

## Assessment of Adolescents' Parents Attachment at Preparatory Schools

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Adolescents' parent's attachment has an essential role in developing adolescents' parent psychological wellbeing and mental health, which is considered one of the protective factors that participate in the smooth transition of adolescents from childhood to adulthood. **Aim:** The current study aimed to assess of adolescents' parent attachment at preparatory schools. **Research design:** A descriptive exploratory research design was utilized in this study. **Setting:** The study was conducted in three governmental preparatory schools in El Marg Governorate. **Subject:** A convenient sample for (202) adolescents' parents. Two **Tools:** utilized for data collection: 1) Socio-demographic interview sheet and 2) Revised inventory of parent Adolescent Attachment. **Results:** the study showed that 42.6% of the studied adolescents' parents had low attachment to their adolescents followed by 37.6% had medium attachment 19.8% had high attachment. **Conclusion:** It is concluded that near to half of the studied adolescents' parents had low attachment to their adolescents followed by more than one third had medium attachment and less than one fifth had high attachment. The study **Recommended** the application of the study results in implementing an awareness program for adolescences' parents to rise their awareness about the significance of secure parent adolescent attachment.

**Keywords:** Parents, Adolescents, Attachment

### Introduction

Adolescence is increasingly recognized as the second major 'window' of opportunity and risk in development and sometimes called stress and storm period. Adolescent go through numerous development changes such as rapid cognitive, neurological, and social changes of adolescence, all of these changes can create a social-cognitive dilemma for both adolescents' parent and adolescents. The integration of diverse and new experiences in relation to oneself and the world. Adolescence also presents an attachment dilemma that is, maintaining connection with parents while exploring new social roles away from the family and developing attachment relationships with romantic partners and peers (Barrow, & Thomas, 2022).

Attachment is a universal human need that leads to the formation of intimate emotional bonds, according to Bowlby (1988). The parent-adolescent attachment is deemed as a kind of deep, intimate, enduring, and stable emotional connection that forms in the process of interaction between parents and their of adolescents which is also known as "parental attachment." The quality of parent of parent adolescent attachment can directly and indirectly affect parent and adolescents' psychological wellbeing and formation of adolescents' emotion, social behavior, personality characteristics, and basic attitude towards human communication (Beeli-Zimmermann, and et al., 2024).

Parent adolescents' attachment continues to play an important role in helping adolescents to successfully adapt

to other attachments figure. Adolescents rely on their parents to provide a haven for them to explore the world through advocacy. Regarding the points of view of parent-adolescent attachment serves as a pattern for the child's relationships in the future. It is thought that the quality of a person's first relationships can predict the quality of their subsequent relationships (**Buka et al., 2022**).

Close parent-adolescents attachment act as "rewards" which enhance parents' wellbeing. Established of secure parent adolescent attachment and strong family bond it will help parents and their adolescent to pass adolescent stage safely. Therefore, it is necessary to assess the attachment among adolescents' parents.

Psychiatric mental health nurses have a pivotal role in providing periodical assessment to ensure high quality of parent-adolescent attachment that facilitate smooth transition of adolescent's stage by early detection of parent detachment and develop training programs to promote secure attachment. As well as, psychiatric mental health nurses can implement many nursing roles based on nursing assessment for adolescents' parents and adolescents' needs. For example, health educator, teacher, mother surrogate, care provider, advocator, researcher and counselor (**Maloney-Newton, Hickey, & Brant 2023**).

### **Significance of the study:**

Adolescence is the most difficult time in human history the World Health Organization reported that around one in five adolescents under the age of 18 experience some form of developmental, emotional, or behavioral problem, and one in eight experiences a mental disorder. One of the major factors that

negatively influence adolescents psychological wellbeing is insecure parent adolescent attachment (**World Health Organization, 2024**).

Many benefits will return on adolescents' parent and adolescent such as promote mental health and psychological wellbeing, help adolescents to explore their surroundings without fear of rejection, forecasts more constructive and adaptive coping skills, manage the transition to high school more successfully, enjoy more positive relationships and experience less conflict with family and peers and so on than do insecurely attached adolescents (**Arulsubila & Subasree, 2017; United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, 2023**).

### **Aim of The Study**

This study aimed to assess of adolescents' parent attachment at preparatory schools.

### **Research questions:**

1. What is the nature of parent-adolescent attachment at preparatory schools?
2. What are levels of parent-adolescent attachment at preparatory schools?

### **Subjects and Methods:**

#### **1. Research Design:**

A descriptive exploratory research design was utilized to meet the aim of the study.

#### **2. Research Setting:**

This study was conducted in three different governmental preparatory schools at El Marg (El Marg governmental preparatory school for boys, El Marg governmental preparatory school for girls, and Kafer Elshorfa mixed preparatory school at El Marg).

#### 4. Subjects of the Study:

A convenient sample of (202) adolescents' parents were used in the current study.

**Data was collected by using the following tools:**

##### 1- Socio-demographic interview sheet:

This questionnaire was designed by researcher after reviewing national and international related literature. The aim of the sheet to assess characteristics of the study participants, and it consists of two parts.

**Part (1)** parent characteristics such as socio demographic data such as (age, sex, residence, educational level, employment, income, and number of children).

**Part (2)** adolescents' characteristics include (adolescents' age, gender, rank between siblings and scholastic level as parents perceived).

##### 2- Revised of Inventory of Parent Adolescent Attachment(R-IPA) (Armsden and Greenberg, 1987).

The inventory was designed by Armsden and Greenberg (1987) to assess parents' attachment toward their adolescents. R-IPA scale consists of 30 items. The inventory items are divided into three subscales [parent quality of communication 12 items), (parent mutual trust 10 items), and (extent of anger and alienation 8 items). The R-IPA scale is a self-report questionnaire with three – points Likert scale responses: Never = 1, sometimes =2, and always = 3).

##### Scoring of R- IPA's three subscales of Parent

Subscales	Parent attachment		
	Low	Medium	High
Communication	1 – 12	13 – 24	25 – 36
Trust	1 – 10	11 – 0	21- 30
Alienation	1 – 8	9 – 16	17 – 24

##### The total scoring system of R-IPA scale:

Low attached	1-30
Medium attached	31-60
High attached	61-90

##### Tools validity and Reliability

The tools, which were designed by the researcher, were tested and evaluated for face and content validity and reliability by a jury committee. The jury committee consisted of five experts from the faculty of nursing at British University in Egypt. The members of the jury committee have different academic hierarchies or categories. One of them is professor and head of the psychiatric and mental health nursing at British University in Egypt, one is an associate professor in psychiatric and mental health nursing at British University in Egypt, one of them is lecturer in psychiatric and mental health nursing at British University in Egypt, one of them is lecturer in community health nursing at British University in Egypt, one of them is lecturer in pediatric health nursing at British University in Egypt.

##### Operational Design

The operational design included preparatory phase, pilot study, filed work, ethical consideration, and limitation of the study.

##### Preparatory phase

After entailed reviewing literature and different studies related to psycho-educational program for enhancing attachment and psychological wellbeing among adolescents' parents by using textbooks, articles, journals, periodicals, magazines, and internet resources to gain a comprehensive understanding of all aspects of the research topic, as well as developing and adapting the study's tools.

## Fieldwork

Data was collected from three different governmental preparatory schools at El Marg. The researcher first explained the aim of the study to the subjects and reassured them that collected data would be treated confidentially and that it would be used only for the research. Data were collected 1 days/per week (Tuesday) as follows (9.00 am to 1.00 pm) to meet parents in the classroom during ordinary school hours. The actual field work started within semester two of the academic year 2023- 2024 from the middle of March 2024 to the middle of May 2024.

The researcher started data collection by self-introducing to adolescents' parents and explaining, in brief, the nature, aim, and purpose of the study to the study subjects to be more familiar with the study and gain their cooperation.

After that, oral permission was taken from parents who agreed to participate, and the researcher gave every parent copy of the study tools. The researcher distributed the self-administered questionnaire to the subjects who agreed to participate in the study. The participants filled the tools consumed for 15 - 20 minutes with each parent depending on their response. Then the researcher collected the answered sheets from the parents.

## 2. Administrative design:

The ethical committee of Helwan University's Faculty of Nursing approved the study. An official letter was sent from the Faculty of Nursing, Helwan University, to Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics. After validating the protocol and data collection tools, program content, the director of Central System for Package and Statistics

at Cairo agreed and signed the official letter and transferred me to Cairo Directorate the education after their approval. After that researcher directed to El Marg Educational Administration and the following agreement was obtained from the General Manager of El Marg Education Department and security of the Directorate.

After that, the researcher obtained official permission to enter El Marg preparatory schools and the letter was signed by both the general manager of El Marg Education Department, and the security of the directorate

## 3. Ethical considerations:

Before the study, approval of each participant to share in the study was taken. Verbal consent was obtained from each participant and was assured that confidentiality and privacy would be considered, and each participant had the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

## 4. Statistical Design:

The collected data were tabulated and statistically analyzed using the statistical package for social science (SPSS), version 21. The statistical analysis included: Percentages (%), mean, standard deviation (SD,) and  $\chi^2$  were used to assess the correlation between the study variables. The observed differences associated were considered as follows:

- Not Significant (NS)  $p > 0.05$
- Significant (S)  $p < 0.05$
- Highly Significant (HS)  $p > 0.00$

## RESULTS:

**Table (1)** illustrates that the Mean  $\pm$  SD of the studied parent age was  $39.76 \pm 5.68$ . Regarding gender, 80.2% of the study sample were females. Regarding residents, 83.2% are from urban areas. As well, this table illustrates (42.6%)

that near to half of the studied parent their educational levels are school education. Concerning employment, 64.4% of parents are working and 49.5 have not enough family income. In addition to that, 40.6% of the samples studied have three children.

**Figure (1):** illustrates that 62.60% of the studied sample has nuclear family 19.80% of the studied parent has an extended family compared.

**Table (2):** shows that the Mean  $\pm$  SD for adolescents is  $12.88 \pm 1.28$  for study group. Regarding to adolescents, 52.5% are female adolescents. Concerning the

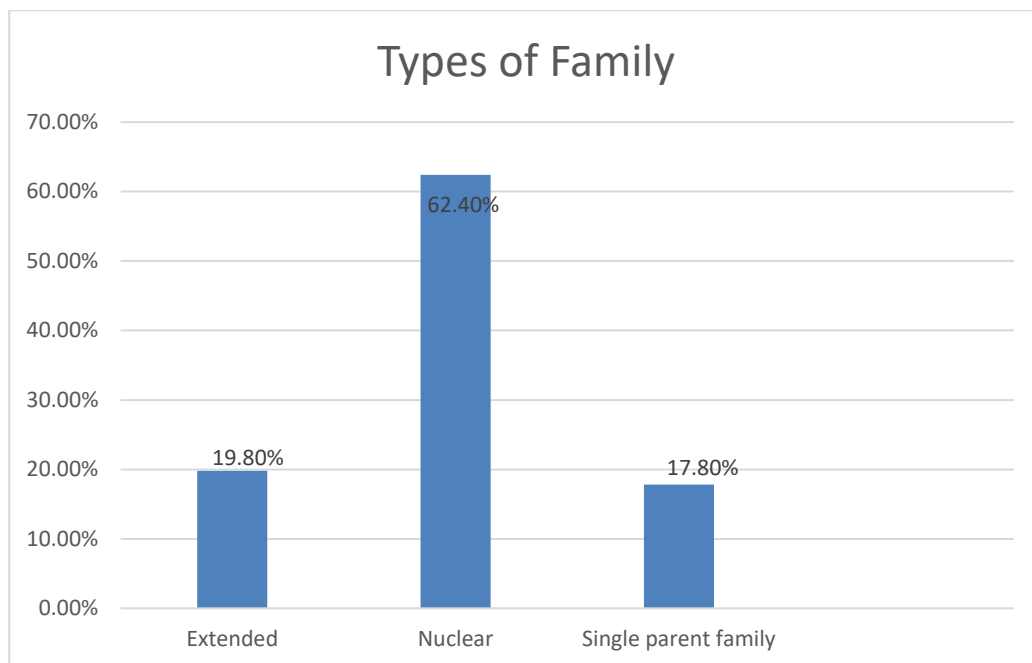
adolescent rank between siblings, 53.5% of the studied sample have first child and concerning adolescent scholastic level as parents reported 45.5% have moderate level.

**Figure (2)** elucidates that 54.50% of the studied adolescents' parents have low communication and 41.50% have high low alienation.

**Figure (3)** explains that 42.6% are low attachment, followed with 37.6% of the studied sample have medium attachment and 19.8% the studied sample have high attachment.

**Table (1):** Distribution of socio- demographic characteristics of the studied adolescents' parents (n=202).

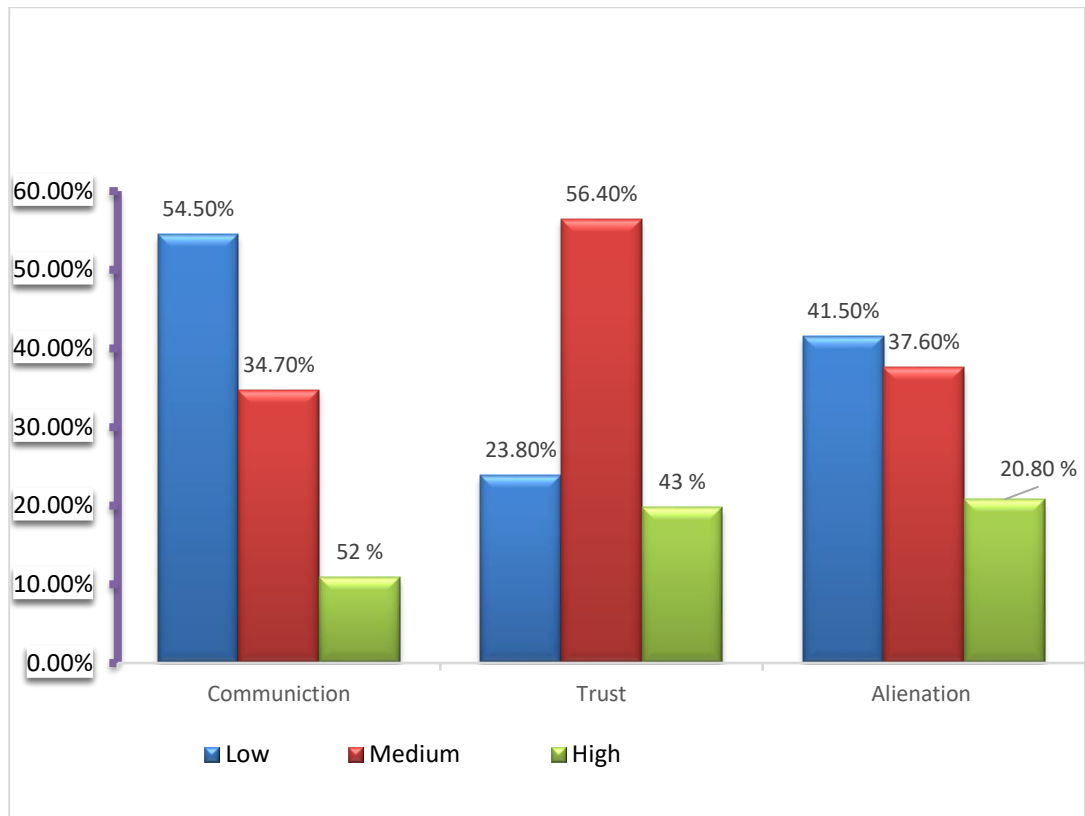
Socio- demographic items	(n=202)	
	N	%
<b>Parent Age (years)</b>		
25-35	52	25.7
36-45	114	56.4
>46	36	17.8
<b>Mean <math>\pm</math> SD</b>	<b>39.76 <math>\pm</math> 5.68</b>	
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	40	19.8
Female	162	80.2
<b>Residence</b>		
Urban	84	83.2
Rural	17	16.8
<b>Parents' educational levels</b>		
Cannot read and write.	2	2.0
Can read and write.	5	5.0
Primary Education	4	4.0
Preparatory Education	11	10.9
High School Education	43	42.6
University Education	25	24.8
Postgraduate	11	10.9
<b>Parent employment status</b>		
Employee	65	64.4
Unemployed/ housewife	35	34.7
Retired	1	1.0
<b>Family Income</b>		
Not enough	50	49.5
Enough	43	42.6
Enough and save	8	7.9
<b>Number of Children</b>		
1	1	1.0
2	18	17.8
3	41	40.6
4	32	31.7
More	9	8.9



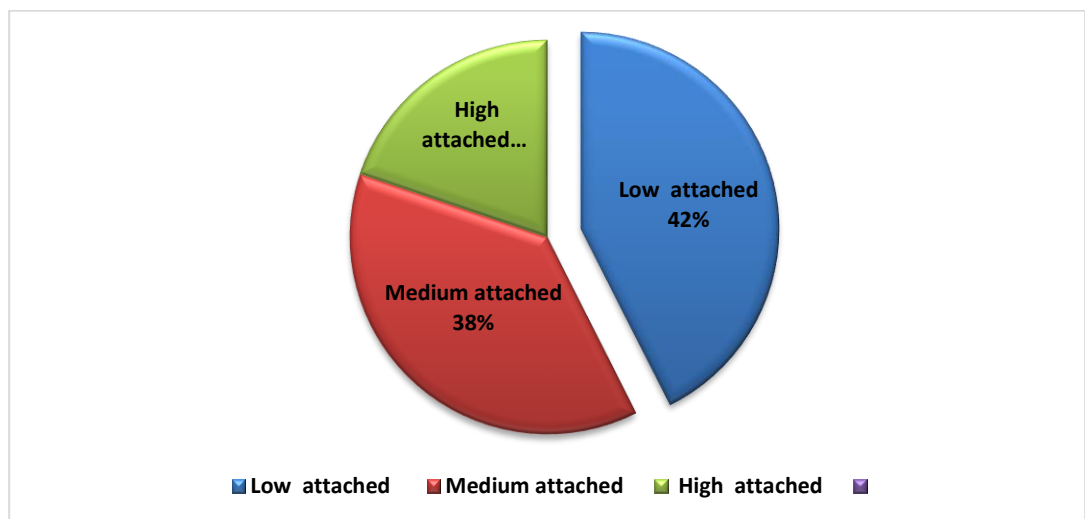
**Figure (1):** Distribution of types of family for adolescents' parents (n= 202).

**Table (2):** Distribution of the adolescents' parents in relation to their adolescents' characteristics (n=202).

Adolescents' characteristics items	(n=202)	
	N	%
<b>Adolescent age</b>		
11-13	135	64.4
14-17	72	35.6
<b>Mean ± SD</b>	<b>12.88 ± 1.28</b>	
<b>Adolescent sex</b>		
Male	92	45.5
Female	<b>106</b>	<b>52.5</b>
<b>Adolescent rank between siblings</b>		
First	108	53.5
Second	46	22.8
Third	36	17.8
More	12	5.9
<b>Adolescent scholastic level as parents reported</b>		
Poor	42	20.8
Moderate	92	45.5
Good	68	33.7



**Figure (2):** Distribution of Adolescents' parents' according to attachment dimensions (trust, communication, and alienation) (n= 202).



**Figure (3):** Distribution of total adolescents' parent attachment among the studied parents (n=202).

## Discussion

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The current study illustrated that more than half of study sample their age were from 36-45 years old with mean  $\pm$  SD  $39.76 \pm 5.68$  respectively. This could be due to the marriage age among Egyptian is between 25 to 27 years of adolescents' parents. The current study results shows that most of the study sample were female. Regards to the residence, this study illustrated that most of the studied parents were from urban areas. This may be due to the choice of setting of the study as the study was conducted in El Mag, Cairo and this is considered urban area.

The findings of this study revealed that nearly half of the study group were high school education. This may be due to nature and perspective of Egyptian urban as they caring with education. Furthermore, the current study reveals that more than half of adolescents' parents were employed. This may be due to the complexity of life and presence of world financial inflation that causes increase in all Egyptians services.

The current study displayed that more than half of the study group have inadequate income compared with near to half for the study group this may be due to global raise in all prices of services for parents and low salary compared with inflation in all services that parents got and other economic restrains, food, residence, sports, educations, sports and ect. Concerning the type of family, the present study showed that more than half of the study samples were had nuclear family type. It could be due to their age and most parents are married, autonomous, and sure can live independently from their parents.

The current study illustrated that adolescent age of the studied sample more than half of their adolescent age were from 11-13 years old with mean  $\pm$  SD  $12.88 \pm 1.28$ . This may be due to the normal age of school of students enter primary schools 6 years or 7 years plus 6 years in primary schools and this normal age mean of preparatory schools and this age is the peak of parents' distress and conflict as adolescents pass through massive hormonal, physical, social, and emotional changes.

The present study revealed to that, more than half of the study parents had female adolescents. As well as, regarding the adolescent rank between siblings, the present study showed that more than half of the studied adolescents' parents have first adolescents this may be due to first parents having limited skills and knowledge about parenting role and parents were eager to learn and acquire needed skills.

The current study clarified that more than half of the studied adolescents' parents had low communication. This may be due to parents' today's faces many challenges and distractions as most of Egyptian parents are working more than one jobs to full financial family requirements, which negatively affect communication and emotional aspects of their adolescents.

As well as most adolescents' parents and their adolescents are victims of different social media platforms like Facebook, what's app, TikTok, internet games Gmail and misuse internet. This study is in the same line with who stated pparents and teens sometimes have difficulty communicating. Because teens' behavior and emotional responses change



dramatically as they grow from childhood to adolescence, relationships with parents can become more challenging. Furthermore, due to the gap in generation between parents and their adolescents. As adolescents at this age tend to be close to their peers and are open to them and stay most of time with them.

As well as, a parent-child relationship is like any other relationship, which is complex one that begins to build from the early days in the life of adolescents and requires a great deal of effort: dedication, conditioning, understanding, love, attention and communication. A positive affective relationship with both parents leads to harmonious development of adolescents' personalities.

This study results agreed with **Dalton, et al., (2019)** who studied "Communication with children and adolescents about the diagnosis of a life-threatening condition in their parents" and reported that adolescents' parents face the dual challenge of coping with their adolescents while trying to maintain a parenting role. Parents are often uncertain about how, when, and what to tell their children about the condition, and are fearful of the effect on their family. Health-care professionals have a key role in supporting and guiding parents and caregivers to communicate with their adolescents.

The result of this study was parallel with **Gubbels, van der Put, & Assink, (2019)** who studied "effectiveness of parent training programs for child maltreatment and their components: A meta-analysis" the results displayed that more than half (64.9 %) of the sample studied need improving the

communicative skills of parents in interaction with their child and learning parents to interact in a positive way with their adolescents. In addition to that, the results displayed regarding parent adolescence quality of time 14.1% of the sample studied reported they need stimulating programs encouraging parents to spend quality time with adolescence, i.e., playing with the child, and doing fun activities together.

The current study revealed that, nearly half of the study sample had high alienation this may be due to different perspective for both parents and adolescents as each one looks from own perspective. Parents tend to see their adolescents obey their orders and be responsible and to be independent from parents and need to increase social cycle with their peers as results of this present negative communication patterns when faced with conflicts.

Moreover, adolescents' social environment starts to increase and tend to be social and close with their colleagues. At the same time adolescent autonomy develops, and adolescents can express their opinions which sometimes contradict with parent opinion, which cause struggle and conflict with parents and negatively cause psychological distress. The decline in the sense of intimacy with parents and the increase in peer influence may affect parents' satisfaction with the relationships with their adolescents. Then comes, some adolescents begin to show difficulties such as behavioral problems in school, academic failure, and the inability to get along with other children. Such problems may lead to more tension between a parent and adolescent.

This result was congruent with **Al Khalfan, & Alzitawi (2022)** who studied “Psychological Security and its Relationship to Latent Delinquency among Preparatory School Students in State of Qatar” and the results presented that regarding parent adolescents’ relationship 15% have excellent relationship 50% they said average relationship and 35% of the sample studied had poor family relationship.

This study results was in the same line with **Oyarzun-Farias, et al., (2021)** who studied “parental stress and satisfaction in parents with pre-school and school age children” and showed that parental satisfaction with the relationships with their adolescent's declines as adolescent age. Once children begin to go to school, the emotional intimacy in parent adolescent attachment begins to decline for several reasons first, adolescent’s social worlds expand, and parents feel an increased sense of separation from their children who spent more time with friends and discovered their own interests.

The result of this study consistent with **Konrath, et al., (2014)** who studied “Changes in adult attachment styles in American college students over time: A meta-analysis” that reported the percentage of students with secure attachment styles has decreased in recent years (1988: 48.98%; 2011: 41.62%), whereas the percentage of students with Insecure attachment styles (sum of dismissing, preoccupied, fearful) has increased in recent years (1988: 51.02%; 2011: 58.38%). The percentage of students with dismissing attachment styles has increased over time (1988: 11.93%; 2011: 18.62%), even after

controlling for age, gender, race, and publication status.

This result was in the same line with **Davis, (2016)** who studied "Multiple roles as predictors of subjective well-being in African American women" and reported separation of parent adolescents also means the increasing possibility of peer influence on their adolescents that parents often believe as negative. Whether the quality of parent–child relationship improves during the child’s early young adult years has been debated.

The results of this study was in agreement with **Ladd, & Kochenderfer-Ladd, (2019)** who studied “Parents and children’s peer relationships ” and showed that the adolescent years (i.e., ages 12–17) were the period when adolescents increasingly strive for autonomy, thus parent adolescents attachment become more distant. Adolescents spend much less time with their parents than younger children. Adolescents prefer peers to parents for their main sources of intimacy and emotional support. Adolescents also become more assertive with parents and questioning their parents about their rules and practices.

## **Conclusion**

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Based on the results of this study, it is concluded that more than half of the adolescents' parents were female and most of them were from urban areas near to half of the studied adolescents' parents had low attachment to their adolescents followed by more than one third had medium attachment and less than one fifth had high attachment. Parental attachment has an essential role in developing adolescents' parent psychological wellbeing and mental

health, which is considered one of the protective factors that participate in the smooth transition of adolescents from childhood to adulthood.

## Recommendations

- Implementing an awareness program for adolescents' parents to raise their awareness about the importance of secure attachment.
- Creating counseling rooms inside the schools to provide health education sessions and provide psychological, social, and spiritual support for adolescents and their families.
- Potentiating the role of mass media in raising public awareness about adolescent period to empower parents with needed skills.
- Provide Hotline services that encourage adolescents' parents and their adolescents to ask questions.

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