

## THE QUALITY OF ATTACHMENT TO PARENT AND PEERS AMONG RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL STUDENTS'

RAMLAH JANTAN<sup>1</sup>, ROHATY MOHD. MAJZUB<sup>2</sup> & NORIAH MOHD. ISHAK<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Sultan Idris Education University, Tanjong Malim, Perak, Malaysia

<sup>2,3</sup>Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia

### ABSTRACT

The main aim of the study was to identify the quality of students' attachment pattern in relation to mother, father and peers. The quality of attachment comprised of three variables namely trust, communication and alienation. This study also examined the relationship between students' quality of attachment to parent with their quality of attachment to peers. Methodology of study was survey questionnaire. The questionnaire used was the 'Malaysian Inventory of Parents and Peers Attachment' (MIPPA). Participants of the study consisted of 420 form 4 students (210 boys and 210 girls) from 7 Mara Junior Science Colleges. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistic such as means, frequency and percentage and inferential statistics involving correlation. Results of the study showed that students' quality of attachment to parents were higher than their attachment to peers. The analysis showed that the relationship between students' quality of attachment to parents were positively and significantly correlated to quality of attachment to peers. Recommendation to educational administrators, among others were, teachers', warden and counselor should build close interpersonal relationship and quality communication with the students in order to develop students' achievement motivation via achieving Vision 2020, producing world class human capital and caring society.

**KEYWORDS:** Quality of Attachment, Residential School Students, Parent, Peers

### INTRODUCTION

Attachment is a close emotional bond between the infant and the caregiver (Bowlby, 1982 in Santrock, 2002). Every child need to be attached to somebody or something in order to start trusting others (Erikson, 1968; Noriah, 2010). Every child craved for the attachment figure to be present (Santrock, 2002). They will look, wait and ponder upon the attachment figure. They will feel restless, worries and helpless if being separated from the attachment figure for some time (Ainsworth, 1978). The need to be attached to parents and peers are a necessity throughout everybody's lifetime (Noriah, 2010). Bowlby (1982) argues that bondage has been built between the individual and his mother which last a lifetime.

The bonding between parents and children are important in a harmonious family. Creating a caring society and a caring culture has been Malaysian Government important goal or known as National Keys Result Areas (NKRA) which the government wishes to achieve in year 2020. To achieve this vision and mission by year 2020, government must try to intensify love and caring in every family. So the main objective of this study was to identify students' quality of attachment pattern to parents and peers. Secondly to examine the relationship between students' quality of attachment to parents with students' quality of attachment to peers.

## STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Bowlby (1982) postulated that the bonding between parents and children have a significant impact on their performance. But when they stayed in the residential school, they were separated from their parents and would this situation affect their performance in school? Outstanding students were sent to residential school in order to be tailored to the government mission and vision to become first-class human capital. What happened to their quality of attachment to parents after they stay with their peers? So the main objective of this study was to identify the students' quality of attachment to parents and peers. Secondly to examine the relationship between students' quality of the attachment to parents with students' quality of attachment to peers.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This study is based on the 'Attachment theory' founded by John Bowlby (1969; 1988). John Bowlby (1969, 1988) founded the theory through his study during working with orphaned and abandoned children at Tavistok Clinic in London. He was a psychologist from Ethologic school. Mary Ainsworth, Blehar and Walters (1978) then continue his study.

Armsden (1987) in his study try to differentiate the relationship between adolescences' attachment to parents and peers and their relationship with affective status, self esteem and coping with loss, threat and challenge. Participants of his study comprises of 401 students (adolescence) age between 17 – 20 years old. Finding showed that there was significant and positive relationship between students' who were securely attached with students' affective and well-being in late adolescence. Adolencece well-being among male were correlated with father and conversely among female their well-being were correlated with their same sex peers. Adolescence who were securely attached and had high score on attachment with father reported high affective well-being than those adolescence who were securely attached and had higher quality attachment score with their mother. Both male and female adolescence who were securely attached often used problem managing coping responses in managing their loss, threat and challenge.

Kenny and Donaldson (1995) study the relationship of parental attachment and peer relation. Finding of the study showed that majority of the college women maintain closed and positive relationship with their parents They considered the attachment with parents play two roles simultaneously that was as the figure that guide them to become autonomy and source of help when needed. This findings also strengthen attachment theory and secure base by Ainsworth et al. (1978) and Bowlby (1988) who contends that securely attached person has positive self-affective and lead to autonomy in the adjustment process. This proposal was seconded by Schneider (2005) and they belief that close relationship with parents will help the adolescence in striving for autonomy and in adjustment process.

Noriah Mohd. Ishak, Melor Md. Yunus, I. Piet Iskandar (2010) in their study have examined patterns of trust and communication that contribute towards development of quality parental attachment among 98 Malaysian academically talented students (43 males, 55 females) studying at five different universities in the United States. The study employed a case study approach using two interview techniques (in-depth and focus group interviews). The findings showed that ten main themes contribute to healthy parental attachment. Six of the themes (understanding, respect, shared trust, accessibility, responsiveness, expectations) described trust, while four themes (extensiveness, quantity, quality, and modes of communication) describe the communication patterns.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the research was to identify the quality of students' attachment pattern to mother, father and peers. The quality of attachment comprised of three variables namely trust, communication and alienation. Secondly this study also examined the relationship between students' quality of attachment to parents with their quality attachment to peers.

## METHODOLOGY OF STUDY

Methodology of study was survey using questionnaire to collect data. The instrument used was 'Inventory of Parents and Peers Attachment' (IPPA) adapted from Noriah's research (1999a). Participants of this research consisted of 420 form 4 students (210 boys and 210 girls) ages between 15 and 16 years old from 7 Mara Junior Science Colleges. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistic such as mean, frequency and percentage and inferential statistics involving correlation.

## RESULTS

Results of the study were discussed as below.

### The Students' Quality of Attachment to Parents and Peers

From table 1, finding showed that with reference to mean, students' quality of attachment to parents were higher than their attachment to peers. In the quality of attachment to mother, it showed that the boys' quality of attachment to mother were higher than girls in all variables namely trust, communication except in alienation, the girls' mean values for alienation to mother were higher than boys. We can interpret that the girls were easily upset by their mother response than boys. In students' quality of attachment to father, based on the mean value, the boys mean values were higher than girls. The mean value for trust, communication and alienation were also high for boys than girls. This showed that, the boys have closer relationship with their father than girls.

**Table 1: Students' Quality of Attachment to Parent and Peers**

Attachment Quality Variables	Total N=420		Boys N=210		Girls N=210	
	Min	Sd	Min	Sd	Min	Sd
Attachment Quality to Mother	3.98	0.61	3.918	0.533	3.906	0.606
Trust	4.01	0.59	4.054	0.544	3.982	0.631
Communication	3.98	0.74	3.990	0.694	3.987	0.779
Alienation	2.98	0.66	2.927	0.687	3.025	0.603
Attachment Quality to Father	3.55	0.50	4.093	0.538	3.891	0.857
Trust	3.73	0.49	3.743	0.497	3.708	0.534
Communication	3.53	0.73	3.550	0.639	3.502	0.814
Alienation	3.33	0.49	2.188	1.073	2.131	0.997
Same gender Attach. Quality	3.45	0.55	3.374	0.529	3.527	0.567
Trust	3.49	0.63	3.398	0.615	3.584	0.639
Communication	3.73	0.78	3.632	0.725	3.829	0.826
Alienation	2.94	0.48	2.529	0.710	2.346	0.875
Different gender Attach. Quality	3.237	0.587	3.259	0.547	3.215	0.624
Trust	3.330	0.663	3.365	0.642	3.330	0.683
Communication	3.273	0.853	3.308	0.779	3.239	0.921
Alienation	2.950	0.396	2.957	0.381	2.943	0.411

In the quality of attachment to same gender peers, the mean values among girls were higher than boys. The girls' mean values for trust and communication (except alienation) were also higher than boys. In the quality of attachment to different gender peer, the mean values among boys were higher than girls. The boys' mean values for trust, communication and alienation were also higher than girls. This showed that among girls, they have closer relationship with same gender peers and among boys they have closer relationship with different gender peers.

### **Relationship between Students' Quality of Attachment to Parent with their Quality of Attachment to Peers**

The students' quality of attachment to parent was correlated significantly and positively with students' quality of attachment to peers (Table 2). The students' quality of attachment to parent were high compared to students' quality of attachment among peers especially their quality of attachment to father. Among girls (Table 1) their quality of attachment with same gender peers (mean=3.527) are higher than boys (mean=3.374).

**Table 2: Relationship between Quality of Attachment to Parent with Quality of Attachment to Peers**

Variables	N	r	r <sup>2</sup>	Significant
Quality of Attachment to Father – Quality of Attachment to Mother	420	0.609	0.370	0.000*
Quality of Attachment to Father – Quality of Attachment to Same Gender Peers.	420	0.356	0.126	0.000*
Quality of Attachment to father – Quality of Attachment Different Gender Peers	420	0.255	0.065	0.000*
Quality of attachment to mother – Quality of attachment same gender peers.	420	0.366	0.133	0.000*
Quality of attachment to mother – Quality of attachment Different gender peers.	420	0.218	0.047	0.000*

Correlation Significant at  $p < 0.001$ .

## **DISCUSSIONS**

Findings showed that means score for students' quality of attachment to parents were higher than their mean score for peers. As a conclusion, the students' quality of attachment to parents are higher than their quality of attachment to peers. This mean they still have close relationship with their parent in term of trust, communication and alienation. This study seconded findings by Kenny and Donaldson (1995) that these students maintained close relationship with their parent after they enter college. Kenny and Donaldson (1995) perceived that the attachment with parent have two purpose simultaneously that is as a figure that guide them to autonomy and as a source of help when needed. Studies by Kenny (1995), Mattanah (2004), Fany (2005) and Noriah (2010) found that majority of college students especially girls maintained close relationship with parent especially their mother evethough they stay faraway.

Result of the study showed that, there was difference in mean score between boys and girls in trust, communication and alienation in the quality of attachment with the same gender peers. This was possible maybe because girls become matured in thinking two years earlier than boys (Santrock 2011). This finding seconded study by Armsden dan Greenberg (1987) and Schneider (2009), that girls mean score in attachment with same gender peers were higher than boys. Therefore, they found the girls could easily cope with their adjustment problems than boys.

## IMPLICATION AND RECOMMENDATION

Since the students' quality of attachment to parents was closer, the warden and teachers must try to establish good and trustworthy interpersonal relationship with the students. They must play the role of surrogate parent in order to give these students high motivation to study. The school must hold programs such as mentor-mentee, students' academic adviser, peer -counseling, cooperative and collaborative learning workshop for their students. Another important implication is the school environment must be turned into eco-friendly, whereby means of communication with parents and peers are easily accessible either through phone or internet (facebook, twitter, instagram, etc). The students' quality of attachment to parent and peers have to be given priority when the students having problems, the parent and peers must be consulted.

## CONCLUSIONS

Through the finding of this study, we can conclude that students' quality of attachment with parent are still closer even though they have stayed in the residential school for seven months. They have started to attach to their peers in the school but it may take longer time to be closer especially in trust and communication. So the school administrator, teachers and counselor should organize programs to build this relationship such as through games and co-curriculum activities. Parents also should be invited to participate in school program such as 'canteen days' whereby parent and their kids cooperate to sell food and raise money for good course such as buying books for the school library.

## REFERENCES

1. Armsden, Gay Gilbert & Greenberg, Mark T. 1987. The inventory of parent and peer attachment: Individual differences and their relationship to psychological well – being In adolescence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 16 (5): 427-454.
2. Ainsworth, M. D. S., Blehar, M. C. & E. Waters, S. Walls. 1978. *Patterns of attachment*. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Erlbaum Associates.
3. Bowlby, J. (1969/1982). *Attachment and loss*. Vol. 1. Attachment. New York: Basic Books. Bowlby, J. 1988. *A secure base*. New York: Basic Books.
4. Fanti, Kosta Andrea. (2005). The parent adolescent relationship and college adjustment over the freshman year. Master of Arts Thesis. Georgia State University.
5. Kenny, M. E. & Rice, Kenneth G. (1995). Attachment to parents and adjustment in late adolescent college students: Current status, applications, and future considerations. *The Counseling Psychologist* 23 (3): 433–456.
6. Mattanah, J. F., Hancock, G. R. & Brand, B. L. (2004). Parental attachment, separation – individuation, and college student adjustment: A structural equation analysis of mediational effects. *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 51 (2): 213-225.
7. Noriah Ishak. (1999a). An analysis of parental and peer attachment and its determinant factors: A test of attachment theory on Malaysian students at American Universities. Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation. Western Michigan University.

8. Noriah Mohd. Ishak; Melor Md. Yunus; I. Piet Iskandar. (2010). Trust, communication and healthy parental attachment among Malaysian academically talented college students. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*. 2010; 9: 1529-1536.
9. Rohaty Mohd. Majzub, and Noriah Mohd Ishak, and Ramlah Jantan. (2010). The Effect of Students' Quality of Attachment To Parent and Peers on Academic, Social and Emotional Adjustmen among Residential Students. *International Journal of Learner Diversity*, 2 (1). pp. 59-74. ISSN 2180-1630.
10. Santrock, J.W. (2002). *Life-Span Development*. 8<sup>th</sup> edition. Boston: McGraw Hill Publishing.
11. Santrock, J. W. (2011). *Adolescence*. Boston: McGraw Hill Publishing.
12. Schneider, B. H. (2005). Child-Parent Attachment and Children's Peer Relations: A Quantitative Review. In M. E. Hertzig & E. A. Farber (Eds.), *Annual Progress in Child Psychiatr And Child Development*, 2002 (pp. 23-58), New York: Taylor & Francis.
13. Schneider, B. H. (2009). An observational study of the interactions of socially withdrawn/anxiety early adolescents and their friends. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 50, 799-806.