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## Relationship between Parental Attachment and Resiliency in Adolescents

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### Abstract

The current research aimed to find out the association of parental attachment with resiliency in adolescents (age range 13-16 years) studying in the private secondary schools of Gujrat city. It is a cross-sectional research. The sample was selected using the stratified random sampling technique. The sample comprised 169 boys and girls (71 boys and 98 girls) from the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> class. To measure parental attachment (mother attachment, father attachment) a standardized scale known as the “Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA)” developed by Armsden and Greenberg (1987) was used. Similarly, for assessing the adolescents’ resiliency “Resiliency Scale for Children and Adolescents (RSCA)” developed by Prince-Embury (2012) was used. Pearson correlation coefficient was used for the statistical analysis of the data. The results of the current research revealed a significant relationship between mother/father attachment and resiliency in adolescents. The results also showed significant gender differences regarding parental attachment and resiliency; indeed, boys scored less on mother/father attachment and resiliency as compared to girls. The current study is beneficial for clinical and school psychologists as well as student counselors for conducting programs to promote resiliency.

**Keywords:** adolescents, parental attachment, resiliency

### Introduction

Adolescence signifies the transition from childhood to adulthood. It is based on physical, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral changes and demand of different social roles. It is a time when children begin to take responsibilities and start building their identity. Many a time they face adverse, stressful and challenging situations. At these times, parental attachment and past experiences of the relationship with parents play a major role in successfully handling troubling situations. Early attachment has a serious impact on later social and emotional outcomes.

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Resilient adolescents easily recover from any stressful situation and believe that they can control or handle their problems, positive thinking start to emerge and feel more attachment with others. They use challenges for growth which makes future hardships more tolerable (Howard & Jhonson, [1999](#)). Resiliency is also very important for adolescents because it allows them to handle adverse, stressful and challenging situations, effectively.

Attachment is a strong emotional connection, such as the link between a child and parent (Doherty & Feeney, [2004](#)). Parents play a significant part in the lives of their children. They teach children how to react in a specific situation. Children also observe their parents and learn by them. Emotional bond with parents is a kind of experience which provides a sense of security and a secure base attachment Bowlby as cited in (Stephens, [2009](#)).

Resiliency is considered as the human capacity to overcome adverse circumstances and being strengthened by them (Mental Health Foundation of Australia, [2005](#)). It is also known as the ability to bounce back and cope with difficulties. It is the ability to twist but to not break even in stress (Meichenbaum, [2005](#)).

Research has revealed that resilience does not emerge due to any special potential; rather, it results from the day to day human interactions. These interactions allow people to adapt when there are disappointments, leading to coping mechanisms that build capacity and skills for similar events in the future. The task then is to sort out what works for or against success for a particular people in a given set of circumstances. Researchers have pointed out that resilience can be learned although it is something that cannot be taught. It is an ability that evolves as a particular situation arises, actions are determined, decisions are made and issues are resolved. In workplaces, resilience can be fostered through stretch assignments that allow people to test their limits by developing new coping skills through facing adversity or failure (Leaderwalk, [2011](#)).

The relationship with families and attachment with parents is crucial in promoting resiliency. According to Gilligan, adolescents show more resilience when parents encourage independence, enforce discipline, offer support and help to deal with financial issues. Parents also provide solutions for social networks (Hill, et al., [2007](#)).

Tiet et al. ([2007](#)) also found that resilient children within the age range of 9-17 years live in higher functioning families and have more guidance from their parents (Atwool, [2006](#)). Bilal et al. ([2013](#)) postulated that parental care, parental

attachment, empathy and emotional friendliness help to protect against psychological problems in youngsters and boost their positive characteristics.

### **Significance**

The current research was conducted to find out the relationship between perceived parental attachment and resiliency in adolescents of 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> class studying in private secondary schools. It will help to understand parental attachment in terms of parent trust, parent communication and parent alienation. It will also help to understand resiliency in terms of mastery, understanding and emotional reactivity. Parental attachment plays an important role in developing adolescents' abilities to cope with adverse situations and having greater control over the environment. This study will help parents and teachers to understand how some children can easily adjust and why others can not. It is also beneficial for clinical or school psychologists and student counselors for conducting more programs to promote resiliency. In District Gujrat, adequate attention is not given to this particular area and not a single study was conducted on this particular topic, so the current study is a contribution for this particular city. The current research can provide more directions for further research on this topic to contribute in the research area.

### **Objectives**

The current study intends to find out

- The relationship between parental attachment and resiliency in adolescents.
- The relationship of mother attachment with resiliency in adolescent boys and girls.
- The relationship of father attachment with resiliency in adolescent boys and girls.

### **Hypotheses**

The hypotheses of the current study are as follows:

- There is a significant positive relationship between mother attachment and resiliency in adolescents.
- There is a significant positive relationship between father attachment and resiliency in adolescents.

### **Operational Definitions**

*Parental attachment* is a strong positive bond between parents and their

children. It signifies a relationship of emotional warmth and empathy between them. They feel comfortable with each other.

*Resiliency* is the power to cope with difficult and vulnerable situations with dignity. It is the ability to stay strong in difficult situations and handle them wisely.

### **Method**

In the current study, cross-sectional research design was used. The target population comprised the students of 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> class studying in private secondary schools of Gujrat. The list of private secondary schools was obtained from the District Education Office, Gujrat. The sampling frame was obtained from every school. The total population was 990. A sample of 169 students was selected using the stratified random sampling technique. Sample size was calculated using the formula developed by Taro Yamane (Tepping, [1968](#)).

Students were divided into two strata: 9th, 10th class girls, and 9th, 10th class boys.

### **Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

Adolescents in the age range of 13-16 years were chosen for the current study, while adolescents in the age range of 17-21 years were excluded from the sample. This was because of the fact that children between 13-16 years of age are characterized as middle adolescents, which is a time of delicate self-awareness, peer bonding, risk taking and increased independence. The middle years comprise an active time period in which children progress from childhood to adulthood. The sample was drawn from private Urdu and English medium secondary schools, while the government secondary schools were excluded from the sample because this research was conducted during summer vacations. All government schools close for summer vacations. However, private schools remained open for summer camp.

### **Measures**

In this study, two standardized tools were used. The first is the “Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA)” developed by Armsden and Greenberg ([1987](#)). It was used to assess parental attachment (mother attachment and father attachment). The second is the “Resiliency Scale for Children and Adolescents (RSCA)” developed by (Prince-Embury, [2012](#)).

IPPA was developed by Armsden and Greenberg ([1987](#)) to assess adolescents’ perceptions about their positive and negative relationship with their parents. The subscales of IPPA, that is, father attachment and mother attachment were used in

this study. The instrument is a self-reporting questionnaire with a five-point likert scale response format. Test-retest reliability was .93 for parent attachment. For the revised version, internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha) for mother attachment was .87 and for father attachment it was .89. RSCA measures the personal attributes of the child. The scale is composed of three stand-alone global scales of 20-24 questions each and ten subscales. The three stand-alone global scales include the Sense of Mastery Scale, Sense of Relatedness Scale, and Emotional Reactivity Scale. Reliability co-efficient for the three resiliency scales ranged from .94 to .95 for the total sample. Corrected test-retest coefficient was .86. Factors including the Sense of Mastery and Relatedness had value of .86 and .88 was of Emotional Reactivity.

### Procedure

First of all, informed consent was taken. Then, the questionnaires were personally handed over to all the participants who were informed that their identity will be kept confidential. Instructions were given to the participants stating that they should read each item of the questionnaire carefully and choose only one option that is more suitable according to their opinion. The respondents filled the questionnaire which consisted of three sections. They provided the demographic information while attempting the first section. In section two, they filled the questionnaire of IPPA and finally in section three, they filled the questionnaire of resiliency. After data collection, data was analyzed using SPSS.

### Results

The current study was conducted to measure the relationship between perceived parental attachment and resiliency in the students of 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> class in private Urdu and English medium secondary schools of Gujrat.

**Table 1**

*Correlation of Mother and Father Attachment with Resiliency*

	Resiliency
Mother Attachment	.21(**)
Father Attachment	.17(*)

\*\*p < .01, \*p < .05

Table 1 indicates the relationship between mother/father attachment and resiliency. Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to explore the correlation between mother attachment, father attachment and resiliency scores of the

respondents. The value of Pearson correlation coefficient for mother attachment and resiliency is (.21\*\*), which is significant. Similarly, the value of Pearson correlation coefficient for father attachment and resiliency is (.17\*), which is also significant. The results showed that there is a significant positive relationship between mother attachment, father attachment and resiliency.

### **Gender Differences**

Another finding of the current study is that the nature of the relationship between mother attachment and resiliency and between father attachment and resiliency is different in boys and girls. In boys, the value of Pearson correlation coefficient for mother attachment and resiliency was calculated to be (.14). Similarly, the value of Pearson correlation coefficient for father attachment and resiliency was calculated to be (.16). These values depict an insignificant relationship. In girls, the value of Pearson correlation coefficient for mother attachment and resiliency was calculated to be (.26\*\*), which is significant. However, the value of Pearson correlation coefficient for father attachment and resiliency was calculated to be (.14), which is insignificant. The results showed an insignificant relationship between mother and father attachment and resiliency in boys. However, there was found a significant relationship between mother attachment and resiliency and an insignificant relationship between father attachment and resiliency in girls.

### **Discussion**

Overall, the results of the relationship between mother attachment and resiliency in adolescents showed a significant relationship between the variables (as mentioned in Table 1). Moreover, the results of the relationship between mother attachment and resiliency in boys and girls showed a significant relationship in girls and an insignificant relationship in boys. The study of Noble and McGrath (2012) supports these findings. They found that emotional support from the mother in childhood leads to better outcomes such as resiliency in adolescents. The study of Lewis (2002) also supports our findings. It found that a good relationship between the child and the mother is the main source of building resiliency in adolescent girls. It is suggested here that resilient children are better able to utilize their strength the results of the current study showed a significant relationship between father attachment and resiliency in adolescents. Rosenberg (2006) focused on father attachment and psychological well-being. Another study found that boys with involved fathers have fewer school behavioral problems and girls with involved fathers have greater self-esteem. However, the results of the current study do not support these claims. The underlying reason is culture difference. The above

mentioned researches were conducted in the U.S. In our culture, children are more attached to their mother and spend less time with their father. Generally, the image of the father is negative in the mind of the children who often feel that the father is there just for the sake of earning money and for providing protection; all attachment and positive feelings are related to the mother. So, children in all life stages are highly attached to their mother. The focus of many researchers has been mother attachment and its effect on children's psychological well-being and the positive growth of their personality. Father attachment and its positive impact on children and adolescents is ignored.

The results established mother attachment as significant. The findings of Ma and Huebner (2008) also support these results as they found that adolescents are more attached to their mother. The findings of Haigler et al. (1995) regarding parental attachment and gender role identity also support the current finding that the degree of attachment with mother is higher than father.

The results of the current research revealed that the relationship with families and attachment with parents are very important in promoting resiliency. According to Gilligan, adolescents show more resilient behavior when they enjoy an effective parenting relationship that encourages them and provide support to cope with social and economic issues. Tiet et al. (2007) also support the current findings that all young people and resilient children live in supportive and attached families and get full assistance and direction from their family.

## Limitations

Following are the limitations of the current study:

- Data was collected only from private secondary schools. Government secondary schools were excluded from the current study because this research was conducted during summer vacations. All government schools were closed due to summer vacations. However, private schools were open for the summer camp. This fact can limit the generalizability of results.
- Since self-report measures were used to collect the data, so there is a possibility that the respondents hid their true feelings which might affect the results.
- The research had to be completed in a short time span.
- It was difficult to collect the relevant research material for the current study because the researcher did not find sufficient books, journals and magazines in the university's central library. So, most of material was collected from the internet.



- The main problem faced during data collection was that most schools did not give permission for conducting research because of the lack of awareness regarding its importance.

## Conclusion

It was concluded that there exists, overall, a significant relationship between parental attachment (father attachment, mother attachment) and resiliency in adolescents. The relationship of parental attachment with resiliency was found to be significant in girls and insignificant in boys. Girls were found to be comparatively highly attached with their parents and more resilient as compared to boys. In the future, another study can be designed to compare the students of private schools and government schools, so that the researcher may differentiate between the perceived parental attachment and resiliency experienced by the students of these schools. This study provides a foundation for future researchers.

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