhibit passive, whiny, fussy, helpless, or immature behaviour and display resistance towards the attachment figure. During stressful conditions, middle adolescents may exhibit a significant dependency on their attachment figure, struggle with separation, display excessive worry about the location of their attachment figure, and find it challenging to recover from upsetting experiences (Chopik, Edelstein & Fraley, 2013). The interview excerpts revealed that two of the learner participants exhibited anxious attachment patterns, which is consistent with the research addressed earlier. During the interviews, the learners revealed instances of emotional and physical abuse experienced at home, a strong inclination towards emotional well-being, a heightened sensitivity in their nervous system, and the presence of trauma. The following are the interview excerpts that were obtained from participants:

"The relationship at home is bad as we are controlled by the owner of the house which is my grandmother. She always treats us bad tell us bad words [painful words] but my mom tries to make us feel better and happy. My grandmothers first born is always drunk, he kicks us out of his mother's house. I even have a cousin who is addicted to Nyaope (drugs) and when he has taken it, he beats me up but I hide my pain. My mother is trying to find a place of us to live in peace." (Learner participant, 10)

"For now, safety and protection does exist in my situation but it cannot be guaranteed if that it will 100% safe because +14 years ago to be approximate our house was once invaded and attempted to be burnt into ashes by an estranged culprit. This has caused me to be extra careful with everything as I'm always scared." (Learner participant, 11)

In addition, two teachers observed that grade 10 students who originate from homes lacking emotional care likely to exhibit evidence of anxious attachment patterns and display disruptive behaviour in class. According to one teacher, grade 10 pupils often struggle with confidence, as it has not yet been established or cultivated in them.

"My Grade 10 learners possess anxious attachment style. Majority of learners in school suffer from separation distress where they experience anxiety that occurs in the absence of the attachments figure, and most parents do not really know their children and are absent emotionally for their children which leads to learners being disruptive in the classroom. Most learners are raised by young single parents and some do not know their parents" (Teacher participant, 3)

"They have an anxious insecure style, very fearful and the fear is also created by the nature of subjects they have chosen because they are not familiar with FET as yet, so it creates that anxiety in the class. Their confidence is not so high at this age. They are still battling with it and trying to find their feet." (Teacher participant, 4)

Based on the interviews with the learner participants, it is clear that one learner has a highly responsive nervous system, which prevents them from being able to relax and constantly reminds them of their past traumas. The other learner has difficulty expressing their pain and therefore conceals instances of abuse, possibly due to feeling hopeless about their situation. According to literature, the anxious attachment style is distinct from other attachment styles since it centres around the traumatic histories and present experiences of children. These children have little agency over these tragic events, which subsequently have a detrimental impact on them (Bergin & Bergin, 2009).

Theme 4: Disorganised/ Fearful attachment style

This ultimate attachment form is a fusion of both anxious and fearful attachment styles. Within this category, children exhibit a tendency to avoid forming close relationships and are prone to sudden outbursts of intense anger and hatred. Additionally, they struggle with effectively regulating their negative emotions. They may exhibit volatile behaviour, such as initiating physical altercations and damaging objects in their vicinity. These children struggle to establish a bond with their caregivers because they experience significant levels of dread and anxiety, which result from the caregivers' insufficient responsiveness and sensitivity, including a lack of tolerance. The interview excerpts revealed that just one out of the 18 learners who participated exhibited a disorganized attachment style, which is consistent with the research reviewed earlier. During the interviews, one learner conveyed feelings of anger resulting from his family's lack of empathy.

"My family relationship is good for the 3 of them (mum, dad, brother) but with me it is a different story reason being, I do not get the same treatment as my younger brother does, he receives all the love my parents give but I don't even get the little bit of that and I am always angry. I try by all means to make them happy or rather proud but nothing is ever enough. In everything that I do they always have to look for mistakes that I did not do purposely just to make me look bad, and it is mostly done by my mother and all those things makes me feel less of a human being and I feel like I am a burden in their lives." (Learner participant, 15)

Furthermore, interview excerpts revealed the encounters of two deputy principals with disorganized learners in their school who exhibit bad behaviour as a means of dealing with the lack of care and responsiveness from their caregivers. The following points were discussed: "...Learners here, are very naughty, violent, mischievous as

they are involved in drugs just to cope with any type of lack at home and the absence of parents...” (Deputy principal participant, 3). One more deputy principal commented on aggressive behaviour of learners from disorganized attachment style, and this is what they had to say:

“Grade 10 learners can be very defensive or aggressive when driven to a corner. Often for learners it easier to be involved in a tussle or a fight at the intermediate phase of learning, the same reaction is minimised at the start of the FET phase. Much more sensitivity and development by learners starts to manifest at this stage and they show a level of understanding leaning towards an increased sense of responsibility. The obverse attitude is also true should a learner be triggered into a fight or flight mode; the grow aggressive, defensive, lying and even devil-may-care in their conduct, which could demonstrate disorganisation and avoidant. They indeed develop a variety of attachments depending on the lead from their caregivers.”

(Deputy principal participant, 2)

“Grade 10 learners possess a few attachments styles in our school such as disorganized, dismissive, secure and fearful because as we have a large group of grade10 learners they possess different attachment styles. Disorganized children tend to be violent, aggressive with others and they tend to be the bullies of the school.”

(Teacher participant, 1)

From the findings presented above, the disorganized attachment style, along with other insecure attachment patterns, requires greater attention in schools. Based on the interview findings, the learner's behaviour and overall social and emotional development are significantly affected by the caregivers' lack of sensitivity and availability. These learners lack recognition and assistance from their families, and as a result, they may exhibit violent, mischievous, and rebellious behaviour due to feelings of anger and confusion. The upcoming topics delved more into the various factors and consequences of insecure bonds.

Discussion

The study explored the forms of attachments styles possessed among grade 10 learners in Sedibeng west township schools. The study findings demonstrated four forms of attachment styles possessed among learners in three different schools, namely, secure, avoidant dismissive, anxious and disorganized attachment styles. The findings of the study reported that some learners were from securely attached homes which were significantly influenced by trust, love, communication and positive self-image. In addition, the findings indicated that learners from secure attachment families showed very positive attributes from their family bonds and were good at conflict resolution. This finding agrees with Fearon and Roisman (2017) study which contends that secure attachment style is founded by trust, confidence, efficient communication, balanced independence and dependency, good self-esteem, emotional control, and resilience.

Moreover, the study findings showed that secure learners are confident children, who respect others and show high levels of participation in the classroom and good understanding of formal and informal assessments. In agreement, Darling-Hammond, et al., (2020) reiterated that children who come from secure homes are generally taught a robust sense of self-esteem and are confident to fully participate in their environments. Similarly, Sagone, et al., (2023) found that individuals with secure attachment tend to possess a favourable perception of themselves and exhibit robust self-confidence. Moreover, this finding agrees with Hong and Park (2012) that individuals with a secure attachment style are capable of confidently and effectively communicating their wants and emotions, while also demonstrating attentiveness and responsiveness towards the needs of others. In addition, this finding concurs with Bowlby, (1969, 1973 & 1980) theoretical assertion that a steady attachment figure must serve as a secure foundation for children to venture into their environment with confidence and knowledge that they have a reliable source of support to rely on. Furthermore, Evans (2020) reiterate that Bronfenbrenner theory asserts that if a child has a strong nurturing relationship with their parents, this would have a positive effect on the child. The implication of this finding thereof, is that parents need to be taught, provided with support and guidance on the importance of secure attachment type in order to support children and strengthen their relationships.

The findings of the study also indicated that some learners were from avoidant dismissive attachment style which is characterized by lack of support, resentment, closed communication and an unmet desire for stable relationship with caregivers created avoidant dismissive learners. This finding agrees with Stanojević and Nedeljković, (2020) which argued that avoidant-dismissive individuals encounter challenges in communication and conveying their own emotions and may face difficulties in establishing emotional connections with others. These individuals may seek reassurance and approval from others, and grapple with a deep-seated fear of rejection or feeling unloved (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2020). The implication of this finding is that schools should develop

parenting programs or increase awareness in the community, which would provide parents with effective bonding techniques that may improve development and emotional security in avoidant-dismissive children and rectify their unpleasant experiences.

The study findings indicated that some learners emanated from anxious attachment style families because they came from broken homes and experienced abuse, high anxiety and trauma. The findings indicated lack emotional care, lack of confidence and disruptive behaviors among learners were end results of anxious attachment styles. This finding agrees with Stanojević and Nedeljković, (2020) which reported that anxious attachment pattern commonly arises because of inconsistent caring, characterized by a caregiver who is sporadically responsive and accessible and attachment figures of nervous children may possess a background characterized by instances of abuse, drug utilization, sadness, or experiences of loss such as death or divorce. The implication of this finding is that schools should put in place appropriate counselling programs to help in the early identification of learners from anxious attachment patterns for best interventions.

The study findings also indicated that disorganized attachment style is significantly influenced by negative feelings of anger caused by low sensitivity and a negative behaviour of violence as a coping mechanism to deal with lack of care and responsiveness. The study findings indicated that disorganized learners do not feel seen and supported at home. In agreement to this finding, Moretti and Peled (2004) argued that disorganized children may exhibit volatile behavior, such as initiating physical altercations and damaging objects in their vicinity and struggle to establish a bond with their caregivers because they experience significant levels of fear and anxiety. In addition, this finding agrees with Beeney, et al., (2017) which asserts that caregiver of a child with fearful-avoidant attachment style may exhibit very unpredictable behavior, causing the child to oscillate between demanding anxious attention and withdrawing in an avoidant manner.

Conclusions & Recommendations

The study concludes that learners from township schools face several obstacles that prevent them from being self-assured, respectful, confident, actively participating in class, and achieving high proficiency in both formal and informal assessments. Thus, learners who come from families with avoidant attachment tend to encounter familial dysfunction, inconsistency, rivalry, lack of support from close relatives, and limited communication. Moreover, learners with anxious and disorganized attachment styles endure distressing pasts and ongoing experiences, unlike individuals with other attachment types, resulting in greater suffering. Furthermore, this study asserts that the lack of sensitivity and presence from caregivers has a detrimental impact on learners' behaviour, as well as their social and emotional development. Therefore, it is crucial to educate parents, offer them assistance, and give them with direction regarding the significance of secure attachment style in order to aid youngsters and enhance their interpersonal connections. The study also concludes that disorganized learners may exhibit violent, mischievous, and obstinate behaviour at home due to a lack of support, possibly stemming from feelings of anger and confusion resulting from neglect by caregivers. This situation may have been altered if schools were able to implement suitable counselling programs to facilitate the early identification of learners with insecure attachment patterns, thereby enabling the implementation of the most effective therapies. The families' incapacity to effectively safeguard learners against insecure attachment patterns can be attributed to a deficiency in support, awareness of secure attachment styles, financial resources, and stable family structures. The implication of this finding is that the School Governing Bodies (SGB) should educate parents about the negative effects of this attachment style in order to rectify this in disorganized learners and assist them with the right support. The study recommends that train parents on best parenting programs and increase awareness in the community on secure homes. This would provide parents with effective bonding techniques that may improve development and emotional security in avoidant-dismissive children and rectify their unpleasant experiences. This is because the study findings indicated that most learners are from insecure attachment homes and this hampers their psychological development.

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