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Interrogating the Attachment Theory and its Implications to the Holistic Development of a Child

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to examine the attachment theory and its implications on the development of a child. Our contention is that this theory has great influence in child psychology and needs to be understood in light of the new development taking place in Africa and Zimbabwe. The theory has generated a great deal of research and exerted an enormous impact in the care of young children and forms the basis of this article. The theory provides educationists with a foundation of how to develop successful and effective relationships with learners and needs to be analyzed for its relevance in learning environments today. The attachment theory is crucial as it facilitates our understanding of the development of a holistically developed individual. Our findings indicate that it is important that the school and community at large, work hand in glove to ensure that all children are afforded an equal opportunity at development, by ensuring secure attachment which has a positive correlation with social and emotional development and academic success. Our recommendation is that attachment theory will assist educators to succeed in their mammoth task of producing functional members of society.

Key words: attachment theory, education, learning, psychology, children

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Introduction

This article examines the attachment theory and its impact on child development. People have problems connecting and establishing sustainable relationships. Attachment is a fundamental concept in developmental psychology which attempts to explain the complex behaviour of human beings. It is based on the joint work of John Bowlby (1907-1990) and Mary Ainsworth (1913-1999). Its developmental history began in the late 1930s with Bowlby's growing interest in the link between maternal loss or deprivation and later personality development, and with Ainsworth's interest in the security theory. Bowlby formulated the blueprint of the theory drawing on ethology and psychoanalytic ideology. Bowlby and Ainsworth's collaboration began after Ainsworth had visited Uganda, where she conducted her first empirical study of infant-mother attachment patterns. The theory advanced significantly afterwards drawing the attention of many researchers. The article provides definition and clarification of key terms, theories of attachment, an outline of the four phases/ stages of attachment, characteristics of attachment and children's behavior patterns upon reunion with caregivers was discussed in this article. The article provides a conclusion and some recommendations.

Conceptual Background

Bowlby in Hardy (2007), defines attachment as an enduring emotional bond which an individual forms with another person. It is perceived as lasting psychological connectedness between human beings. Van Ijzendoorn and Bakermans-kranenburg (2012), assert that attachment is the emotional bond between children and parents. Berns (2010) and Haiman (2017), concur that attachment is an emotional bond formed with a specific person that is enduring across time and space. It is a bond that is involved with making the child safe, secure and protected. Papalia, Olds and Feldman (1999) in Komagata (2014) define attachment as a reciprocal enduring relationship between infant and caregiver, each of whom contributes to the quality of the relationship. However, McLeod (2009), argues that attachment does not have to be reciprocal. One person may have an attachment which is not shared. From the above statements, it can be deduced that attachment refers to the degree of an emotional connection between an infant and a caregiver which makes the infant feel safe and secure, a concept advocated by the Rogerian person-centered theory for a child to self-actualise. Bowlby also used the term maternal deprivation in his theory. It refers to the separation or loss of the mother as well as the failure to develop an attachment (McLeod, 2009). The implication of this statement is that maternal deprivation is the absence of or a disruption of the mother-child attachment.

Background of Theory

The theory of attachment was a brain child of Edward John Mostyn Bowlby in 1959. He was born in 1907 and died in 1990 at 83 years. He is known as the father of attachment. His ideas were influenced by Freudian ideology and Konrad Lorenz's study of imprinting in 1935. Bowlby was a British psychologist who graduated from the University of Cambridge in 1928. He received rigorous training in developmental psychology and performed voluntary work at a school for maladjusted children. His experiences with two children at the school set his professional career on course as they sparked in him an interest in child psychiatry. He carried out empirical studies on

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attachment and some of the prominent ideas of his theory were maternal deprivation and separation which he believed gave rise to anti-social behavior. Mary Ainsworth (nee Salter), refined Bowlby's ideas in 1973. She perceived familial security in the early stages of life as playing a fundamental role in the formation of relationships, new skills and interests. Where familial security lacked, the individual was bound to be handicapped by what she termed a secure base. Goldberg (2000), asserts that Ainsworth's famous Strange Situation Experiment brought a new dimension to the study of attachment.

Basic Assumptions of the Attachment Theory

The attachment theory is premised on the assumptions that;

1. Early life experiences influence adult personality; for a child to grow up mentally healthy, they should experience a warm, intimate and continuous relationship with their mother/caregiver, (Malekpour, 2007).
2. An internal working model is used as a prototype or template for future relationships.
3. Infants are biologically pre-programmed to form attachments with responsive and sensitive caregivers to form an attachment with a caregiver (McLeod, 2009).
4. Maternal deprivation can have permanent deleterious effects on child development.
5. Attachment is a significant developmental process which occurs during infancy but continues to develop throughout life (Komagata, 2014).
6. There is a critical period for developing an attachment, that is, 0-5 years. If proper attachment fails to occur during this period, then the child may suffer irreversible developmental consequences (Prior and Glaser, 2006).

Theories of Attachment

The Psychoanalytic Theory of Attachment

McLeod (2009) asserts that according to Freud, children are born with instincts that require gratification hence the need to be attached to their mothers. Attachment starts to develop within the oral stage where the id derives pleasure from oral gratification through breastfeeding. Psychoanalysts believe in the drive theory which states that motivation for attachment derives from gratification of hunger and libidinal drives. The mother provides instant gratification to the needs of the child, hence, becomes the object of affection. Bowlby termed this relationship, cupboard love. Freud asserts that children have their libidinal energy invested in those who care for them, and this is a healing process called catharsis. According to the Freudian perspective, children protest separation from the attachment figure because of fear that their bodily needs will not be gratified. Bowlby rejected the notion that attachment is viewed as an instinct derived from feeding or sexuality. Instead, he views attachment as a psychological bond in its own right rather than an instinct derived from feeding and sexuality (McLeod, 2009).

The Behaviourist Theory of Attachment

The major theorists in this second psychological force include Ivan Pavlov, J.B. Watson, Edward Thorndike and B. F. Skinner. According to McLeod (2009), the behaviourist paradigm perceives attachment as a set of learned behaviours. The foundation for the learning of attachment is the provision of food. An infant will form an attachment relationship with whoever feeds it. McLeod (2009), further points out that environmentalists believe that the infant learns to associate the feeder with the comfort of being fed and through classical conditioning comes to find contact with the mother comforting, hence an attachment is created. Behaviourists assert that attachment behaviours such as crying and smiling bring desirable responses from others, hence, through the process of

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operant conditioning infants repeat these behaviours in order to get what they want. McLeod (2009) points out that the behaviourist school of thought sees attachment as a systems phenomenon than biological disposition. In simple terms, it is a learned behaviour that results from stimulus-response associations within the environment of the infant.

The Cognitive Theory of attachment

Proponents of this perspective include Bruner, Piaget and Vygotsky. The cognitivists suggest that the driving force in attachment is the child's discovery that the mother's presence alleviates hunger, thirst and pain. They further subscribe to the belief that attachment starts early through interactions with the caregiver. Attachment is perceived as a mental process, hence, the development of object permanence as stated in Piaget's Cognitive theory. This is what Bowlby termed the 'monotropy' hypothesis.

Cognitive theorists further point out that attachment develops within one's socio-cultural context. Attachment is fostered through playing with and interacting with the child. This is in line with Vygotskian socio-cultural theory. (McLeod, 2009).

The Ecological/Ethological theory of Attachment

Major proponents of this theory include, Lorenz, Bronfenbrenner, Darwin, Bowlby and Ainsworth. Ecological theorists were interested in studying animals in their natural setting. They studied animals such as monkeys and geese and discovered that they are born with instincts that drive towards an attachment. According to this theory, children are born biologically prewired to form an attachment with others in order to survive. McLeod (2009) points out that the infant produces innate social releaser behaviours such as crying and smiling that stimulate innate caregiving responses from adults. Attachment theorists believe that the determinant of an attachment is not food but care and responsiveness to the needs of the infant.

Experiments

Harry Hallow and the rhesus monkeys

Various experiments in Ethology inspired Bowlby to formulate the attachment theory. Harry Hallow experimented with rhesus monkeys which formed affectional bonds with terry cloth surrogate mothers who were soft but offered no food, and not with wire surrogate mothers who provided food but were less pleasant to touch. The results of this study established that security and not food motivate attachment. The study concluded that for young monkeys to develop normally, they required nutrition, protection, comfort and socialization. The other monkeys that had been alienated failed to develop attachment and exhibited anti-social behaviour due to maternal deprivation, (Prior and Glaser, 2006).

Lorenz's Imprinting with Goslings

The evolutionary theory of attachment was also influenced by the 1935 study of geese by Konrad Lorenz, whose results indicated that goslings follow the first moving object they see during the critical period after hatching, a process called imprinting. According to Komagata (2014), attachment is biologically determined as evidenced by the imprinting of the young geese on Lorenz. This study showed that attachment was innate and had a survival value.

The Forty-Four Thieves Study- Bowlby

Gross (2010) asserts that Bowlby carried out a study termed the 'Forty Four Thieves Study' in the London Child Guidance Clinic. He interviewed the forty-four thieves and another group of forty-four who were not thieves and compared the results. He also interviewed the parents of all the

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participants who were involved in the study. The results showed that more than half of the juvenile delinquents had been separated from their mothers for periods of as long as six months during their first years of life. He discovered that several of the thieves showed affectionless psychopathy. This showed that maternal deprivation has detrimental effects on human development.

The Strange Situation Procedure-Mary Ainsworth

Mary Ainsworth embarked on an observational project whose thoroughness no researcher has equaled, (Gross, 2010). She termed the procedure ‘The Strange Situation Experiment’ (SSE). As the name suggests, about one hundred one year old infants were placed in a strange situation in order to study the nature of human attachments. The mothers or care-givers and their infants were involved in a 20 minute drama with 8 episodes of three minutes each or less. The episodes involved leaving the baby alone, introducing the stranger and reuniting with the infant again.

The responses of the infants on reunion with the caregiver were crucial in establishing the patterns of attachment. Malekpour (2007), points out that the results of Ainsworth’s phenomenal (SSE) showed that the levels or patterns of attachment differ depending on the experiences a child has with a care giver or mother. They responded differently to strangers and their caregivers at reunion. Some showed distress but approached their carers in a positive manner.

Others showed little distress but did not seek contact and avoided the caregiver’s gaze or physical contact. Others were overly passive showing anger towards the caregiver and not resuming play and exploration. The responses of the infants in the SSE gave rise to the two major patterns of attachment namely secure and insecure attachment. Haiman (2017) concurs that the relationship between an infant and caregiver can lead to two possible outcomes, secure or insecure attachment. Ainsworth’s SSE gave rise to secure, insecure ambivalent and insecure avoidant attachment patterns. The disorganized attachment pattern was later discovered by Main and Solomon, former students of Ainsworth’s in 1986. Maternal sensitivity was the fundamental factor in determining patterns of attachment.

Stages of attachment

Van Ijzendoorn and Bakermans-Kranenburg (2012), state that attachment theorists believe that attachment occurs in stages. The diagram below summarizes the stages of attachment

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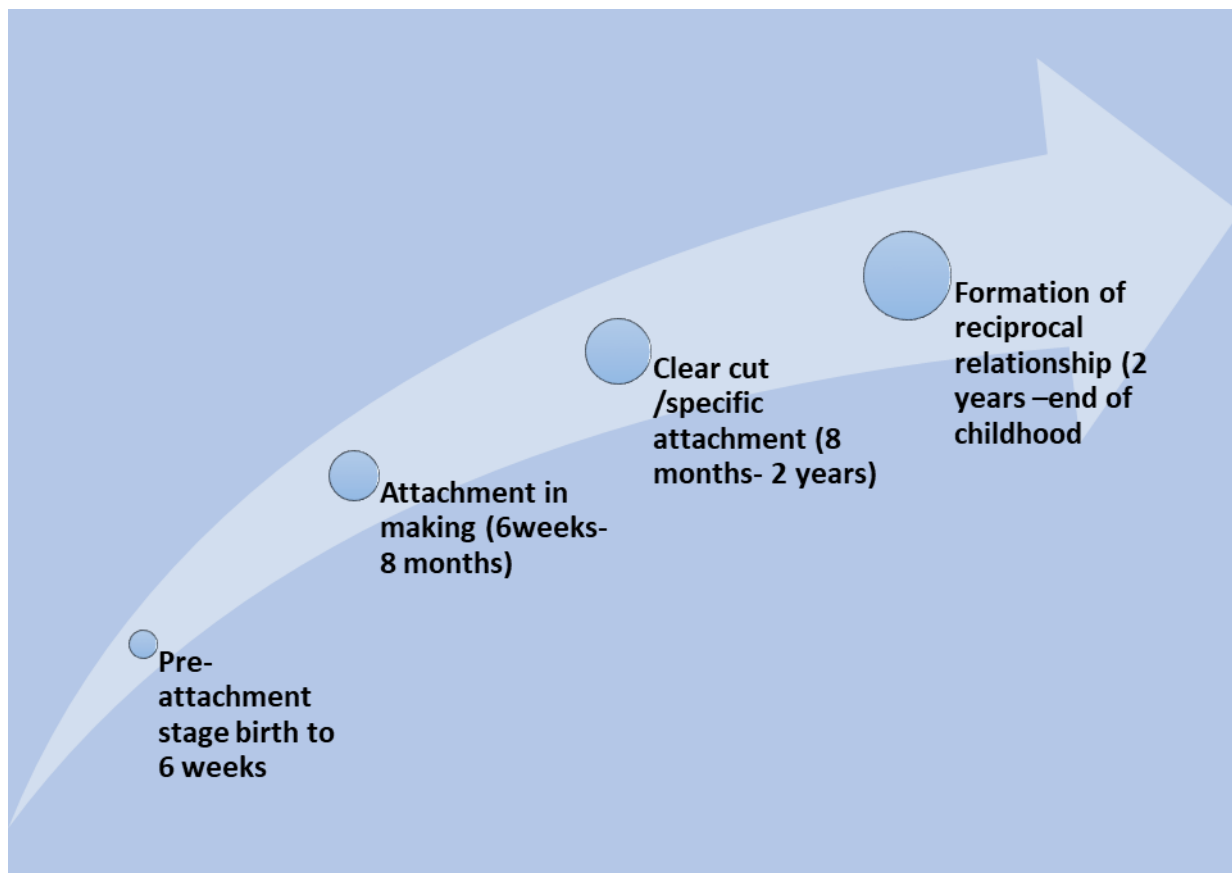


Fig 1: Stages of attachment

Source: Van Ijzendoorn and Bakermans-Kranenburg (2012)

Pre-attachment/ indiscriminate orientation (birth to 6 weeks)

At this stage, the infant indiscriminately signals to people. It seems tuned to the signals from the environment mostly sounds of people. The baby cries to attract the attention of the caregiver. During this phase, the infant does not show any attachment to a specific caregiver and it has no fear of strangers.

Attachment in making (6 weeks-8 months)

Rose and Parker (2014) identify the second stage as the attachment in making stage where a baby develops preference of care given by smell and by sight. Van Ijzendoorn and Bakermans-Kranenburg (2012), assert that during this phase, the infant accepts care from other people but begins to distinguish between familiar and unfamiliar people and becomes more responsive to responsive caregivers.

Clear cut /specific attachment (8 months- 2 years)

Clear cut attachments develop at this phase. The infant establishes strong attachment with one primary caregiver who provides a secure base for exploration, (Elliot and Reis, 2003). McLeod (2009) avers that Bowlby termed it monotropy, that is, a strong attachment bias towards a person who shows responsiveness and consistency in attending to the infants signals. The child suffers from separation anxiety when the attachment figure leaves. The stage is characterized by

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monitoring the movements of the mother or care giver. Infants also have secondary attachment figures that form a hierarchy of attachment.

Formation of reciprocal relationship (2 years –end of childhood).At this stage, children understand the schedule of the caregiver, hence, separation protests decline. The child becomes a partner in the attachment. According to Bowlby, knowledge on attachment behaviours at this stage is limited as it coincides with a phase where adolescents seek independence from parental dominance to form attachments with parental substitutes.

According to Bowlby, in Mcleod (2009), the child`smonotropic attachment relationship to a primary caregiver leads to the development of an internal working model. This refers to a cognitive model comprising mental representations of understanding the world, self and others. It is this internal working model that guides future social and emotional behaviour. In simple terms, infants will use their first attachment to form an idea of how future relationships should be. The concept of the internal working model is supported by the quiz findings of Hazan and Shaver, (1987). They created a love quiz which assessed attitudes about adult emotional relationships. The results of the quiz showed that individuals who experienced poor quality attachment during infancy were less likely to value or hold down a serious relationship. This, therefore, provides support for the internal working model, as early experiences mould expectations of future relationships. (Gross, 2010).

Characteristics of attachment

The characteristics/properties of attachment are illustrated below:

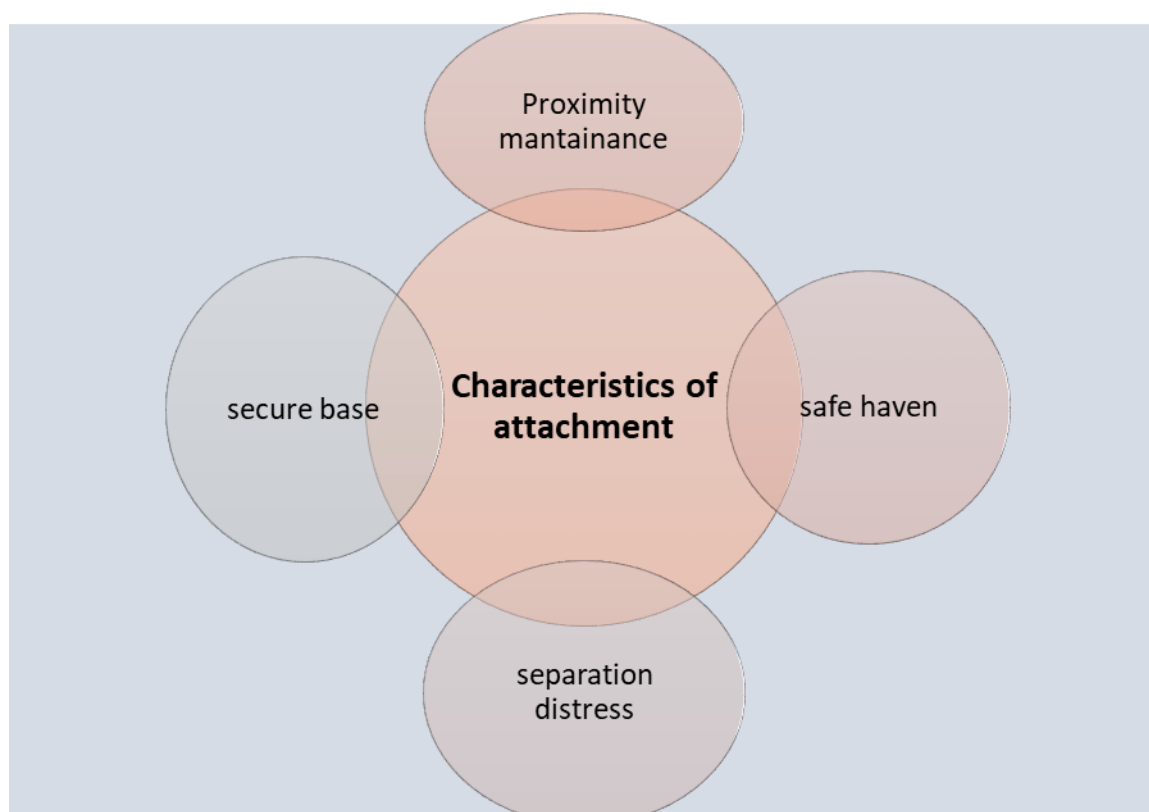


Fig 2: Summarising characteristics of attachment

Source: Survey

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Proximity maintenance

According to Prior and Glaser (2006), attachment theorists believe that children are born with the innate desire to seek proximity with their care giver when under stress or threatened. Infants have a desire to be close to the people they are attached to, hence, keep track of their whereabouts.

Secure base

Van Ijzendoon and Bakermans-Kranenburg (2012) point out that the quality of social engagement is more influential than the amount of time spent together in creating attachment relationships. Responding promptly to infant cues and engaging in lively social interaction promotes the foundation of solid attachment relationships. The attachment figure acts as a base of security from which the child can explore the environment.

Safe haven

During times of distress or fear, the infant retreats to its safe haven, the attachment figure. Research evidence by Lorenz (1935) established that infants form bonds with any consistent caregiver who is sensitive and responsive to their needs especially in times of distress, (McLeod, 2009).

Separation distress

Van Ijzendoon and Bakermans-Kranenburg (2012) point out that separation distress is a characteristic of attachment. It refers to anxiety that a child experiences in the absence of the attachment figure.

Patterns of Attachment



Figure 3: Patterns of attachment

Source: Kids cooperate

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Secure attachment and its impact on human development

Gearity (2005) states that secure attachment is formed when the caregiver consistently and sensitively responds to the cues of the infant. The caregiver is emotionally expressive and provides pleasant physical contact. Ijzendoorn and Bakemans-Kraneburg (2012) concur that various studies prove that maternal sensitivity is the most important factor in forging secure attachment. A responsive caregiver establishes a sense of trust in the world for the infant which is of paramount importance in aiding the total development of a child, as propounded by the first stage of Erik Erikson's Psychosocial theory, trust versus mistrust.. Securely attached children suffer from separation anxiety on departure of caregiver but are joyful when the caregiver returns. During times of distress, securely attached children seek comfort from caregivers fully aware that it is readily available. Guided by a sense of trust and using the caregiver as a secure base, the child freely explores the milieu, thus, gaining great competence.

Bretherton in McLeod (2009) asserts that secure attachment is positively linked with human development. Securely attached children have positive relations and good social skills. According to Kogomata (2014), multiple studies indicate that children who develop secure attachment at an early age grow to develop strong social skills. Coleman (2003), concurs that a positive correlation exists between the development of secure attachment in the early years of life and later social competence.

Secure attachment empowers children with a strong and solid foundation on which to forge successful adult relationships. A sense of trust created in this type of attachment promotes total development of the child and ensures social and emotional stability, (Haiman, 2017). Due to the secure and threat-free environment created by the caregiver, the child develops curiosity and interest in exploring the world around them, hence, developing a great sense of autonomy.

Ekeh (2012) avers that children with secure attachment earn higher grades and are more goal oriented than their peers with insecure attachment. This corroborates the findings of Bergin and Bergin (2009) which established that security of attachment predicts academic achievement. Research evidence by Sears (2016) established that securely attached children were observed to be caring, compassionate, connected, careful, and confident, open to redirection and strive to be well behaved in order to please their parents. This indicates that through social learning, a concept advocated by Bandura, children also adopt the positive attachment and spread it to others. In addition, these children tend to be empathetic and comfortable at expressing affection, concepts that are central in the Rogerian person-centred theory. Children nurtured in this type of attachment are better positioned to self-actualize later in life. In nutshell, secure attachment is an essential vehicle for effective social and emotional development.

To the classroom practitioner, it is significant to create a stimulating and conducive learning environment that strengthens the child's trust. In addition, unconditional positive regard given to learners increases their faith in the teacher as a secure base for exploration. Good teacher-learner interactions strengthen a positive self-concept amongst learners which is positively lined with academic achievement. Sensitivity and responsiveness to the needs of learners translates the classroom to a safe haven, hence promotes the holistic development of learners.

Ambivalent/Insecure Resistant Attachment

According to Malekpour (2007), this type of attachment is a strategy that stems from infants' experience of inconsistent and insensitive parenting. Children who display ambivalent attachment show distress due to separation anxiety. They show anger towards parents or caregivers and are overly passive. They lack trust in the world due to poor maternal availability. They commonly exhibit a clingy and dependent behavior. The child fails to develop feelings of security. They have

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difficulty in exploring novel situations. Research evidence suggests that this type of attachment is associated with the permissive parenting style.

Insecure Avoidant Attachment

Children who are in insecure avoidant attachment relationships tend to ignore the caregiver by avoiding their gaze and physical contact. The carers are less sensitive, provide more physical contact of an unpleasant nature hence the infants avoid them. According to Epstein (2001), this is a strategy developed by infants whose parents discourage overt signs of affection or distress, and who don't readily offer sympathy or comfort. The children react with little protest to caregivers' departure and avoid them on return. Research evidence suggests that this attachment style might be a result of autocratic parenting.

Disorganized/Disoriented Attachment

Malekpour (2007) states that disorganized attachment occurs when a parent or caregiver has a lot of unresolved emotional issues from their own past that they have no mental space left for their child. When the caregiver is the source of fear or threat, the child's faith in relationships is diminished. Children with disorganized attachment usually present contradictory and disoriented behaviors, seem afraid and confused. Some researchers believe that a lack of clear responsive care gives rise to behavioural disorders. This attachment pattern is usually linked to the neglectful parenting style.

Insecure Attachment and its Impact on Human Development

Bowlby in McLeod (2009) suggests that insecure attachment resulting from maternal deprivation has negative effects on the developing child. The findings of a case study by Curtiss (1977) of a girl called Genie confirm Bowlby's hypothesis that maternal deprivation impairs a child permanently. Genie was locked away by her father for 12 years because she was allegedly retarded and never formed an attachment with any one. On discovery at 13 years, she was profoundly retarded from severe confinement. Her language development was also severely handicapped since she had passed the critical period of acquiring language as propounded by Lenneberg's milestone theory. Deprivation, therefore, was proved to have deleterious results on human development.

Research evidence by Koluchova (1976) of Czechoslovakian twins also supports the view that maternal deprivation can result in dwarfism (retarded growth), aggressiveness, social maladjustment, affectionless psychotherapy, depression, delinquency or any form of non-compliant behavior to a certain extent. However, the results refute the theory that the effects of deprivation are permanent. The Czech twins were fostered at 9 years old by two sisters and by 14 years old, they had tremendously developed intellectual and social functioning. This indeed demonstrates that the effects of deprivation are reversible. In addition, McLeod (2009), points out that Bowlby was criticized for the maternal deprivation hypothesis because it was noted that other variables such as family conflict, parental income and education may influence anti-social behavior among insecurely attached children.

To the educators, this implies that various positive strategies should be employed to modify anti-social behaviour. Rose and Parker (2014), point out that sanctions received by learners who exhibit behavioural disorders due to insecure attachment may reinforce feelings of negativity and low self-worth. Hence, teachers should employ non-radical corrective measures such as the Freudian counselling therapy of free association to modify their behaviour. Schools to have an open door policy in line with Guidance and Counselling to help learners deal with challenges that stem from insecure attachment.

Greenough, Gunar, Emde, Masinga and Shonkoff (2001) point out that children who have been exposed to insecure attachment may display an array of developmental deficits that they

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endure over time. This shows that insecure attachment can be a source of childhood impairment. Malekpour (2012) points out that inconsistent and insensitive nurturing gives rise to a neurotic personality in the child which is manifested in relationship difficulties in adulthood, immaturity, demandingness and emotional instability. According to Simpson, Collins, Tran and Haydon (2007) insecurely attached children distrust adults, hence, a state of mistrust is negatively associated with development.

The teacher needs to create a non-threatening learning environment which will be conducive for learners to develop trust and see the teacher as a secure base, in line with Erik Erikson's stage of trust versus mistrust in his psycho-social theory. This will encourage learners to explore the environment freely and discover knowledge empirically, thus, effective learning will take place. Also this will gradually promote independence.

In addition, the teachers need to be responsive and sensitive to the needs of learners. Ignoring learners when they seek assistance may have negative repercussions on their social and emotional development.

Malekpour (2012) points out that research evidence indicates that insecure attachment not only leads to developmental problems at infancy or toddlerhood but predispose towards specific difficulties in later life as well. Epstein (2001), states that disorganized attachment can disrupt many different areas of development. Wong, Wiest and Cusick (2002) assert that insecure children struggle academically as they fail bond with the teacher successfully because of the nature of their parent-child attachment. They fail to perceive the teacher as a secure base from which to engage in academic tasks and challenges. (O'Connor and McCartney, 2006). A study by Ramsdal, Bergvik and Wynn (2015) confirms that insecure attachment negatively affects academic performance. However, findings of the study also point out that in some cases, insecurely attached learners defy the odds and achieve academic success.

Teachers should act in loco-parentis and strive to establish very good teacher-pupil relationships which are significant in the intellectual, social and emotional development of the learners. This is especially crucial for teachers in Early Childhood Development learners as they are still within the critical period of forging attachment relationships.

Teachers to be good role models for learners by displaying effective and good teacher-pupil interactions so that learners develop a positive internal working model which will guide their future relationships. This is accordance with the views of Albert Bandura in his Observational learning theory. According to Sears (2016) children brought up within disorganized attachment tend to have a low self-esteem, lack confidence, display oppositional, hostile and aggressive behavior towards others. The above statement is collaborated by Rice (2005) in Ganga and Chinyoka (2013) who asserts that when children are deprived of their emotional needs, they may become fearful, hostile, insecure, anxious and avoidant persons. This evokes resentment towards them, hence, they are rejected by peers and become social outcasts. They may be the targets of bullying or be the perpetrators of bullying themselves.

To deal with such behaviours in the classroom, the teacher needs to display the Rogerian principle of unconditional positive regard to learners in order to promote secure attachment which is positively associated with high academic achievement. This is in line with the findings of a research study on cross cultural patterns of attachment in 8 countries by Van Ijzendoorn and Kroonenberg (1988) which revealed that secure attachment was the best for healthy social, emotional and intellectual development. Accepting learners despite their individual differences will help them to adopt a positive self-concept which correlates positively with academic achievement.

Rose and Parker (2014) suggest that attachment awareness workshops can be coordinated in schools to train teachers so that they are able to respond positively to children who have unmet attachment needs and have experienced loss or trauma. This will also help teachers to recognize the

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impact of negative emotions on classroom behaviour and appreciate the benefits of positive teacher-learner interactions. The ability to understand and view children's behavior as the cumulative result of their attachment may enhance the teacher's sensitivity to the learners' needs as well as increase the understanding of behavioural disorders among learners. Discerned from the above statements is that attachment patterns depend on the nature of the interplay between biological and environmental factors. For secure attachment to take place, both nature and nurture should effectively complement each other, that is, reciprocal determinism.

Critique of the Attachment Theory

According to Harris in Lee (2013) the attachment theory over-emphasises the role of parents in determining the adult personality of their children. It disregards some important factors such as peer pressure. Harris further points out that a child's peers exert a stronger influence on them than their parents. Children learn behaviours from peers because they want to fit in as outlined by the Social Identity Theory advanced by Tajfel.

Field (1996) in Lee (2013) rejects the attachment theory citing that the findings of Ainsworth's Strange Situation experiment were based on data that was collected only during stressful times. He further alludes to the behaviours directed towards the attachment figure during departing and reunion, citing that these cannot be the only factors used when defining attachment. Field (1996) in McLeod (2013) states that attachment is confined to infancy and the early childhood period ending during puberty as noted by Bowlby. It totally ignores attachments that occur during adolescence, adulthood and later life.

Another weakness of this theory is that it idolizes the role of the mother on formation of attachment relationships, when in fact a father or sibling can have the same attachment at the same time. (Lee, 2013). McLeod (2013), points out that critics of the theory argue that focusing on maternal sensitivity when trying to explain different patterns of attachment is a reductionist approach. Instead, Kegan (1984), suggests that the temperament of a child is actually what leads to the different types of attachment. Children with different innate temperaments will have different patterns of attachment. This observation is supported by the findings of a study by Fox (1989) who discovered that babies with an easy temperament develop secure attachment, infants with slow temperaments develop insecure attachment whereas those with difficult temperaments develop ambivalent attachments.

The interactionist theory on patterns of attachment is that, it is a result of a combination of factors in both the child's innate temperament and their parent's sensitivity towards their needs.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In line with the forgoing discussion, it can be noted despite criticism, the attachment theory has been highly influential in child psychology. It has generated a great deal of research and exerted an enormous impact in the care of young children. It provides educationists with a foundation of how to develop successful and effective relationships with learners. These are crucial as they facilitate the development of a holistically developed individual. It is, therefore, imperative that the school and community at large, work hand in glove to ensure that all children are afforded an equal opportunity at development, by ensuring secure attachment which has a positive correlation with social and emotional development and academic success. This will assist educators to succeed in their mammoth task of producing functional members of society.

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