

## Parental Attachment and Peer Attachment Bonds with the Identity Development during Late Adolescence

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### Abstract

The present study investigates the relationship between parental attachment and peer attachment bonds with the identity development during late adolescence. Correlational research design and purposive sampling was used to collect data from (N=100) college students of Lahore; including (n=50) male and (n=50) female students. A self-developed Demographic Questionnaire, Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment Bonds and Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status-Revised were administered. Pearson Correlation and Independent sample t-test were applied. Results showed that there is a significant positive relationship between parental and peer attachment bonds and not significant relationship between peer attachment bonds and identity development while a significant positive relationship between mothers' attachment bonds with identity development. Moreover, there are no gender differences between parental attachment bonds, peer attachment bonds and identity development during late adolescents. This research enabled us to develop a new insight into the parental and peer attachments bonds the common stereotype present in the society about peer attachment having the maximum influence on adolescents' proved wrong. On this basis many new researches can be conducted.

**Keywords:** Parental attachment; Peer attachment; Identity development

### Introduction

An attachment may be defined as affectional tie that one person or animal forms between himself and another specific one-a tie that binds them together in space and endures over time, the behavioral hallmark of attachment is seeking to gain and to maintain a certain degree of proximity to the object of attachment, which ranges from close physical contact under other circumstances [1,2]. It has been said that attachment is a relationship, developing out of the interaction between children and parents. Both parents and children contribute to the nature of the attachment relationship [3].

Attachment is defined as an enduring affectional connection with another person [4]. Visible signs of attachment can be seen in the warm greetings the child gives his/her parents when they approach smiling broadly, stretching out his/her arms, and his/her active efforts at contact when picked up such as touching his/her parent's face, and snuggling close. Attachment may serve as an organizing construct in the assessment of development in adolescence.

The main objects of child's attachment have the greatest power to calm him and to protect him from fear when he/she experiences a strange event or is in an unfamiliar situation [5]. Attachment can also be seen in a child's efforts to stay near his parents in an unfamiliar situation, crawling or running to their sides, holding on to a leg. And it can be seen in the distress that older babies show when their parents leave them temporarily; its negative equivalent is expressed in the separation protest. Attachment behaviors which promote proximity or contact-seeking behavior such as approaching, following and clinging and signaling behaviors such as smiling, crying and calling.

The intensity of attachment behaviors may be heightened or diminished by situational conditions but once an attachment has been formed, it cannot be viewed as vanishing during periods when attachment behavior is not obvious.

Attachment was viewed as a strong emotional bond that forms between child and caregiver in the second half of the child's first year.

Therefore, it seems necessary to view attachment as an organization of behavioral systems when endures throughout periods when none of the component attachment has been activated.

Attachment between adolescence and parents develops naturally with time, as the children who developed a strong need to remain near their parents were the once who were most likely to survive-both physically and psychologically. Attachment does not develop suddenly and unheralded but rather emerges in a series of steps, moving from a baby's general preference for human beings over inanimate objects to a child's real partnership with its parents. The term attachment refers to the infant's tendency during the first 24 months to approach particular people, to be maximally sympathetic to being cared for by these people, and to be least afraid when with people. The attachment of infancy is unlike the symbolic love relation that exists between a 3 and 4 years old and his parents.

The gradual differentiation of people into the familiar ones who are targets of attachment and all others is a product, in part, of the establishment of a schema for his adult caretakers. Children who have developed an attachment to their parents, most probably wanted to maintain their parents' affection and approval and so are motivated to adopt the standard of behavior that the parents set for them. When the schema is finally expressive, the infant will detect the difference between the familiar caretakers and others will become afraid of those who are unfamiliar.

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Schaffer proposes four phases in the development of attachment; in the first phase, which lasts only a month or two, the baby's social responses are relatively indiscriminate. In the second phase, the baby under 6 months of age gradually learns to distinguish familiar from unfamiliar from unfamiliar people, but he does not yet protest when familiar caregivers depart; he is not yet truly attached to these people. In the third phase, which begins when the baby is about 7 months old specific attachment develop with certain regular caregivers, such as the mother greeting them happily and often crying when those people temporarily depart. After passing the 2 year mark and entering toddlerhood (from about 2 to 5) the attachment relationship moves into the final phase, at this point, owing to advances in cognitive development, children become aware of others feelings, goals and plans and begin to consider these things in formulating their own actions. Parental attitudes influence the way parents treat their child, and their treatment influences the attitude towards them. Fundamentally, therefore, the parent-child relationship is dependent upon the parents' attitude [6].

Parental attitudes are more liberal today than in the past, variations occur in different social and age groups. Studies of parental attitudes reveal how varied they are and how greatly they influence parent-child relationships as well as sibling relationships. The most common and most influential are: permissive, authoritarian, authoritative.

The permissive parent attempts to behave in a non-disciplinary, acceptant and positive manner towards the child's impulses, desires and actions. The parent consults with the child about policy decisions and gives explanations for family rules [7].

The authoritarian parent attempts to shape, control, and evaluate the behavior and attitudes of the child in accordance with a set standard, theologically motivated and formulated by a higher authority. The parent values obedience as a virtue and favors disciplinary.

The authoritative parent affirms the child present qualities, but also sets standards for future conduct. They use reason, power, and shaping by command and reinforcement to achieve their objectives, and do not base their decisions on group agreement or the individual child's desires. There are two main styles of attachments: Secure Attachment, Insecure Attachment. Whereas insecure attachment divides into three: Insecure-Resistant Attachment, Insecure-Avoidant Attachment, and Insecure-Disorganized Attachment.

The purpose of conducting this research was to assess the relationship of parental attachment and peer attachment bonds with the identity development during late adolescence. It was fact that parental and peer attachment bonds play major role in identity development during late adolescence. Peer influence is considered a very strong and powerful aspect of adolescent life. They choose their friends who accept them or see them as encouraging and helpful. The impact of peers, whether positive or negative, is of critical importance for personality development during late adolescence. During adolescence, they struggle to decide about their future professions.

## Hypotheses

From the objectives, the following hypotheses are formulated:

There is likely to be positive relationship between parental attachment bonds and identity development during late adolescence.

There is likely to be positive relationship between peer attachment bonds and identity development during late adolescence.

There is likely to be significant gender differences in relationship between parental attachment and peer attachment bonds and identity development during late adolescence.

## Material and Methods

The purposive sampling strategy was used for this research. A sample of 100 students (50 boys and 50 girls) was taken for this research. The sample was collected from the different colleges of Lahore their age range as between 14 to 19 years. The present research was conducted to find out relationship between parental and peer attachment bonds during late adolescents. Gender differences were also observed. A sample of 100 students between the age ranges 14 to 19 was taken for this research project (Table 1).

Table 1 shows the age range in mean and standard deviation of sample for male and female students. Sample characteristics were age, education, family system. It shows birth order and residence. It shows the frequencies in percentage of male and female.

## Assessment Measures

### Inventory of parental and peer attachment (IPPA)

The IPPA was developed by, in order to assess adolescents' perceptions of the positive and negative affective/cognitive dimension of relationships with parents and close friends -- particularly how well these figures serve as sources of psychological security. The theoretical framework is attachment theory. Three broad dimensions are assessed: degree of mutual trust, quality of communication, and extent of anger and alienation. The instrument is a self report questionnaire with a five point likert scale response format. The IPPA consists of 25 items for the mother, 25 items for the father, and 24 items for the peer. The IPPA is scored by reverse-scoring the negatively worded items and then summing the response values in each section. The alpha reliability of the IPPA inventory is 0.875.

### Extended objective measure of ego identity status – Revised

Extended objective Measure of Ego identity Status –Revised was developed by [8]. It will be measure the ego identity status. It is a 6 point likert type scale ranging from "strongly agree" "moderately agree"

Characteristics	Male (n=50) M (SD)	Female (n=50) M (SD)
Age	17.2 (0.502)	16.7 (0.881)
	f (%)	f (%)
Education frequency in %age		
Matriculation	2 (4%)	1 (2%)
Intermediate	45 (90%)	44 (88%)
Bachelors	3 (6%)	5 (10%)
Family system Frequency in % age		
Nuclear	10 (20%)	30 (60%)
Joint	16 (32%)	9 (18%)
Single parent	24 (48%)	11 (22%)
Birth order frequency in %age		
First	12 (24%)	10 (20%)
Middle	18 (36%)	25 (50%)
Last	20 (40%)	15 (30%)
Residence frequency in %age		
Day Scholars	41 (82%)	43 (86%)
Hostel	9 (18%)	7 (14%)

Note. M: Mean; SD: Standard Deviation; f: frequency; %: Percentage; N: Sample of Participants; n: number of participants

Table 1: Descriptive of the sample characteristics (N=100).

“agree” “disagree” “moderately disagree” strongly disagree”. It consists of 28 items which indicate to what degree of reflects your own thoughts and feelings. The alpha reliability of the scale is 0.774 (Table 2).

Table 2 indicates mean and standard deviation values of male and female Student on Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) and Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status (EOM-EIS).

## Procedure

An authority letter was sought from the Department of Applied Psychology, University of the Punjab Lahore, explaining the nature of the research project. Sample was taken from different colleges of Lahore. The letter authenticated the researcher’s identity and the topic of the research. The letter was presented to the principles of different colleges. A consent form was given to the participants. The nature and purpose of the study was explained to the participants and any queries from the participants were answered. The SPSS software program version 16.0 was used to analyze the correlation between parent attachment and peer attachment bonds with the identity development during late adolescents. Pearson product moment correlation was used for analysis of the relationship between parental attachment and peer attachment bonds with the identity development during late adolescents. Independent sample t-test was used to assess the gender differences between parental attachments and peers attachments bonds with identity development during late adolescents.

## Findings

There were three hypotheses were made for revealed the results of this research study. Pearson Correlation and Independent sample t-test were applied. Results showed that there is a significant positive relationship between parental and peer attachment bonds and no significant relationship between peer attachment bonds and identity development while a significant positive relationship between mothers’ attachment bonds with identity development. Moreover, there are no gender differences between parental attachment bonds, peer attachment bonds and identity development during late adolescents.

It was hypothesized that there is likely to be positive relationship between parental attachment bonds and identity development during late adolescence. The correlation analysis was run for its statistical analysis (Table 3).

Table 3 shows the correlation between parental attachment and

Variable	Male (n=50)		Female (n=50)		a
	M	SD	M	SD	
IPPA	1.62	16.7	1.61	1.34	0.875
Sub Scales of IPPA					
Mother Scale	53.9	72	54.1	6.06	
Father Scale	52.4	8	52.3	6.66	
Peer Scale	55.7	8.98	55.5	8.75	
EOM-EIS	25.5	8.6	23.8	6.73	0.774

Note. IPPA: Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment; EOM-EIS: Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status; M: Arithmetic Mean; SD: Standard Deviation; N: Sample size; n: no of participants; α: alpha reliability.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of the variables (N=100).

Variable	Identity Development
Mother Attachment	0.48**
Father Attachment	0.23

\*\*p<0.01

Table 3: Correlation between Parental attachment and Identity Development.

identity development which shows that there is highly significant positive relationship between parental attachment and identity development at 0.01 level of significance. This means that the more the adolescents have parental attachment, the more they increase their identity development.

It was hypothesized that there is likely to be positive relationship between peer attachment bonds and identity development during late adolescence. The correlation analysis was run for its statistical analysis and the results showed no significant results (Table 4).

Table 4 shows the relationship between peer attachment and identity development. Table shows that there is no significance relationship between peer attachment and identity development so the hypothesis is rejected.

It was hypothesized that there is likely to be significant gender differences in relationship between parental attachment and peer attachment bonds and identity development during late adolescence. For the test of this hypothesis, the independent sample t-test was run for the statistical analysis (Table 5).

Table 5 showed that there is slightly gender differences between mother attachment bonds and there are no gender differences between father and peer attachment bonds. There are slightly gender differences in identity development during late adolescents.

## Discussion

The purpose of conducting research is to assess the relationship of parental and peer attachment bonds with the identity development during late adolescents. It is fact that parental and peer attachment bonds play major role in identity development during late adolescents. The findings of the results indicated that there is significant positive relationship between parental attachment and identity development. The findings of the results also indicated that there is insignificant relationship between peer attachment bonds and identity development.

Development of identity in significant domains of life, including occupation, is an important developmental task during adolescence [9]. This is the time when adolescents struggle to decide about their future profession. There has been a consensus not only on the significance of the process of identity development during adolescence, but also the importance of the context within the person’s environment including the immediate social networks. The present study was an attempt to explore how various social contexts influence the process of identity development of adolescents. It seemed important to understand the role that parental and peer attachment bonds play in identity development during late adolescents.

Results of present study show a significant positive relationship

Variable	Identity Development
Peer Attachment	0

Table 4: Correlation between Peer attachment and Identity Development.

Variables	Male (n=50)	Female (n=50)	CI 95%		
	M (SD)	M (SD)	t	p	LL-UP
Mother Attachment	53.9 (6.30)	54.1 (6.06)	-0.12	0.89	-2.61,-2.29
Father Attachment	52.4 (8.00)	52.3 (6.66)	0.09	0.94	-2.78,-3.06
Peer Attachment	55.7 (8.98)	55.5 (8.75)	1.12	0.9	-3.30,-3.74
Identity Development	25.5 (8.60)	23.8 (6.73)	1.12	0.26	-1.32,-4.80

Note: SD=standard deviation, M=mean, CI=Confidence Interval

Table 5: Gender differences between male and female on Parental attachment, Peer attachment and Identity Development.

between identity development and parental attachment bonds (Table 3). These findings are supported by the research evidence suggesting that in healthy parent-adolescent relationships, parents provide structure with enough flexibility, by which adolescents can securely engage in identity exploration, and reciprocate by establishing autonomy without sacrificing relatedness [10]. Kamptner reported that warmth and autonomy in the family enhance adolescents' identity development and confidence. Parents who encourage self-expression, the acceptance of unique view points and respect for others' perspective have positive impact on identity formation and they are not considered by teens as domineering or intrusive, but rather than as concerned and emotionally available [11].

Stein conducted a research on the parental attachment and identity development in adolescents. The results of previous research are that parental attachment may serve as an organizing construct in the assessment of identity development in adolescence. The findings of the previous research are consistent with current research findings.

There is no significant relationship between peer attachment bonds and identity development, a past research is not fully supported the recent research results. The research into the role of peers as attachment figures is lacking, despite the fact that research from the friendship and support literature has supported the idea that close relationships with peers promote healthy adolescent adjustment. Strong relationships with peers has been linked with perceived self-worth, high levels of perspective taking and prosocial behavior, and decreased risk of emotional and behavioral problems.

There are no significant gender differences in parental attachment and peer attachment bonds with identity development. The present findings are supported by Gilligan who argues that "for men, identity precedes intimacy and generativity in the optimal cycle of human separation and attachment; for women, these tasks seem instead to be focused.

The goal of the current research was to investigate whether parents and peers serve similar functions in adolescent adjustment. The current analysis was designed to examine the relations between concurrent parent and peer attachment and a variety of adolescent adjustment indices, including depression, anxiety, aggression, sympathy, and academic efficacy. Previous research has linked these adjustment indices to the quality of either peer or parent relationships but has not compared the influence of parent and peer attachment. Because research is unclear about the extent to which parent and peer relationships serve similar functions, no specific a priori hypotheses were formed. In general, however, it was expected that high levels of both parent and peer attachment would be associated with positive adolescent adjustment. Thus, it was predicted that adolescents with secure relationships with both parents and peers would show the most positive adjustment and those with less secure relationships with both would show the least positive adjustment.

The previous research conducted by Hetherington and Parke and the purpose of this study was to find out that attachment is a relationship, developing out of the interaction between children and parents. Both parents and children contribute to the nature of the attachment relationship. Results show that there is attachment relationship between parents and children. The findings of the previous research supported the findings of the present research.

A past research conducted by Wesselmann that attachment between adolescence and parents develops naturally with time, as the children who developed a strong need to remain near their parents

were the once who were most likely to survive-both physically and psychologically. Findings of the present research revealed that there is significant relationship. Findings of the prior research supported the findings of the present research.

A previous research conducted by Hurlock concluded that Parental attitudes influence the way parents treat their child, and their treatment influences the attitude towards them. Fundamentally, therefore, the parent-child relationship is dependent upon the parents' attitude. Findings of the present research are consistent with previous study.

It is clear from the above researches that parents do influence the personality development and behavior of their children, but whether their influence plays a greater or lesser role, than that of the peer group, cannot be definitively determined. One reason for this is that much of the research conducted did not study the two groups simultaneously, and where this was done, there appeared to be discrepancies in the results. Another reason which makes it difficult to provide clear cut answers is the complex nature of the underlying relationship between parents and peers.

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