

Vol. 2, No. 2, September, 2024 Edition

# Lagos Journal of Psychology

www.lagosjournalofpsychology.com

Published by the Department of Psychology,
Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Lagos.

ISSN: 2756-3510

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## FOREWORD

The Department of Psychology, University of Lagos has continued to expand the frontiers of knowledge through the engagement of cutting edge research by her seasoned faculty members, and the publications of rigorously processed articles in her new journal. This new journal has been welcomed in the academia as a veritable tool for the dissemination of research findings in Nigeria and beyond. The first issue has continued to attract the interest of scholars and researchers and has guided enlightened conversations in the specific areas wherein the studies were conducted; In this edition we are presenting even more fascinating topical issues being addressed by different authors. We hereby invite you to savour these well researched articles. The edition is, as usual, a combination of thought-provoking analyses and discussions on different quests to understanding human behavior and mental processes for a sustainable world; it also highlights promising paths and directions for future intervention. It is hoped that findings from this edition of the journal will furnish the understanding of scholars on how to improve human behaviour for a sustainable society through effective use of modern therapy and intervention models. Finally, this edition has advanced the combined ideas of scholars and academics from different academic disciplines. For this reason, I want to thank everyone who is interested in promoting the boundaries of knowledge, transformation process and ultimately adding to the body of research in behavioural science.

**Editor**

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# Adolescent's attachment with parents and peers as precursors of psychosocial adjustment.

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## Abstract

Literature indicates that during the normative development of young adults, peers gradually replace parents in the fulfillment of adolescents' attachment needs. Moreover, adolescents may become ill adjusted owing to poor attachment with parents and peers; this study therefore seeks to examine the relationship between adolescent's attachment and their psychosocial adjustment. The study was conducted among randomly selected adolescents of 13-16 years of age. The Participants were from 12 demographically diverse public secondary schools in Lagos metropolis. The sample of the study consists of 320 participants, who responded to self-report measures on "Relationship Questionnaire" Children's Expectations of Social Behavior Questionnaire – Peer Version, as well as "Behavior Adjustment Scale". The data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Results show that secure adolescents were less aggressive than insecure/avoidant adolescents. Further, secure adolescents perceived themselves as more socially competent than insecure/avoidant adolescents. Findings also indicated that secure adolescents were more socially accepted by their peers than the insecure/ambivalent adolescents. However there were gender differences in the perception of participants regarding conformity to social expectations, with insecure/ambivalent girls, more likely than insecure/ambivalent boys to be socially non- conforming and socially incompetent. The findings underscore the necessity of a healthy bonding between a child and the significant others in the course of development.

***Keyword:*** *Attachment, Peers, relationships, adjustment, adolescents, psychosocial*

## Introduction.

Adolescence is characterized by normative explorative behavior which is critical for adolescents' social and emotional development (Collado et al., 2014; Crone et al., 2016) As adolescents explore their increasing social worlds, social cues become more salient with young adults navigating new social relationships and acquiring more complex social skills (Blakemore and Mills, 2014). Adolescents also experience rapid neurobiological reorganization that enables them to be sensitive particularly to social cues from peers (Blakemore and Mills, 2014; Nelson et al., 2016). Attachment security with parents or caregivers during infancy is the basis upon which social expectations, autonomous behaviors, and regulatory competencies later in life are built (Thompson, 2006). These early attachment experiences influence the formation of internal working models, which is how individuals mentally represent their expectations about social relationships, exploration, and safety (Bretherton, 1987). Many previous studies on attachments of children reveal that it is associated with an array of social and psychological outcomes (Asekun & Ikimoya 2020). Such as competence in preschool and kindergarten (e.g., Brechwald and Prinstein, 2011; Jessor, 1993; Kandel, 1985); behavioural problems; (e.g., Sarfika et al., 2023) relations with peers, friends, and siblings (Ubha & Cahill, 2014). According to Bowlby (1969) new-born formed attachment bond with their care givers during the infancy stage of life. Bowlby identified three attachment styles which included: secure attachment style which is developed when children perceive their caregivers as available and responsive. However, children develop an ambivalent or avoidant style when they perceive their caregivers as either inconsistently responsive or unavailable and not responsive (Fraley, 2010). Children with secure internal working models of attachment tend to show more successful social skills and effective emotion regulation across childhood (Booth-Laforce and Oxford, 2008), but insecure attachment children exhibited difficulties in socioemotional engagement during dolescence and even adulthood (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2019). There is also a biobehavioural aspect of Attachment in which early caregiving shapes the developing of brain in ways that can facilitate or inhibit successful regulatory development (Callaghan and Tottenham, 2016; Morris et al., 2017; Vrtiˇcka, 2017). Indeed, brain regions associated with affective processing (i.e., amygdala), reward processing (i.e., VS), and decision-making (i.e., anterior cingulate cortex (ACC), prefrontal cortex (PFC) exhibit differential activation as a function of attachment security during adolescent regulation (Vrtiˇcka et al., 2014). The amygdala appears to play a key role in attachment-based socioemotional functioning during

development, such that early maternal deprivation is associated with reduced amygdala growth across childhood and adolescence (VanTieghem et al., 2021) and a lack of discrimination between attachment figures and strangers via amygdala activation during childhood and adolescence (Olsavsky et al., 2013). In spite the empirical evidence in literature that attachment security formed during childhood can determine the quality of social relationships and engagements, there are few works that examine how attachments influence relationships with peers and consequently the implications on psycho-social adjustment

## Literature Review

In the course of transition from infancy to adolescence, children become more autonomous in their engagements with their parents and get closer with peers for social interaction and support (Lee & Park), children live the home to join the educational institution, thereby forming an attachment with peers (Bowlby, 1969), and building profiles (or typologies) of attachment relations with multiple figures (Wang & Wang, 2012; He et al., 2018; Markiewicz et al., 2006; Rosenthal and Kobak, 2010), no doubt, attachment to parents remains an important part of adolescents' lives. A past study reveals that high levels of peer attachment may protect adolescents from risky behavior (Telzer et al., 2015). Accordingly, high level of peer attachment may heighten adolescents' sensitivity to risk information. Individuals who developed a secure attachment to their parents are more likely to establish a secure attachment bond with their peers. The study of peer attachment is of great interest especially in adolescence, when social relationships become more complex. A secure peer attachment is defined as a relationship established on a basis of trust, along with the belief that the other person will respect one' own needs and desires, and will be able to both understand and respond if when communicating his or her feelings. Thus, secure peer attachment relationships in adolescence are based on mutual understanding, trust and good communication quality .On the contrary, insecure peer attachment is characterized by the feeling of alienation and isolation from the peer-group. This feeling might be due to a fear of rejection at the same time to a desire of proximity and affiliation, along with poor communication and mis-trust. Hence, adolescents who perceive their peers as neither supportive nor trustworthy and often feel isolated from their peer group, tend to present emotional and behavioral difficulties. Previous research has supported the role of peer attachment in explaining adolescent's engagement in behavioral problems such as aggressive behavior and substance abuse.(e.g., Simons et al, 2001).

Additionally, attachment insecurity increases the possibility of emotional symptoms such as depression and anxiety. These difficulties might be related to the feeling of agony when an adolescent feels unable to trust others and communicate their own emotional dilemma, especially when group affiliation is of such importance in this developmental stage. Furthermore, adolescents who establish secure peer attachment relationships, are more likely to engage in prosocial behaviors (Shaver, et al., 2016). They have developed positive internal working models which motivate adolescents to collaborate with each other because they believe it is worth it (Carlo et al, 2014). Such secure attachment may contribute to children's ability to form meaningful peer relationships when they enter school (Holt et al, 2018). These relationships may provide increased opportunities to participate in prosocial behaviors, which in turn sustain positive interactions with peers into adolescence, reinforcing children's views of others as good and worthy of care (Monteoliva, et al, 2018). On the contrary, insecure attached adolescents have negative expectations and hostile attributions about peer behaviours that likely undermine prosocial behavior.

According to attachment theory, the quality of present attachment relationships with the parents, as well as skills acquired in a secure attachment relationship since childhood, are key features in solving developmental issues linked to adolescence. This theory focuses on individual and relational developmental processes. Not only does it propose a framework for understanding adolescent normative and pathological functioning, but it also offers practitioners a pertinent intervention model for the emergence of skills that were underdeveloped within dysfunctional parent-child relationship. Bowlby (1997) described attachment as a lasting connectedness between human beings. Attachment is where the child uses the primary caregiver as a secure base from which to explore and, when necessary, as a haven of safety and a source of comfort (Waters, 2000). Attachment security refers to the individual's capacity to seek comfort from a meaningful figure when in distress and, once soothed, to become available to explore the environment and acquire new learning experiences Weinfield (2008). Throughout development, attachment relationships provide the individual with emotional support and a feeling of continuity and comfort, especially during stressful periods and moments of important change, such as the transition into adolescence or adulthood Gillath (2005). Attachment theory also suggests that daily interactions between young children and their parents are internalized into internal working models – including representation

of self, others, and relationships – which influence the child's anticipation of parental behaviors as well as the child's behavior towards the latter and eventually towards others Bretherton (2008). Attachment theory has expanded in recent decades, with its influence over relationships other than the paternal-filial being explained, as well as how attachment influences in later development stages Olivia (2011). In this developmental period, adolescents prepare to develop their potential and begin adulthood (Borrás-Santisteban 2014). The emotional, cognitive, and social transformations of the adolescent are delineated by attachment processes previously established (Allen, 2008). Indeed, the empirical evidence indicates that adolescents, in general, experience an increased need for privacy and a decrease in emotional closeness, expressions of affection, and time spent with parents Olivia (2011). There are higher levels of ambivalence and lower levels of idealization from adolescents towards their parents (Collins, 2006). Autonomy development in adolescence entails a continuation of child-like exploration, as well as attachment framework, alongside having to find a balance between new scenarios and needs Delgado (2011). Similar to what occurred in the strange situation, adolescents feel more secure when they perceive availability and support from their parents. Therefore, in spite of the paternal-filial relationship changes, when there is a quality relationship, the bond between them is still characterized by warmth, with the parents being important attachment figures even until emerging adulthood Olivia (2011). In the process of adolescent development, the internal working models guide the child in the construction of their relational world with their past experiences as the base. The internal working models are frameworks or internal maps of each person in which the relationship with other significant individuals is constructed and represented.

According to Bowlby, these internal models allow the child to predict and interpret the conduct of their attachment figures given that such internal models define the internal working models consisting of expectations and beliefs about the self and others. In the future, these models are integrated in the personality and guide social relations. It has been shown that via secure attachment, conflicts with parents are navigated in a healthy way, with a greater tendency from both parents and child to communicate with each other and find solutions. Adolescents with secure attachment demonstrate confidence defending their opinion to their parents, knowing that there will be no negative consequences and that the relationship will remain intact (Allen, 2008). However, adolescents with insecure attachment experience emotional distancing from their parents

in a stressed manner. These adolescents foresee a threat in the relationship with their parents during the autonomy-seeking process. It has been found that the adolescents with insecure-evasive attachment tend to avoid conflict and opportunities for solutions, while adolescent with insecure-ambivalent attachment show intense involvement which can diminish increasingly throughout the autonomy-seeking process of the adolescent (Allen, 1999).

Following the considerations of psycho-social adjustment and as a significant factor influencing social outcomes, there has been an increased focus in the literature on the role, understanding and importance of psychosocial adjustment in other spheres of life. Initially, investigation into psychosocial adjustment focused on persons who are maladjustment in survivors commonly being measured by psychopathology of quality of life (Klings, 2009). Subsequently, the literature focused on identifying and understanding predictors or risk factors associated with psychosocial adjustment, before beginning to examine methods by which these may be manipulated to improve psychosocial outcomes (Fauerbach, 2007). Simultaneously the relatively undefined term of psychosocial adjustment began to receive clarification and focus, as research and practice moved more towards social, occupational, relational and growth factors for gauging adjustment rather than simply focusing more generally on psychopathology and quality of life (Costa, 2008).

Research has identified numerous predictors and risk factors that may influence psychosocial adjustment to varying degrees such as personality, coping strategies, perceived social support, pre-morbid psychopathology, demographic and social factors (Wiechman, 2011). However, there are gaps in the literature concerning the areas of prevention, intervention and improving outcomes for psycho-social adjustment

**Present Study**

Adolescence is a major transitional period in socio-emotional, and behavioral development (Crone & Dahl, 2012). Adolescents do not only form attachments with parents or care givers but also extend their attachment to friends and intimate partners, thereby developing multiple hierarchically organized attachment relationships (Bowlby, 1969; Ainsworth, 1989) although primary attachments, particularly to the mother, have been found to be crucial for child and adolescent well-being and socioemotional development (Groh et al., 2017; Bartholomew &

Horowitz, 1991; Fraley, 2019) and are characterized by three dimensions: Attachment-related anxiety reveals a heightened need for intimacy and fear of losing one's attachment figure. Attachment-related avoidance is a tendency to desire independence at the expense of intimacy and distance oneself from others. However, secure attachment involves low levels of both attachmentsrelated anxiety and avoidance, In view of the foregoing; the present study aims to examine the relationship between adolescent's attachment and their psychosocial adjustment. The hypotheses below are stated:

The hypotheses below are stated:

- Secure adolescents are less likely to be aggressive than insecure/avoidant adolescents.
- Secure attachment would significantly predict social competence.
- There would be a significant difference in theself-reports of secure and insecure/avoidant adolescents on perception of social acceptance.

## Method

### Research Design

The research utilizes a cross-sectional survey methodology, enabling data collection from participants simultaneously. By employing a cross-sectional survey design, the researcher can gather data on multiple variables concurrently. Furthermore, none of the variables were manipulated by the researcher during the study.

### Participants:

The data for this study were gathered from students of private secondary School in Lagos, Nigeria. The participants were recruited in collaboration with the school. To be eligible for the study, students needed to meet the following criteria: be between the ages of 12–16 years old, be in senior secondary school 1 and 3 and express a willingness to participate

**Instruments:**

**Relationship Questionnaire (RQ**) was designed by Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991). The measure is a single item instrument which consists of four short paragraphs, that describes a prototypical attachment pattern as it applies in close adult peer relationships. Research participants are required to rate their degree of correspondence to each prototype on a 7-point Likert format scale. A person could rate him or herself as: Secure 6, Fearful 2, Preoccupied 1, Dismissing 4. These ratings (or "scores") provide a *profile* of an individual's attachment feelings and behaviour. The RQ was designed to obtain continuous ratings of each of the four attachment patterns, and this is the ideal use of the measure. However, if necessary, the RQ can also be used to categorize participants into their best fitting attachment pattern. The highest of the four attachment prototype ratings can be used to classify participants into an attachment category.

**Behaviour Adjustment Scale.**

The Behavior Adjustment Rating Scale by David et al, (2002) rates students' total behavioral adjustment in classrooms. The scale answers the question, "Is the pupil's behavior satisfactory or causing difficulty to any degree. The teacher lists all the children in the class, and then rates them using four response options indicating a gradually increasing scale from satisfactory adjustment to serious behavior difficulties. Boys and girls are rated separately. The four response options in the Behavior Adjustment Rating Scale (BARS) are as follows: Satisfactory Adjustment: Indicates that the student's behavior is well-adjusted and not causing any significant difficulties. Some Adjustment Difficulties: Suggests minor behavioral challenges that may require attention but are not severe. Moderate Adjustment Difficulties: Points to more noticeable behavior issues that may impact the classroom environment. Serious Behavior Difficulties: Indicates significant behavioral challenges that require immediate intervention or support.

**The social competence Questionnaire (SCOMQ**). The scale assesses perceptions of an individual on social competence and acceptance in social settings. It exhibits an acceptable internal consistency r = .85 (Sarason et al, 1985) and predicts social competence and social acceptance. The Social Competence and Acceptance Questionnaire is a 5- point likert-type scale consisting of 15 statements. It aims to measure the acceptance and social competence that students

experience with their peers. It comprises seven subscales. The format of the response are as thus: 1= Not at all, 2 = occasionally, 3 = about half the time, 4 =Most often, 5 = All the time.

**Procedure**

The data for this study were gathered from students of private secondary of five randomly selected schools in Alimosho Local government, south West Nigeria. The participants were recruited in collaboration with the school authorities. They received consent to participate from their teachers while they themselves gave their assents to participate. To be eligible for the study, students needed to meet the following criteria be between the ages of 12–16 years old, be in senior secondary school 1 and 3 and express a willingness to participate. Those who had difficulties in completing the questionnaire due to physical or psychological issues during the study were excluded. The sample size was determined using G*Power 3.1. In all a total number of 320 participants were selected for the study. The Participants who showed interest were informed that there was no right or wrong answers and as such, they should try to be as honest as possible in their responses while the researcher also clarified or answer any questions participants were not clear about in the questionnaire that was administered to them. Participants answered items on the questionnaire within 30 – 40 minutes and were appreciated for taking part in the survey after questionnaires were collated. The data gathered from the participant were then entered into SPSS V27 and analyzed using the regression analysis and t-test statistical instruments. Statistical analysis was done at the level of significance chosen for this study $P < .05$

**Result**

**Table 1 showing Summary of T-test for the Independent Samples Showing differences in secure adolescents and insecure avoidant adolescents on aggressiveness.**

| Aggressiveness | N | Mean | Std. Dev | Df | T | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | 318 | 3.92 | <0.5 |
| Secure | 165 | 50.08 | 9.74 | | | |
| Insecure/Avoidant | 155 | 36.19 | 7.21 | | | |

Table 1 above shows that there is a significant difference in the scores of secure and insecure/avoidant adolescents on aggressiveness scale [t (318) = 2.89; P<.05]. The result confirms the stated hypothesis, hence, it was accepted.

Secure attachment as predictor of social competence

**Table 2: Summary of a Regression analysis showing the influence of secure attachment on social competence.**

| Variables | Beta | t-value | P | R | $R^2$ | F | Sig |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Secure Attachment | .448 | 6.431 | <.05 | | | | |
| Social competence | .129 | 3.588 | <.05 | .440 | .624 | 8.740 | <.05 |

DV: Social competence

Table 2 shows the predictive influence of secure attachment on social competence

The results indicate that security attachment influences social competence {R= .440; $R^2$= .194; F (4, 318) = 8.740; p<.01}. This implies that secure attachment account for about 62.4% variance in social competence among the children.

**Table 3: Summary of t-test For the Independent Samples Showing differences in perception of secure/insecure adolescents on social acceptance**.

| Social acceptance | N | Mean | Std. Dev | Df | T | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | 318 | 1.42 | <0.5 |
| Secure | 170 | 42.08 | 9.51 | | | |
| Insecure/Avoidant | 150 | 33.19 | 8.48 | | | |

Table 3 above shows that there is a significant difference in the scores of secure and insecure/avoidant adolescents on social acceptance [t (1.42) = 318; P<.05]. The result confirms the stated hypothesis, hence, it was accepted.

## Discussion

This study examined if there are differences in secure adolescents and insecure avoidant adolescents on aggressiveness measure, our hypothesis was confirmed. This research indicated that such a parenting approach fosters essential skills like emotional regulation and empathy in young adults. That prevents them from becoming aggressive on others In addition, Goleman (1995). emphasised how crucial parental involvement is to the development of emotional intelligence. On the other hand, individuals with insecured attachment were reported as exhibiting the most attention-seeking negative behaviors, including the highest level of rebellion, rule-breaking, truancy, and general externalizing problems. Further, insecure adolescents were commonly diagnosed with personality disorders largely characterized as excessively emotive and attention-seeking (e.g., affective disorders, obsessive-compulsive, histrionic, and borderline disorders; (Rosenstein & Horowitz, 1996).

According to the second result secure attachment is a predictor of social competence. Children who are secured have been shown to have higher levels of perceived competence in multiple domains (Kerns et al., 1996), have higher self-esteem (Simons, Paternite, & Shore, 2001) and feel less lonely. Furthermore, relatively lower security has been associated with both internalizing and externalizing problems (Granot & Mayseless, 2001; McCartney, Owen, Booth, Clarke-Stewart, & Vandell, 2003). The quality of the child-parent attachment relationship has been linked with social competence and adjustment Ogunleye et al. (2019) which demonstrates that insecure attachment plays a significant role in predicting aggressive behaviours. Furthermore, the finding of this study is consistent with the investigation conducted by Varoy et al. (2016) who in their study discovered that addolescents who are insecure have low level of impulsivity, an aspect of (urgency) which significantly correlates with hostility and anger among the study's subjects.

In our third hypothesis, our result indicates secure/insecure adolescents differed on social acceptance. Attachment theory suggests that insecurely attached individuals will have more difficulty seeking and getting acceptance from others. Developmentally, such difficulties to get acceptance by an adolescent may reinforce insecure adolescents' negative expectations of others (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2009; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2013). Lack of acceptance, in turn, has far-reaching implications for relationship functioning, health, and wellbeing across the life span (see, e.g., Chu, Saucier, & Hafner, 2010; Heaney & Israel, 2002). Empirically, insecure attachment in

young adulthood is associated with less help-seeking behavior in general, with dismissing individuals considering others to be unreliable and preoccupied individuals considering themselves to be unworthy (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Insecurely attached individuals are more likely to behave in a defensive manner and to show more negative and less positive emotions in social interactions (Creasey, 2002; Roisman, Tsai, & Chiang, 2004; Weimer, Kerns, & Oldenburg, 2004). Insecure adolescents are likely to struggle in forming and maintaining close relationships in general, and in particular, are likely to struggle with expecting relationships to be sources of support (Grabill & Kerns, 2000; Zimmermann, 2004). This may be especially true for dismissing adolescents: One study found that nearly a third of adolescents classified as insecured nominated themselves as their own primary attachment figure (Freeman & Brown, 2001). Within adolescence and early adulthood, insecure attachment has been associated with lower quality friendships, as well as more loneliness and lower self-perceived social support (Kobak & Sceery, 1988; Priel & Shamai, 1995; Zimmermann, 2004).

**Conclusion**

Adolescence is a major transitional period in behavioral development (Crone and Dahl, 2012). Adolescents do not only form attachments with parents or care givers but also extend their attachment to friends and intimate partners, thereby developing multiple hierarchically organized attachment relationships (Bowlby, 1969), A seamless process of attachments would guarantee a healthy socio-emotional development (Fraley, 2019) and ensure a well-adjusted individual ready to face the future. As adolescence progresses, the importance of peer relationships increases dramatically. Teens spend proportionately less time with family and more time with friends, and these peers' relationships become more intimate. These studies have demonstrated the need for parents and caregivers to guide adolescents in their attachments to their peers.

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