

Examining the Connection Between Attachment And Risk for Psychopathology in Adolescents : A Comprehensive Review

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Abstract

The foundation of attachment theory is the notion that early relationships – such as the one between a child and primary caregiver – play a crucial role in patterns of emotional regulation, interpersonal behaviors and adult functioning. This review explores how attachment styles are associated with psychopathology in adolescents by systematically assessing research studies up to May 2024.

Studies have shown that insecure attachment styles are risk factors for adaptation and psychopathology in adolescence, including anxiety disorders, dissociative disorders, borderline personality disorder, conduct disorder and substance use. Securely attached adolescents have better mental health outcomes. Longitudinal studies have also confirmed that early attachment affects later psychopathology. Insecure infant attachment is linked to depression, suicidality, substance use and dissociation in adolescents.

Emerging attachment-based interventions – including, for example, Attachment-Based Family Therapy (ABFT) – have demonstrated promise in treating adolescent mental health by targeting attachment disorganization level. Ultimately, working on reflective functioning, parental sensitivity and emotion regulation skills can help adolescents repair their attachments.

Even in light of these findings, attachment does not appear as straightforwardly explanatory as one might expect, given the developmental importance of attachment entering a new stage. Attachment researchers should consider participants' experiences of early attachment, in light of patterns of change during individual development, as well as in light of a family systems perspective – for instance, understanding that some adolescents who become disaffected from their families have parents who tend to be dismissive of their emotional needs. All of these could help in effective prevention and treatment of adolescent psychopathology.

Keywords: Attachment, psychopathology, adolescents, secure attachment, insecure attachment

Introduction

Attachment theory illustrates how early interactions between children and their parents or other primary caretakers contribute to their personal development across the lifespan. It has been developed to posit that the quality of attachment that children establish with their primary caregivers fosters confidence of belonging in a safe environment. They are relationships that act as significant markers to new relationships, thus being effective in promoting self-esteem and emotional well-being.

In attachment theory, the focus predominantly is on the importance of the relationships in influencing social-emotional development and well-being, by focusing on how children's relationships with their

primary caregivers shape regulation of emotions and behavior (Bowlby, 1969; Bretherton, 1992; Ainsworth et al., 1978).

Attachment theory was suggested to be a biopsychosocial model underlining how, or in what way a certain individual can operate in rather close relationships with the other people, and patterns of interaction with parents, children and sexual partners (Lorenzini & Fonagy, 2013).

In attachment theory, children who have secure parent representations move through each phase of development, expecting that secure relationships will be available. These include thinking that they should be cared for, having thoughts that the world is safe, and these thoughts and emotions are optimistic and positive.

As postulated by Brown and Wright (2003), those individuals with high levels of self reported emotional expressiveness, organization and optimism are considered to be having a 'secure' attachment. Positive self-images, openness, and honesty while acknowledging emotions and giving a detailed reason behind the emotions in display, makes the secure adolescents warm and intimate with people; *insecure* types, characterized by low attributional optimism and cognitive incoherence; *ambivalent* attachment, where the anxious element of the attachment system is also amplified and consist of larger uncontrolled, extravagant anxiety with an aimless, wandering character and *avoidant* attachment who are 'switching off' which refers to the inability to recognize emotions.

Children who have unresponsive parenting have a defense mechanism so as not to get discouraged or disappointed. In the case where a child develops *dismissive* attachment, they no longer seek comfort from their caregivers. There exists a *preoccupied* approach where children anxiously fear rejection by caretakers, while seeking attachment from them. Some children have a more *disorganized* attachment style which means that the child may be very much in need of affection and care but harbors what is referred to as the working model or possesses a negative view of the caregiver (Diamond et al., 2021).

The principles of attachment theory remain extremely important throughout adolescence, and emerging relationships influence social and emotional development. Children form healthy, secure relationships in the initial years of childhood through their attachment patterns, which enable adolescents to self-explore and have healthy and positive interpersonal relationships. On the other hand, maladaptive attachment patterns may translate into low levels of trust in peers, regulation of anger and other emotions, and efforts to gain autonomy in adolescence. These early attachments can significantly influence their psychological health, self- and emotional outcome and their capacity to cope well with life difficulties.

Method

A systematic literature review was performed to analyze the relationship between the attachment patterns and psychopathology, and to understand the techniques for interventions focusing on the attachment patterns among adolescents. The articles included in the review were identified according to materials available until May 2024 and sources like Scopus, PubMed, PsycINFO, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. These target journals are comparatively high impact: Journal of Research on Adolescence, Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, Development and Psychopathology, Attachment & Human Development, both volumes of Clinical Psychology Review.

Search terms such as (Attachment and Psychopathology) OR (Attachment Styles and Mental Health) OR (Attachment Interventions and Adolescents) OR (Attachment-Based Therapy) OR (Parent-Child Attachment and Adolescence). Studies by Rosenstein & Horowitz (1996) and McCauley et al. (1997) explored how different attachment styles, including secure, anxious, and avoidant, correlate with various

psychopathological outcomes in adolescence were utilized to recognize relevant studies. These studies have been carried out on adolescents, described attachment styles in relation to psychopathology, or elaborated on interventions for attachment disorder, and included peer-reviewed articles, longitudinal investigations, randomized controlled trials, meta-analyses, or systematic reviews written in English. Due to duplicate articles, an initial list of 95 studies articles was compiled for which the titles and abstracts were examined and 42 studies that were appropriate to the study were identified during a full-text review. The sources of data comprised the authors, the year of publication, the study design, attachment and psychopathology types, intervention details and key findings. The data were analyzed to provide a general overview of the present literature.

Discussion

Attachment And Psychopathology

Adolescents are more likely to possess a diminished capacity to restrain negative emotional states if they encounter discomfort in attachment to others, heightening the likelihood that the attachment system is triggered when they face traumatic events, and this increases the likelihood of developing dissociative symptomatology as a result of fragmented perceptions of self and others (Nag et al., 2024)

The theory of attachment gives us their general approach on the nature and effects of early attachment, especially from caregivers, on personality development and mental health. It has become evident that these early patterns of attachment are correlated with numerous forms of adolescent psychopathology including clinical depression, anxiety disorders, personality disorders, and antisocial behavior.

Several studies indicate that there may be a connection between categorical dimensions of attachment experiences in childhood and adolescence, and the emergence of psychopathology.

In a sample of thirty adolescents aged between 13 and 17, who were admitted in psychiatric hospitals, the relationship between personality disorder, psychopathology and classification of attachment was studied by Rosenstein and Horowitz (1996). Adolescents with dismissing attachment expressed higher vulnerability to narcissistic or antisocial personality disorder and higher level of self-reported narcissistic, antisocial, and paranoid personality disposition, in comparison with the rest of participants. Adolescents displaying a preoccupied attachment pattern had greater frequency of symptoms of affective disorders, OCD, histrionic, borderline or schizotypal personality disorder, self-reported avoidant, anxious, dysthymic personality and had previously received a diagnosis of any form of personality disorder.

Adverse childhood traumatic events and its association with psychopathology were examined by Pinto-Cortez et al. (2023) involving adolescents of northern Chile. The moderation of both intimacy avoidance and abandonment anxiety as the styles of attachment were also examined in the study. A total of one hundred and fifty four school-age adolescents between the age of 12 and 17 completed various self-report questionnaires. The findings also justify that increased levels of abandonment anxiety may heighten the effects on psychopathology among adolescents whereas, decreased levels of abandonment anxiety might decrease the influence of adverse childhood experiences on psychopathology in adolescents.

Renzi et al. (2023) conducted a study on the sample involving fifty children and adolescents suffering from headaches, asked to complete questionnaires and inventories. The correlational analysis suggested that secure father-child attachment predicted lower somatic symptoms among children, such that there was an inverse relationship between the two. Also, somatic symptoms showed positive relationships with attachment anxiety and avoidance towards both parents and therefore this research supports the theory of attachment, an insecure attachment pattern that associated with high level of both anxiety and avoidance

contributing to increased levels of somatic symptoms in children.

In a study by İmrek et al. (2023) on Turkish Adolescent Offenders and Victims study, an association between offenders and victims concerning attachment characteristics was established with the following findings: Offenders who were less securely attached with their parents had lower emotional acceptability and were less skilled in theory of mind and emotion identification in comparison to the victims. The study suggested that children may be protected from victimization and delinquency risks by promoting healthy parent-child connectedness and parenting practices.

In a study by Marín-Tejeda et al. (2021), 255 adolescents responded to questionnaires while they were in institutions namely, Mexico City and Puebla. The mental health personnel gave details compiled in record, such as, the, the minor's demographic history, psychiatric, and trauma history, the level of attachment between him and the attachment figure. According to the study, findings revealed that adolescents in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are most vulnerable, and this is especially true if the adolescents are likely to have a negative quality of attachment. This has found to be related to higher levels of psychopathology and a significant and non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI).

Barcaccia et al. (2020) in their study, used a cross-sectional survey approach and through self-report led subjects to complete validated questionnaires. It was evidenced in this particular study that insecure affective/cognitive quality of attachment had a direct detrimental impact on the view of the self which escalates depression, anxiety and anger.

Cross-sectional study assessing the relationship between attachment and psychopathology among adolescents was carried out separately in the clinical and nonclinical samples according to Lacasa et al. (2015). Being adolescents in the age bracket of 14-18 years, the sample consisted of 248 teenagers. Participants in the adolescent in each group were matched according to their age, sex and socioeconomic status. According to the measure of attachment, the CaMir questionnaire was applied in the process, whereas the measurement of the symptoms was done by applying the Youth Self Report. Similar patterns of association were identified between psychopathology and attachment in the non-clinical adolescent and the clinical one. Somatization, verbal aggression, phobia-anxiety, internalization, externalization, and reasoning or executive skills deficits were also predicted by the preoccupied attachment style in both groups.

The research conducted by Gur (2006) analyzed targeted high-risk adolescents in residential treatment for one year and accordingly; adolescents reported lower rates of anger, depressive symptoms and behavioral issues if they are provided with a secure sense of attachment by the staff members.

Roelofs et al. (2012) focused on exploring the association between insecure attachment styles and negative cognitive schemas, and various psychological disorders among the adolescent patients who came for counseling. The outcomes have indicated that distinct forms of insecure attachment lead to distinct forms of psychopathological disorders.

Miljkovitch et al. (2018), in their work, explored disorganized attachment in BPD in the 13 to 19-year-old group of adolescents. Specifically, the research questions sought to identify whether disorganized attachment with both parents would be higher among adolescents diagnosed with BPD compared to the non-adolescent clinical control group. The findings supported their hypothesis: The adolescents with BPD demonstrated greater disorganized attachment with both parents. On the other hand, the control group did not have such severe symptoms of disorganized attachment, but they reported secure attachment with at least one parent only. Other specific features of BPD adolescents were the combination of the disorganization toward both parents; insecure distinctiveness toward the father; and attachment

deactivation in relationships with the mother.

A study by Falgares et al. (2017) examines the possibility of self-criticism and dependency as a mediator in the link between suicidality and Insecure attachment styles. Questionnaires measuring the variables were completed by three hundred and forty randomly selected high school students ranging from the age of thirteen to twenty. The results suggested that dependency and self-criticism were predicted by the heightened degree of attachment anxiety. However, self-criticism was found to be positively related to an increase in suicide actions. Dependency and self-criticism mediated substantial indirect effects of attachment anxiety on suicide behaviour. In the case of attachment avoidance, people who had lower levels of dependency and higher levels of self-criticism were considered. It established the relationship between self-criticism and flipped suicide propensity higher than baseline.

The study by Rosenstein & Horowitz (1993) investigated the role of attachment in adolescent psychopathology. Mothers and adolescents were summed as subjects with thirty-seven mothers and sixty adolescents. As for measures, diagnostic and personality tests were administered to adolescents, whereas the mothers and the adolescents completed the Adult Attachment Interview categorization. The studies have shown that there was a relationship established between adolescents' clinical diagnosis and their personality, and the quality of their connections with their parents. The second interesting aspect is the high level of concordance between the mothers' and patients' attachment classifications.

In a study conducted by Demidenko et al. (2014), the main aim was to compare the adolescent girls who had depression with those who didn't, to determine the kind of attachment and communication patterns between the girls and their fathers. Pathology in mothers and fathers was also examined, however it should be noted that the author does not fully explain the differences between these two concepts, although they hold importance in the assessment of the results of psychopathology. Diagnostic interviews and measures of attachment and communication were carried out. Their mothers were administered a mood disorder diagnostic interview. The study found that girls with depression were more likely to have mothers with mood disorders or fathers with diagnosable psychopathology as compared to girls without such diagnoses. More specifically, girls having received depressive diagnoses were perceiving higher general rejection and lesser warmth from the father, lesser attachment and more complicated communication, as well as negative feelings toward the father. While fathers of girls without depression indicated they had communicated more frequently with their female children, fathers of girls with depression diagnoses pointed to lesser communication frequency.

Adolescents with dismissive attachment style utilized self-defensive mechanisms to protect them from information that portrayed attachment relationships in a negative way. Similar approach was employed by adolescents who were involved in substance misuse, narcissistic and antisocial personality features and other externalizing illnesses. Adolescents in the Preoccupied attachment group, self-reported predominantly negative images of parents, and they reacted to concerns about their attachment relationships with great intensity. They are inclined to demonstrate dependent, avoidant, schizotypal, dysthymia, and obsessive-compulsive personality dimensions, as well as the tendency to develop borderline, schizotypal, histrionic, and affective disorders.

In a nutshell, these studies explain the importance that attachment plays in shaping numerous psychopathological trends during human life while insisting on the importance of primary attachment experiences for individual mental health.

In conclusion, there is ample evidence from the numerous research conducted on adolescents to suggest that attachment experiences play an important role in determining different aspects of psychopathology.

Research carried out by Rosenstein & Horowitz (1996), Pinto-Cortez et al. (2023), and Marín-Tejeda et al. (2021) showed that the pathways found in insecure attachment are generally connected with increased risk of developing different types of psychopathologies including personality disorders, anxiety disorders, depression, and other behavioral disorders. Implications of these findings accentuate the central features of attachment theory which postulates that early attachments leave a long-lasting positive or adverse effect on adolescents' mental health and calls for early interventions that are geared towards enhancing healthy attachment and reducing adolescent abnormal development.

Longitudinal Studies

Longitudinal Research studies investigating attachment in the context of psychopathology have contributed effectively to the understanding of how individuals' attachment experiences in childhood have helped to predict the course of their personality throughout their lifetime. These longitudinal studies follow subjects over long time spans, such as, from birth to young adulthood, to investigate how high or low levels of attachment affect psychosocial well-being or pathology in later years. When studying people over time, attachment styles as well as their effects on novel and recurrent psychological maladaptive processes and potential disorders can be clearly assessed. This approach helps in identification of psychosocial vulnerability hence is effective in pointing out critical periods and sensitive periods in development where disruptions in attachment might cause adverse effects on mental health of an individual.

Cortés-García et al. (2020) conducted a longitudinal study to test the association between insecure attachment to parents and the development of symptoms of disordered eating across the developmental change from childhood to adolescence and to evaluate whether depression symptoms might be a mediator on the path. It also examines other factors that may further differ, including the child's gender, the attachment figure or the reciprocation of the variables. Longitudinal data were collected from a community-based sample of 904 Spanish youths in follow-up assessments at 2-year intervals between ages 10 and 16. The results suggest that insecure attachment could potentially influence eating disorder symptomatology in adolescence through the rise in depressive symptoms.

Securely attached adolescents are least likely to use substances while conversely, insecure adolescents are most likely to engage in substance use (Schindler, 2019). The study by (Branstetter et al., 2009) observed that 14 years old children who had the secure attachment used fewer substances when they were 16 years of age. This was supported by Danielsson et al. (2011), indicating that the attachment security in adolescents at 13 years was effective in preventing heavy drinking episodes in the same individuals at 15 years of age. Zhai et al. (2014) showed that participants who had insecure attachment at early adolescence, that is, at the age 10 to 12 years, had dysregulation at the middle adolescence, and substance use at later young adulthood.

Another study by Aikins and his colleagues (2009), followed the subjects for 15 years and focused on the stability of the representations throughout infancy and adolescence as well as the onset of the unresolved representations during the adolescence. Individuals whose relationship and developmental failures occurred in adolescence were at highest risk to get the Unsolved Representations in adolescence. The study also concluded that whilst healthy, high-quality interactions seemed to be necessary for healthy adolescent development, missing out on these crucial interactions appeared to hamper the fundamentals for adolescent healthy development or hinder human's ability to build the internal and external resources that help them to deal with the pressures of adolescence. Hypothesis postulated that the style of

attachments in adolescents could be forecasted by the extent of mother-child secure-base relationships in early development. Self-reported externalizing and internalizing symptoms, loneliness, and overall mother-child contact and relationships during adolescence were less frequent among youth with better mother-child attachment histories.

Longitudinal studies of Dutra et al., (2005) indicated that the strongest and most specific risk factors for adolescent dissociation were disorganized attachment in infancy, disturbed affective communication with the mother and maternal neglect.

Bosquet & Egeland (2006) explored the etiology and trajectory of symptoms of anxiety from infancy until the age of 18 years in a large high-risk community sample. In this research 155 subjects were studied using tools of observation, projective, and objective paradigms. The cause of negative peer relationship representations in preadolescence have been linked to insecure attachment relationships in infancy. These representations also prophesied signs of anxiety in adolescence as well.

A multiple regression analysis research work was carried out by Warren et al. (1997), with infants from the age of 12 months to 17.5 years of age, identifying the possible connection between anxious/resistant attachment and later anxiety disorders in adolescents, determining that there is a significant relationship between the quality of attachment relationships and the probability of developing anxiety disorders in adolescents.

Longitudinal studies indicate that early attachment patterns, seen as secure, are related to reduced substance use and less symptoms of anxiety and depression, improved ability to regulate feelings in teen years and into the early adult years. On the other hand, subtypes of insecure attachment like the avoidant, ambivalent, or disorganized attachment styles, are related to factors that increase the probability of maladaptive behavior like the use of alcohol, drugs or mental illness.

Insecure Attachment As A Risk Factor

Insecure attachments due to inadequate care-giving can involve distortions in emotional and interpersonal function, thus manifesting behavioral and psychological disorders. Individuals who face challenges in establishing a secure base in childhood usually grow up to have insecure attachment with negative internal working models of themselves and those around them, as well as problematic expectations in the relationships (Schindler, 2019).

A study conducted by Babo et al. (2023) with 249 adolescents living in residential care facilities in Porto, Portugal suggests that both the emotional functioning and the working model of the relationship with caregivers are affected as the perceived attachment with the caregivers is recognized as insecure.

A meta-analytical review by Spruit et al. (2019) critically evaluated the relationship between attachment security and depression in adolescents. It concluded that, there may be a possibility of attachment insecurity being a risk factor for development of depression in children and adolescents.

Patterns of insecure attachment during childhood, play a significant role, and impact the adolescents' social, emotional, and behavioral development. Insecure attachment patterns in adolescents predispose them to severe limitations in forming secure relationships, regulating and expressing emotions, building self-esteem, psychological and social functioning.

The children exhibiting insecure attachment patterns can also display such behaviors as social withdrawal, aggression or poor help-seeking. Further, they may adopt the models of insecure relationships with primary caregivers in subsequent relationships, which potentially creates the insecurity and problematic interpersonal experiences.

Secure Attachment As A Protective Factor

Autonomy should be acquired by sustaining attachment through adolescence (Steinberg, 1990). A study by Malik et al. (2021) suggested that, instead of establishing a direct cause-and-effect relationship between attachment and psychopathology, attachment can be considered as a risk factor that increases the vulnerability to developing psychopathology, and also posits that secure attachments are protective, leading to rewarding interpersonal relationships. Taking this into consideration, possessing certain protective factors that cancels out the effects of risk factors can be crucial in understanding attachment related psychopathology

Collective knowledge of the protective factors of attachment related psychopathological models is imperative in shedding light on the manner in which one can be resilient despite coming from early negative caregiving environments. The theory of attachment maintains that having secure connections serves as a protective factor in human emotional growth and interpersonal relationships and counteracts the damaging impacts of insecure ones. Protective factors include features of self and context in relation to caregiving, ranging from caregiver–child relationships to the stability of the environment and milieu intervention strategies.

As for the capability to modulate stress, Lorenzini and Fonagy (2013) explained that secure attachment can be thought of, as the possessor of organized internal representations of the attachment relationship, adaptability to the new and varying social context, and, most importantly, capability with regards to the present index, to regulate stress both internally and through interactions with others.

In the study by Tan et al. (2023), the mediating role of psychological quality and moderating role of coping styles, in the relationship of parent child attachment with adolescent mental health on 633 early adolescents were examined. The study suggested that development of psychological quality and task-focused coping strategies holds crucial importance for adolescent mental health. Additionally, promoting task-focused thinking and encouraging a positive response to academic and life challenges through teaching and learning strategies can contribute to reducing the occurrence of psychological problems.

The study of Cunha et al. (2012) that included 651 adolescent participants, aimed at determining the connection between: Early memories, attachment styles and levels of psychopathology. This study highlighted that adolescents who possess a secure attachment pattern were significantly more likely to report positive memories of warmth and security in their early years than teens with an insecure attachment pattern (avoidant or ambivalent).

Coping assets in attachment-related psychopathology represent an important protector variable in encouraging resilience and shielding against negative psychological consequences within adolescent-aged youth. In particular, studies reinforce the importance of secure attachment patterns for learning proper regulation of emotional states and developing healthy identities and effective coping strategies. Studies show that secure attachments result in the acquisition of well-organized internal working models and the ability to regulate stress and cope with affect; these factors limit susceptibility to psychopathology. This signifies the importance of understanding and supporting protective factors at the level of attachment.

Interventions

Approaches which focus on the aspect of attachment processes in adolescents, are pivotal in preventing psychopathological results as well as promoting adolescents' positive growth and wellbeing.

Barcaccia et al. (2020) have emphasized that Clinical approaches treating adolescents with mindfulness

practice supported by clinical techniques stemming from attachment theory may benefit on different psychological levels and alter self-related attitudes leading to tendencies improving depression and anxiety. On the other hand, treatments modifying self-related attitudes with particular consideration to self-reassurance and self-inadequacy revealed the potential for a positive effect on adolescents' mental health.

Attachment-Based Family Therapy (ABFT) specifically targets attachment disintegration within caregiver-adolescent relationships. ABFT interventions lead to effective communication and emotional regulation in adolescents, which improve mental health outcomes, such as a significant reduction in depressive and suicidal thoughts, in a wide range of therapeutic contexts and demographics (Diamond et al., 2021).

Programs that focus on fostering secure attachment in children and adolescents are suggested to prevent Substance use disorders (Schindler, 2019). Adolescent sadness and anxiety may be reduced, and self-esteem may be increased by integrating mindfulness practices with attachment-focused therapies

Furthermore, parent-teen relationships are improved by interventions such as MBT and the CONNECT program, which accentuate reflective functioning and parental sensitivity, improving dyadic affect regulation and mutual understanding between them (Moretti et al., 2015). The program known as Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-up (ABC) highlights the importance of parental sensitivity in providing emotional support for adolescents and stresses the long-term effects of early interventions on adolescent-mother interactions (ABC, 10-session home visiting program (Dozier & Bernard, 2017)

Obsuth et al. (2006) have discussed that adolescent oppositional difficulties were reduced successfully by increasing parental knowledge regarding the theory of attachment and making overall changes in the parent adolescent interactions. In the study, questionnaires were completed, 48 teenagers with severe conduct disorders and their caregivers were involved, the procedure was done before and after joining the parent group named Connect Parent Group. The program of study utilizes attachment theory and skills in empathic understanding as well as parental sensitivity and effective affect regulation in a dyadic unit. These capabilities are basic to a stable attachment and are essential in the fine art of parenthood. From the caregivers' side, the enhanced signs of parental competencies and satisfaction of both the teens and the caregivers have been observed, including a reduced rate of violent behaviors, internalizing and externalizing problems, and avoidance behaviors in the adolescents.

Procedures that are focused on or involve aspects of attachment or use peer directed interventions such as social skills training can be utilized in the repair of relationship ruptures and in the rebuilding of consistent positive relationships with peers and parents (Roelofs et al. , 2012)

Interventions integrating mindfulness and attachment-based clinical techniques have proved to improve self-related attitudes among adolescents, which mitigates depression and anxiety (Kobak & Kerig, 2015). These integrative approaches highlight the multi-faceted benefits of attachment-focused interventions in addressing both attachment trauma and emotion regulation strategies paramount for adolescent mental health (Gander et al., 2018; Kobak & Kerig, 2015). These approaches further spotlight the importance of early intervention and family-focused interventions to promote secure attachments and build emotional resilience from adolescence emerging into adulthood.

A key claim of attachment theory is that the early relationships one forms with caregivers play a critical role in shaping emotional self-regulation and behavior in interpersonal relationships established later in life. Notably, Insecure attachment among adolescents manifested avoidantly, ambivalently or Disorganized may lead to poor ability in attaining trusting relationships and regulating emotions. Based

on the attachment theory, the approaches aimed at supporting changes in caregiving behaviors include targeted interventions like ABFT, mindfulness and other MBT, CONNECT and other parent-teen relationship programmes. Through increasing dyadic caregiver sensitivity, emotional availability, and providing a safe haven/secure base in play, these interventions aim at reducing symptoms of depression, anxiety, and conduct disorders and fostering resources and adaptive coping among pre-adolescent and adolescent children. Knowing about the role of attachment as far as the formation of psychopathology determines the interventions that seek to enhance relational development during this development.

According to Barcaccia et al. (2020), it is effective to combine clinical approaches compatible with mindfulness practices and approaches originating from attachment theory to address adolescents and their attitudes toward self and improve self-related attitudes, depression, and anxiety. ABFT along with programmes like MBT, CONNECT, and ABC program increases the child-parental communication, emotion regulation, and attunement which contribute significantly towards quality mental health, change in depressive and suicidal cognition, improvement in self-esteem, and reduction in conduct disorders. Such interventions highlight the need for using attachment security and early and family-based approaches to build up young people's emotional strengths and decrease their risks of adopting psychopathological symptoms

Limitations

The relationship of early attachment security to later behavior is not universally found in short-term, cross-sectional studies, which raises questions about the nature of the findings. The limitation of the review is the selection of convenient sources, which are English peer-reviewed articles available in the specific databases. In the studies, comparison is not easy because the methodologies, sample sizes, and the tools used to assess maternal outcomes all differ. Validated quantitative self-assessed tools are common and may overemphasize positive behavior and distort past events. The conclusions and interventions highlighted may be practically inapplicable or not applicable across cultures as they are developed primarily within Western settings. Other arguments do not account for factors such as genetics, cultural, and coexisting mental disorders influencing the attachment and psychopathology.

Future Research

The stage of adolescence should be given precedence in future studies within developmental framework, taking into account the important influence of early attachment patterns. To comprehensively investigate these dynamics, it is essential to take a perspective that incorporates family systems (Schindler, 2019).

Further research should be undertaken with subjects followed-up for an extended period of time to identify complex interactions between early care-giving experiences and later on psychopathological manifestation. Because of the existing limitations in studying culture differences, the suggestions called for more culturally diverse research so that results would extend beyond the predominantly western settings. Further research should also consider the use of mixed methods research design that involves both qualitative and quantitative approaches in portraying a true picture of the dynamics of attachment processes and effects. Investigators have to consider factors like genetics, culture, and other psychiatric diagnoses in order to minimize risk factors that may influence the outcomes.

Moreover, the exploration of treatment outcomes and benefits among the attachment-focused interventions could be useful for generalizing their usage in different cultural communities or when concerning people with different socioeconomic statuses. Last but not least, understanding the long-term

impact of these interventions and defining the aspects that offer resistance to releasing negative effects is paramount for coming up with more effective evidence-based practice approaches to the management of attachment-related psychopathology in adolescents.

Though these findings attest to the importance of attachment in influencing the psychopathological course, there seems to be a more complex relationship that makes the outcome difficult to replicate across all the studies. Future research should pay more attention to the adolescent period within a developmental framework, take into consideration the early attachment influences, and consider a family systems approach to investigate these pathways in more depth

Conclusion

The review provides a comprehensive understanding of how attachment experiences can significantly affect the well-being of adolescents. The review presented various kinds of research that support that some kinds of insecure attachment have some sort of association with various psychiatric illnesses; dismissing, preoccupied, and disorganized attachments among them. For example, Rosenstein and Horowitz (1996) identified that the dismissing mode of Attachment has been associated with narcissistic and antisocial PD among adolescents, while, the preoccupied mode of Attachment has been related to affective disorders, OCD, and borderline PD. Likewise, Pinto-Cortez et al. (2023) pointed out that anxiety in attachment increases the impact of ACEs on psychopathology and underlines the importance of providing a safe parenting care focus for emotional regulation and developing problem-solving abilities.

Also in both longitudinal and cross-sectional studies, profound evidence shows how these early attachment patterns impact the later adolescent health. Cortés-García et al. (2020) found that the secure base and emotional insecurity with parents during childhood significantly predicted disordered eating behaviors in adolescents, moderated through depression. Similarly, Bosquet and Egeland (2006) established that negative peer associations and fearful attachment styles in infancy predict symptoms of anxiety in adolescents. The buffering aspect of secure attachment is observed by studies, suggesting that enhanced parent-child attachment during early years shapes healthier emotional development and lower substance use during later developmental stages.

This review recaps data from many studies to explain the multifaceted pathways from attachment style to psychopathology in adolescence. Across the board, the presence of insecure attachment styles in adolescents – often related to adverse childhood experiences and disrupted parental bonding – appears to be associated with a wide range of psychopathological outcomes in adolescence, including anxiety disorders and dissociative disorders, borderline personality disorder and substance abuse

Longitudinal work adds to this picture, underlining the developmental significance of attachment, and demonstrating the extent to which early attachment patterns can prefigure later psychopathology: insecure attachment patterns in infancy have been associated with depressed mood, suicidality, substance use, and dissociation in adolescence; secure attachment in infancy is generally associated with more positive mental health outcomes, and can also serve as protective factors against potential psychopathology..

The findings of this review hold important clinical implications. Among interventions that align with attachment theory are modes of intervention such as Attachment-Based Family Therapy (ABFT), which, by addressing attachment dysregulation, have been shown to successfully improve mental health outcomes for adolescents through caregiver and adolescent interventions that target reflective functioning, parental sensitivity and emotion regulation skills. Integrating mindfulness practices with attachment-based interventions can further augment outcomes.

Overall, a closer examination on the nexus between attachment styles and psychopathology might pave the way to specific and targeted prevention and treatment interventions rooted in the firm grounds of developmental theories and successful strategies to build resilience among adolescents affected by mental health burden. The promising early steps remain for further research and clinical innovation on this path.

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Abstract The foundation of attachment theory is the notion that early relationships – such as the one between a child and primary caregiver – play a crucial role in patterns of emotional regulation, interpersonal behaviors and adult functioning. This review explores how attachment styles are associated with psychopathology in adolescents by systematically assessing research studies up to May 2024. Studies have shown that insecure attachment styles are risk factors for adaptation and psychopathology in adolescence, including anxiety disorders, dissociative disorders, borderline personality disorder, conduct disorder and substance use. Securely attached adolescents have better mental health outcomes. Longitudinal studies have also confirmed that early attachment affects later psychopathology. Insecure infant attachment is linked to depression, suicidality, substance use and dissociation in adolescents. Emerging attachment-based interventions – including, for example, Attachment-Based Family Therapy (ABFT) – have demonstrated promise in treating adolescent mental health by targeting attachment disorganization level. Ultimately, working on reflective functioning, parental sensitivity and emotion regulation skills can help adolescents repair their attachments. Even in light of these findings, attachment does not appear as straightforwardly explanatory as one might expect, given the developmental importance of attachment entering a new stage. Attachment researchers should consider participants' experiences of early attachment, in light of patterns of change during individual development, as well as in light of a family systems perspective – for instance, understanding that some adolescents who become disaffected from their families have parents who tend to be dismissive of their emotional needs. All of these could help in effective prevention and treatment of adolescent psychopathology.

Introduction Attachment theory illustrates how early interactions between children and parents or other primary caretakers contribute to his or her personal development across lifespan. It has been developed to posit that the quality of attachment that children establish with their primary caregivers fosters confidence of belonging in a safe environment. They are relationships that act as significant markers to new relationships, thus being effective in promoting self-esteem and emotional well-being. In attachment theory, the focus predominantly is on the importance of the relationships in influencing social-emotional development and well-being, by focusing on how children's relationships with their primary caregivers shape regulation of emotions and behavior (Bowlby, 1969; Bretherton, 1992; Ainsworth et al., 1978). Attachment theory was suggested to be a biopsychosocial model underlining how or in what way a certain individual can operate in rather close relationships with the other people and its aim is to describe the subject's patterns of interaction with parents, children and sexual

partners (Lorenzini & Fonagy, 2013). In attachment theory, children who have secure parent representations move through each phase of development expecting that a secure relationship with the caregiver will be available. These include thinking that they should be cared for, having thoughts that the world is safe and these thoughts and emotions are major and positive. As postulated by Brown and Wright (2003) those individuals with high levels of self reported emotional expressiveness, organization and optimism are considered to be having 'secure' attachment. Positive self-images, openness, and honesty while acknowledging emotions and giving a detailed reason behind the emotions in display, makes the secure adolescents warm and intimate with people; insecure types, characterized by low attributional optimism and cognitive incoherence; ambivalent attachment, where the anxious element of the attachment system is also amplified and consist of larger uncontrolled, extravagant anxiety with an aimless, wandering character and avoidant attachment who are 'switching off' which refers to the inability to recognize emotions. Children who have unresponsive parenting have a defense mechanism so as not to get discouraged or disappointed. In the case where a child develops dismissive attachment, they no longer seek comfort from their caregivers. There exists a preoccupied approach where children anxiously fear rejection by caretakers, while seeking attachment from them. Some children have a more disorganized attachment style which means that the child may be very much in need of affection and care but harbors what is referred to as the working model or possesses a negative view of the caregiver (Diamond et al., 2021). The principles of attachment theory remain extremely important throughout adolescence, and emerging states of development and relations influence social emotional development. Children form healthy working models of relationships in the initial years of childhood through their attachment patterns, which enable adolescents to self- explore and have healthy and positive interpersonal relationships. On the other hand, maladaptive attachment patterns may translate into low levels of trust in peers, regulation of anger and other emotions, and efforts to gain autonomy in adolescence. These early attachments can significantly influence their psychological health, self- and emotional outcome and their capacity to cope well with life difficulties. Method A systematic literature search was performed to analyze the relation between the attachment patterns and psychopathology and to understand the techniques for interventions focusing on the attachment patterns among adolescents. The articles included in the review were identified according to materials available until May 2024 and sources like Scopus, PubMed, PsycINFO, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. These target journals are comparatively high impact: Journal of Research on Adolescence, Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, Development and Psychopathology, Attachment & Human Development, both volumes of Clinical Psychology Review. Studies by Rosenstein & Horowitz (1996) and McCauley et al. (1997) explored how different attachment styles, including secure, anxious, and avoidant, correlate with various psychopathological outcomes in adolescence. Search terms such as (Attachment and Psychopathology) OR (Attachment Styles and Mental Health) OR (Attachment Interventions and Adolescents) OR (Attachment-Based Therapy) OR (Parent-Child Attachment and Adolescence) were utilized to recognize relevant studies. These studies have been carried out on adolescents, described attachment styles in relation to psychopathology, or elaborated on interventions for attachment disorder, and included peer-reviewed

articles, longitudinal investigations, randomized controlled trials, meta-analyses, or systematic reviews written in English.

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Due to duplicate articles, an initial list of 95 studies articles was compiled for which the titles and abstracts were examined and 42 studies that were appropriate to the study were identified during a full-text review. The sources of data comprised the authors, the year of publication, the study design, attachment and psychopathology types, intervention details and key findings. The data was analyzed to provide a general overview of the present literature. Insecure attachment Insecure attachments due to inadequate care-giving can involve distortions in emotional and interpersonal function thus manifesting behaviour and psychological disorders. Individuals who face challenges in establishing a secure base in childhood usually grow up to have insecure attachment with negative internal working models of themselves and those around them, as well as problematic expectations in the relationships (Schindler, 2019). A study conducted by Babo et al. (2023) with 249 adolescents living in residential care facilities in Porto, Portugal suggests that both the emotional functioning and the working model of the relationship with caregivers are affected as the perceived attachment with the caregivers is recognized as insecure. A meta-analytical review by Spruit et al. (2019) critically evaluated the relationship between attachment security and depression in children and adolescents It concluded that it there may be a possibility that attachment insecurity may be a risk factor for development of depression in children and adolescents. Adolescents are more likely to possess a diminished capacity to restrain negative emotional states if they encounter discomfort in attachment to others, heightening the likelihood that the attachment system is triggered when they face traumatic events and this increases the likelihood of developing dissociative symptomatology as a result of fragmented perceptions of self and others (Nag et al., 2024) Patterns of insecure attachment during childhood play a significant role and impact the adolescents' social, emotional, and behavioral development. Insecure attachment patterns in adolescents predispose them to severe limitations in forming secure relationships, regulating and expressing emotions, building self-esteem, psychological and social functioning. The children exhibiting insecure attachment patterns can also display such behaviors as social withdrawal, aggression or poor help-seeking. Further, they may adopt the models of insecure relationship with primary caregivers in subsequent relationships, which potentially creates the insecurity and problematic interpersonal experiences. Attachment and Psychopathology The theory of

attachment gives us their general approach on the nature and effects of early attachment, especially from caregivers on personality development and mental health. It has become evident that these early patterns of attachment are correlated with numerous forms of adolescent psychopathology including clinical depression, anxiety disorders, personality disorders, and antisocial behavior. Several studies indicate that there may be a connection between categorical dimensions of attachment experiences in childhood and adolescence and the emergence of psychopathology. In a sample of thirty adolescents aged between 13 and 17, who were admitted in psychiatric hospitals, the relationship between personality disorder, psychopathology and classification of attachment was studied by Rosenstein and Horowitz (1996). The validity of the criterion was tested on 27 dyads, composed of adolescents and their mothers, to compare the attachment classification of both the participants. Adolescents with dismissing attachment expressed higher vulnerability to narcissistic or antisocial personality disorder and higher level of self-reported narcissistic, antisocial, and paranoid personality disposition in comparison with the rest of participants. Adolescents displaying a preoccupied attachment pattern had a greater frequency of symptoms of affective disorders, OCD, histrionic, borderline or schizotypal personality disorder, self-reported avoidant, anxious, dysthymic personality and had previously received a diagnosis of any form of personality disorder. Adverse childhood traumatic events and its association with psychopathology were examined by Pinto-Cortez et al. (2023) involving adolescents of northern Chile. The moderation of the both intimacy avoidance and abandonment anxiety as the styles of attachment were also examined in the study. A total of one hundred and fifty four school age adolescents between the age of 12 and 17 completed various self-administered paper based self-report questionnaires. The findings also justify that whereas increased levels of abandonment anxiety may heighten the effects on psychopathology among adolescents, decreased levels of abandonment anxiety might decrease the influence of adverse childhood experiences on psychopathology in adolescents. Renzi et al. (2023) conducted a study on the sample involving fifty children and adolescents suffering from headaches, asked to complete questionnaires and inventories. The correlational analysis suggested that secure father-child attachment predicted lower somatic symptoms among children, such that there was an inverse relationship between the two. Also, somatic symptoms showed positive relationships with attachment anxiety and avoidance towards both parents and therefore this research supports the theory of attachment, an insecure attachment pattern that associated with high level of both anxiety and avoidance contributing to increased levels of somatic symptoms in children. In a study by Imrek et al. (2023) on Turkish Adolescent Offenders and Victims study, an association between offenders and victims concerning attachment characteristics was established with the following findings: Offenders who were less securely attached with parents; had lower emotional acceptability; and were less skilled in theory of mind and emotion identification compared with the victims. For victimization and delinquency risks, children may be protected by some preventive efforts that


can promote parent-adolescent connectedness and parenting practices, In a study by Marín-Tejeda et al. (2021), 255 adolescents responded to questionnaires while they were in institutions namely in Mexico City and Puebla. The mental health personnel gave details compiled in record, such as, the, the minor's demographic history, psychiatric, and trauma history, the level of attachment between him and the attachment figure. According to the study, findings revealed that adolescents in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are most vulnerable, and this is especially true if the adolescents are likely to have negative quality of attachment. This is related to a higher levels of psychopathology and a significant and more recent non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI). Barcaccia et al. (2020) in their study, used a cross-sectional survey approach and through self-report led subjects to complete validated questionnaires. It was evidenced in this particular study that Insecure affective/cognitive

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quality of attachment had direct detrimental impact on the view of the self which escalates depression, anxiety and anger. Cross-sectional study assessing the relationship between attachment and psychopathology among adolescents was carried out separately in the clinical and nonclinical samples according to Lacasa et al. (2015). Being adolescents in the age bracket of 14-18 years, the sample consisted of 248 teenagers. Participants in the adolescent in each group were matched according to the age, sex and socioeconomic status. According to the measure of attachment, the CaMir questionnaire was applied in the process, whereas the measurement of the symptoms was done by applying the Youth Self Report. Similar patterns of association were identified between psychopathology and attachment in the non-clinical adolescent and the clinical one. Somatization, verbal aggression, phobia-anxiety, internalization, externalization, and reasoning or executive skills deficits were also predicted by the preoccupied attachment style in both groups. The research conducted by Gur (2006) analyzed targeted high-risk adolescents in residential treatment for one year and accordingly; adolescents reported lower rates of anger, depressive symptoms and behavioural issues if they are provided with a secure sense of attachment by the staff members. Roelofs et al. (2012) focused on exploring the association between insecure attachment styles and negative cognitive schemas and various psychological disorders among the adolescent patients who came for counseling. The outcomes have indicated that distinct forms of insecure attachment lead to distinct forms of psychopathological disorders. Miljkovitch et al. (2018), in their work, explored disorganized attachment in BPD in the 13 to19-year-old group of adolescents and used samples from a European study. Specifically, the research questions sought to identify whether disorganized attachment with both parents would be higher among adolescents diagnosed with BPD compared to the non-adolescent clinical control group. The findings supported their hypothesis: The adolescents with BPD demonstrated greater disorganized attachment with both parents. On the other hand, the control group did not have such severe symptoms of disorganized attachment, but they reported secure attachment with at least one parent only. Other specific features of BPD adolescents were the combination of the disorganization toward both parents; insecure distinctiveness toward the father; and attachment deactivation in relationships with the mother. A study by Falgares et al. (2017) examines the

possibility of self-criticism and dependency as a mediator in the link between suicidality and Insecure attachment styles. Questionnaires measuring the variables were completed by three hundred and forty randomly selected high school students ranging from the age of thirteen to twenty. The results suggested that dependency and self-criticism were predicted by the heightened degree of attachment anxiety. However, self-criticism was found to be positively related to an increase in suicide actions. Dependency and self-criticism mediated substantial indirect effects of attachment anxiety on suicide behaviour. In the case of attachment avoidance, people who had lower levels of dependency and higher levels of self-criticism were considered. It established the relationship between self-criticism and flipped suicide propensity higher than baseline. The study by Rosenstein & Horowitz (1993) investigated the role of attachment in adolescent psychopathology. Mothers and adolescents were summed as subjects with thirty-seven mothers and sixty adolescents. As for measures, diagnostic and personality tests were administered to adolescents, whereas the moms and the adolescents completed the Adult Attachment Interview categorization. The studies have shown that there was a relationship established between adolescents' clinical diagnosis and their personality and the quality of their connections with the parents. The second interesting aspect is the high level of concordance between the mothers' and patients' attachment classifications. According to the study conducted by Demidenko et al. (2014), the main aim of the research was to compare the adolescent girls who had depression with those who didn't to determine the kind of attachment and communication patterns between these girls and their fathers. Pathology in mothers and fathers was also examined, however it should be noted that the author does not fully explain the differences between these two concepts, although they hold importance in the assessment of the results of psychopathology. Diagnostic interviews and measures of attachment and communication were carried out with the assistance of the adolescent girls with and without depression, and their fathers. Their mothers were administered mood disorder diagnostic interview. They found that girls with depression were more likely to have mothers with mood disorders or fathers with diagnosable psychopathology as compared to girls without such diagnoses. More specifically, girls having received depressive diagnoses were perceiving higher general rejection and lesser warmth from the father, lesser attachment and more complicated communication, as well as negative feelings toward the father. While fathers of girls without depression indicated they had more frequently communicated with their female children, fathers of girls with depression diagnoses pointed to lesser communication frequency. Adolescents with dismissive attachment style utilized self-defensive mechanisms to protect them from information that portrayed attachment relationships in a negative way. Similar approach was employed by adolescents with conduct disorders who were involved in substance misuse, narcissistic and antisocial personality features and other externalizing illnesses. Adolescents in the Preoccupied attachment group, self-reported predominantly negative images of parents, and they reacted to concerns


about their attachment relationships with great intensity. They inclined to demonstrate dependent, avoidant, schizotypal, dysthymic, and obsessive-compulsive personality dimensions, as well as the tendency to develop borderline, schizotypal, histrionic, and affective disorders. In a nutshell, these studies explain the importance that role of attachment plays in shaping numerous psychopathological trends during human life while insisting on the importance of primary attachment experiences for individual mental health. In conclusion, there is ample evidence from the numerous research conducted on adolescents to suggest that attachment experiences play an important role in determining different aspects of psychopathology. Research carried out by Rosenstein & Horowitz (1996), Pinto-Cortez et al. (2023), and Marin-Tejeda et al. (2021) showed that the pathways found in insecure attachment are generally connected with increased risk of developing different types of psychopathologies including personality disorders, anxiety disorders, depression, and other behavioral disorders.

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Implications of these findings accentuate the central features of attachment theory which postulates that early attachments leave a long-lasting positive or adverse effect to adolescents' mental health and calls for early interventions that are geared towards enhancing healthy attachment and reducing adolescent abnormal development. Longitudinal Studies

Longitudinal Research studies investigating attachment in the context of psychopathology have contributed effectively to the understanding of how individuals' attachment experiences they have had in childhood have helped to predict the course of their personality throughout their lifetime. These longitudinal studies follow their subjects over long time spans, such as, from birth to young adulthood, to investigate how high or low levels of attachment affect psychosocial well-being or pathology in later years. When studying people over time, loneliness and attachment styles as well as their effects on novel and recurrent psychological maladaptive processes and disorders can be clearly assessed. This approach helps in identification of psychosocial vulnerability hence is effective in pointing out critical periods and sensitive periods in development where disruptions in attachment might cause adverse effect on mental health of an individual. Some trends noted in longitudinal research and meta-analyses are as follows: It has been observed that the attachment at an earlier age impacts substance abuse at a later stage and three different longitudinal studies support this. Cortés-García et al. (2020) conducted a longitudinal study to test the association between insecure attachment to parents and the development of symptoms of disordered eating across the developmental change from childhood to adolescence and to evaluate whether depression symptoms might be a mediator on the path. It also examines other factors that may further differ, including the child's gender, the attachment figure or the reciprocation of the variables. Longitudinal data were collected from a community-based sample of 904 Spanish youths in follow-up assessments at 2-year intervals between ages 10 and 16. The results suggest that insecure attachment could potentially influence eating disorder symptomatology in adolescence through the rise in depressive symptoms. The study by (Branstetter et al., 2009) observed that 14 years old children who had the secure attachment used fewer substances when they were 16 years of age. This was supported by Danielsson et al. (2011), indicating that the attachment security in adolescents at 13 years was effective in preventing heavy drinking episodes in the same

individuals at 15 year of ages. However, the Zhai et al. (2014) study showed that participants who had insecure attachment at early adolescence, that is, at the age 10 to 12 years, had dysregulation at the middle adolescence, that is, the age of 16 years and substance use at later young adulthood, the age of 22 years. Securely attached adolescents are least likely to use substances while conversely, insecure adolescents are most likely to engage in substance use (Schindler, 2019). Another study by Aikins and his colleagues (2009), followed the subjects for 15 years and focused on the stability of the representations throughout infancy and adolescence as well as the onset of the unresolved representations during the adolescence. Individuals whose relationship and developmental failures occurred in adolescence were at highest risk to get the Unresolved Representations in adolescence. The study also concluded that whilst healthy, high-quality interactions seemed to be necessary for healthy adolescent development, missing out on these crucial interactions appeared to hamper the fundamentals for adolescent healthy development or hinder human's ability to build the internal and external resources that help them to deal with the pressures of adolescence. Hypothesis postulated that the style of attachments in adolescents could be forecasted by the extent of mother-child secure-base relationships in early development. Self-reported externalizing and internalizing symptoms, loneliness, and overall mother-child contact and relationships during adolescence were less frequent among youth with better mother-child attachment histories. Longitudinal studies of Dutra et al., (2005) indicated that the strongest and most specific risk factors for adolescent dissociation were disorganized attachment in infancy, disturbed affective communication with the mother and maternal neglect. Bosquet & Egeland (2006) explored the aetiology and trajectory of symptoms of anxiety from infancy until the age of 18 years in a large high-risk community sample. In this research 155 subjects were studied using tools of observation, projective, and objective paradigms. The cause of negative peer relationship representations in preadolescence have been linked to insecure attachment relationships in infancy. These representations also prophesied signs of anxiety in adolescence as well. A multiple regression analysis research work was carried out by Warren et al. (1997), with infants from the age of 12 months to 17.5 years of age, identifying the possible connection between anxious/resistant attachment and later anxiety disorders in adolescents, determining that there is a significant relationship between the quality of attachment relationships and the probability of developing anxiety disorders in adolescents. Longitudinal studies indicate that early attachment patterns, seen as secure, are related to reduced substance use and less symptoms of anxiety and depression, improved ability to regulate feelings in teen years and into the early adult years. On the other hand, subtypes of insecure attachment like the avoidant, ambivalent, or disorganized attachment styles, are related to factors that increase the probability of maladaptive behavior like the use of alcohol, drugs or mental illness. Procedures that are focused on or involve aspects of attachment or use peer directed interventions such as social skills training can be utilized in the repair of relationship ruptures and

in the rebuilding of consistent positive relationships with peers and parents (Roelofs et al., 2012)

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Jun 22, 2024

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Protective Factors Collective knowledge of the protective factors of attachment related psychopathological models is imperative in shedding light on the manner in which one can be resilient despite coming from early negative caregiving environments. The theory of attachment maintains that having secure connections serves as a protective factor in human emotional growth and interpersonal relationship and counteracts the damaging impacts of insecure ones. Protective factors include features of self and context in relation to caregiving, ranging from caregiver-child relationships to the stability of the environment and milieu intervention strategies. Information derived from studies demonstrates that caregiver and contextual variables can help in preventing insecure attachments to alleviate symptoms of psychopathology like anxiety, depression and behavior disorders. Understanding the specific processes in which actual protective factors are employed would enhance the applicability of boosting resilient processes to populations being at risk for developing attachment-related psychopathology and maladjustment. As for the capability to modulate stress, Lorenzini and Fonagy (2013) explained that secure adult attachment can be thought of, as the possessor of organized internal representations of the attachment relationship, adaptability to the new and varying social context, and, most importantly, capability with regards to the present index, to regulate stress both internally and through interactions with others. In the study by Tan et al. (2023), the mediating role of psychological quality and moderating role of coping styles in the relationship of parent child attachment with adolescent mental health on 633 early adolescents were examined. The study suggested that parent-child attachment had significantly impacted the mental health of adolescents. The study of Cunha et al. (2012) that included 651 adolescent participants aimed at determining the connection between: Early memories, attachment styles and levels of psychopathology. This study highlighted that adolescents who possess an insecure attachment pattern (avoidant or ambivalent) were significantly less likely to report positive memories of warmth and security in their early years than teens with a secure attachment pattern. Autonomy should be acquired by sustaining attachment through adolescence (Steinberg, 1990). A study by Malik et al. (2021) suggested that, instead of establishing a direct cause-and-effect relationship between attachment and psychopathology, attachment can be considered as a risk factor that increases the vulnerability to developing psychopathology, and

also posits that secure attachments are protective, leading to rewarding interpersonal relationships. Coping assets in attachment-related psychopathology represent an important protector variable in encouraging resilience and shielding against negative psychological consequences within adolescent-aged youth. In particular, studies reinforce the importance of safe attachment patterns for learning proper regulation of emotional states and developing healthy identities and effective coping strategies. Studies show that secure attachments result in the acquisition of well-organized internal working models and the ability to regulate stress and cope with affect; these factors limit susceptibility to psychopathology. The buffering effects of secure attachments are not only protective against depression and other mental health issues, but also against substance use. This signifies that importance to understand and support protective factors at the level of attachment. Interventions Approaches which focus on the aspect of attachment processes in adolescents, are pivotal in preventing psychopathological results as well as promoting adolescents' positive growth and wellbeing. Barcaccia et al. (2020) have emphasized that Clinical approaches treating adolescents with mindfulness practice supported by clinical techniques stemming from attachment theory may benefit on different psychological levels and alter self-related attitudes leading to tendencies improving depression and anxiety. On the other hand, treatments modifying self-related attitudes with particular consideration to self-reassurance and self-inadequacy revealed the potential for a positive effect on adolescents' mental health. Attachment-Based Family Therapy (ABFT) specifically targets attachment disintegration within caregiver-adolescent relationships. ABFT interventions lead to effective communication and emotional regulation in adolescents, which improve mental health outcomes, such as a significant reduction in depressive and suicidal thoughts, in a wide range of therapeutic contexts and demographics (Diamond et al., 2021). Programs that focus on fostering secure attachment in children and adolescents are suggested to prevent Substance use disorders (Schindler, 2019). Adolescent sadness and anxiety may be reduced, and self-esteem may be increased by integrating mindfulness practices with attachment-focused therapies Furthermore, parent-teen relationships are improved by interventions such as MBT and the CONNECT program, which accentuate reflective functioning and parental sensitivity, improving dyadic affect regulation and mutual understanding between them (Moretti et al., 2015). The program known as Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-up (ABC) highlights the importance of parental sensitivity in providing emotional support for adolescents and stresses. the long-term effects of early interventions on adolescent-mother interactions (ABC, 10-session home visiting program (Dozier & Bernard, 2017) Obsuth et al. (2006) have discussed that adolescent oppositional difficulties were reduced successfully by increasing parental knowledge regarding the theory of attachment and making overall changes in the parent adolescent interactions. In the study, questionnaires were completed, 48 teenagers with severe conduct disorders and their caregivers were involved, the procedure was done before and after joining the parent group named Connect Parent Group. The program of


study utilizes attachment theory and skills in empathic understanding as well as parental sensitiveness and effective affect regulation in a dyadic unit. These capabilities are basic to a stable attachment and are essential in the fine art of parenthood. From the caregivers' side, the enhanced signs of parental competencies and satisfaction of both the teens and the caregivers have been observed, as well as the reduced rate of violent behaviors, internalizing and externalizing problems, and avoidance behaviors in the adolescents. Procedures that are focused on or involve aspects of attachment or use peer directed interventions such as social skills training can be utilized in the repair of relationship ruptures and in the rebuilding of consistent positive relationships with peers and parents (Roelofs et al., 2012)

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Interventions integrating mindfulness and attachment-based clinical techniques have proved to improve self-related attitudes among adolescents, which mitigates depression and anxiety (Kobak & Kerig, 2015). These integrative approaches highlight the multi-faceted benefits of attachment-focused interventions in addressing both attachment trauma and emotion regulation strategies paramount for adolescent mental health (Gander et al., 2018; Kobak & Kerig, 2015). These approaches further spotlight the importance of early intervention and family-focused interventions to promote secure attachments and build emotional resilience from adolescence emerging into adulthood. A key claim of attachment theory is that the early relationships one has with caregivers play a critical role in shaping emotional self-regulation and behavior in interpersonal relationships established later in life. Notably, Insecure attachment among adolescents manifested avoidantly, ambivalently or Disorganized may lead to poor ability in attaining trusting relationships and regulating emotions. Basing on the attachment theory, the approaches aimed at supporting changes in caregiving behaviours include targeted interventions like ABFT, mindfulness and other MBT, CONNECT and other parent-teen relationship programmes. Through increasing dyadic caregiver sensitivity, emotional availability, and providing a safe haven/secure base in play, these interventions aim at reducing symptoms of depression, anxiety, and conduct disorders and fostering resources and adaptive coping among pre-adolescent and adolescent children. Knowing about the role of attachment as far as the formation of psychopathology determines the interventions that seek to enhance relational development during this development. The review provides a comprehensive understanding of how attachment experiences can significantly affect the well-being of adolescents. The review presented various kinds of research that support that some kinds of insecure attachment have some sort of association with various psychiatric illnesses; dismissing, preoccupied, and disorganized attachments among them. For example, Rosenstein and Horowitz (1996) identified that the dismissing mode of Attachment has been associated with narcissistic and antisocial PD among adolescents, while, the preoccupied mode of Attachment has been related to affective disorders, OCD, and borderline PD. Likewise, Pinto-Cortez et al. (2023) pointed out that anxiety in attachment increases the impact of ACEs on psychopathology and underlines the importance of providing a safe parenting care focus for emotional regulation

and developing problem-solving abilities. Also in both longitudinal and cross-sectional studies, profound evidence shows how these early attachment patterns impact the later adolescent health. Cortés-García et al. (2020) found that the secure base and emotional insecurity with parents during childhood significantly predicted disordered eating behaviors in adolescents, moderated through depression. Similarly, Bosquet and Egeland (2006) established that negative peer associations and fearful attachment styles in infancy predict symptoms of anxiety in adolescents. The buffering aspect of secure attachment is observed by studies, suggesting that enhanced parent-child attachment during early years shapes healthier emotional development and lower substance use during later developmental stages. According to Barcaccia et al. (2020), it is effective to combine clinical approaches compatible with mindfulness practices and approaches originating from attachment theory to address adolescents and their attitudes toward self and improve self-related attitudes, depression, and anxiety. ABFT along with programmes like MBT, CONNECT, and ABC program increases the child-parental communication, emotion regulation, and attunement which contribute significantly towards quality mental health, change in depressive and suicidal cognition, improvement in self-esteem, and reduction in conduct disorders. Such interventions highlight the need for using attachment security and early and family-based approaches to build up young people's emotional strengths and decrease their risks of adopting psychopathological symptoms. Limitations The relationship of early attachment security to later behavior is not universally found in short-term, cross-sectional studies, which raises questions about the nature of the findings. The limitation of the review is the selection of convenient sources, which are English peer-reviewed articles available in the specific databases. In the studies, comparison is not easy because the methodologies, sample sizes, and the tools used to assess maternal outcomes all differ. Validated quantitative self-assessed tools are common and may overemphasize positive behaviour and distort past events. The conclusions and interventions highlighted may be practically inapplicable or not applicable across cultures as they are developed primarily within Western settings. Other arguments are not accounted for factors such as genetics, cultural, and coexisting mental disorders influencing the attachment and psychopathology. Future Research The stage of adolescence should be given precedence in future studies within developmental framework, taking into account the important influence of early attachment patterns. To comprehensively investigate these dynamics, it is essential to take a perspective that incorporates family systems (Schindler, 2019). Further research should be undertaken with subjects followed-up for a period of time to identify complicated interactions between early care-giving experiences and later on psychopathological manifestation. Because of the existing restrictions, the suggestions called for more culturally diverse research so that results would extend beyond the predominantly western settings. Further research should also consider the use of mixed methods research design that involves both qualitative and quantitative approaches in portraying a true picture of the dynamics of attachment processes and effects. Investigators


have to consider factors like genetics, culture, and other psychiatric diagnoses in order to minimize risk factors that may influence the outcomes. Moreover, the exploration of treatment outcomes and benefits among the attachment-focused interventions could be useful for generalizing their usage in different cultural communities or when concerning people with different socioeconomic statuses. Future research should focus on expanding standardized and culturally acceptable methods of ascertaining that would improve reliability and validity. Last but not least, understanding the long-term impact of these interventions and defining the aspects that offer resistance to releasing negative effects is paramount for coming up with more effective evidence-based practice approaches to the management of attachment-related

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Conclusion This review recaps data from many studies to explain the multifaceted pathways from attachment style to psychopathology in youth. Across the board, across studies, the presence of insecure attachment styles in adolescents – often related to adverse childhood experiences and disrupted parental bonding – appears to be associated with a wide range of psychopathological outcomes in adolescence, including anxiety disorders and dissociative disorders, borderline personality disorder, conduct disorder, substance abuse, depression and suicidality. Longitudinal work adds to this picture, underlining the developmental significance of attachment, and demonstrating the extent to which early attachment patterns can prefigure later psychopathology: insecure attachment patterns in infancy have been associated with depressed mood, suicidality, substance use, and dissociation in adolescence; secure attachment in infancy is generally associated with more positive mental health outcomes, and can also offer protection. Though these findings attest to the importance of attachment in influencing the psychopathological course, there seems to be a more complex relationship that makes the outcome difficult to replicate across all the studies. Future efforts should pay more attention to the adolescent period within a developmental framework, take into consideration the early attachment influences, and consider a family systems approach to investigate these pathways in more depth. The findings of this review hold important clinical implications. Among interventions that align with attachment theory are modes of intervention such as Attachment-Based Family Therapy (ABFT), which, by addressing attachment disorganization in caregiver-adolescent relationships, have been shown to successfully improve mental health outcomes for adolescents through caregiver and adolescent interventions that target reflective functioning, parental sensitivity and emotion regulation skills. Integrating mindfulness practices with attachment-based interventions can further augment outcomes. Overall, a closer examination on the nexus between attachment styles and psychopathology might pave the way to specific and targeted prevention and treatment interventions rooted in the firm grounds of developmental theories and successful strategies to build resilience among adolescents affected by mental health burden. When routes to emotional healing are identified early – and even worse somehow missed altogether – all developmental pathways are at risk and could deviate or even expire. Extra help along these paths is desperately needed. The promising early steps remain for further research and clinical innovation on this path.

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