

Ameya Ananyan

Capstone Project

American University of Armenia

Professor Dr. Mica Hilson

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How parental behavior affect children's attachment styles: avoidant, anxious, and secure attachment styles in relationships and the core psychological causes of their development.

Key words: Attachment styles, parenting styles, parent-child relationships, avoidant and anxious attachments, secure attachment, the role of mother, children's emotional needs, parental communication.

Imagine a situation when you have been in a relationship with your partner for many years and you still cannot understand why he detaches himself every time you have "deep talks" and intimate emotional connection. A person may think that this detachment is the result of lack of love and passion in relationship, however, it can be explained by the attachment theory: this person likely has an avoiding attachment style which forces him to avoid overly emotional connections, where his autonomy and independence would be under a "threat". Due to the fact that parents are the first models of behavior for their children, their emotional unavailability, physical absence, and lack of empathy towards their children can lead to the evolvement of avoiding attachment style as soon as their children will try to enter relationships in adulthood. Hence, the aforementioned scenario could be perceived and interpreted differently by a person if he/she is aware of the

attachment styles and does not connect the detached behavior of the partner to the non-existing problems in their relationship. Attachment styles can be considered as the heart and cornerstone of healthy relationships which will not only save the relationship but also will reduce the feelings of insufficiency, insecurity, and misunderstanding in both partners. The awareness about the attachment theory will not only shed a light on one's intricate relationships with parents, but also can save their own romantic relationships.

To define more about attachment styles, it is important to mention that there are three main types: anxious, avoidant, and secure, as well as anxious-avoidant, which is a more complex manifestation of an attachment style. The theory of attachment styles was discovered and examined in 1969 by British psychology John Bowlby which was inspired by the experience of his own children who were separated from parents. Each person has his/her own style of bonding with another person both emotionally and physically. While most people have healthy/ secure attachment styles which is characterized by stable relationships with both parents in childhood and a healthy family dynamic, others evolve anxious, avoidant, or anxious-avoidant attachment styles which are the result of their caregivers' emotional unavailability, lack of care and attention, or overly protective and controlling ways of behavior.

To bring more specific examples and imaginary scenarios to show the connection between parenting communication and attachment styles, a young boy is raised in a family where his parents do not show emotions and affection and expect their son to do the same. The parents get angry when their boy cries, so they do not show affection and emotional availability. This boy will likely grow up an adult who will avoid

intimate and emotional relationships where he will have to reveal his strong emotions. This adult will have an avoidant attachment style which will be manifested in prioritizing personal independence and emotional loneliness over close relationships because it will be a threat to his usual behavior and independence. In other words, this boy will simply follow the example of his parents and, whether consciously or not, he will avoid the emotional side of relationships to stay in his “comfort zone”. Now let’s imagine another scenario: a girl is raised in an inconsistent environment, where parents are both controlling but also emotionally available when necessary: the girl does not know whether she will be praised or ignored, depending on the mood of her parents. As she grows up, she will seek a constant reassurance in her relationships due to the fear of being ignored. This emotional dependency of the girl will mean that she developed an anxious attachment because of the inconsistent family dynamics and an unpredictable parenting behavior.

Teenagers and adults, particularly in Armenia, are not sufficiently taught about the psychological aspects of relationships and, in general, interpersonal communication, which is an essential element of every-day life. This capstone project aims at showing the attachment styles and their main causes which go back to the ways parents communicated with their children in early childhood and, later, in adolescence. Such parenting behavior and attitude as neglect, emotional unavailability, warmth, acceptance, responsiveness to child’s needs are the constituents of either the psychologically secure attachment styles or avoidant and anxious attachments. The psychological researches from different countries and authors are taken as evidence for the main idea of the project which states that secure attachment develops in children who had mostly warm, understanding, and emotionally

available parents, while anxious and avoidant attachments are the results of inconsistent, unstable, either emotionally distant or overly protective parents who did not fully meet the emotional needs of their children when it was necessary. Adults with anxious attachment style are those who demonstrate a desperate need for reassurance in their relationships due to the fear of being abandoned by their partners, while, vice versa, the avoidant partners evolve a defense mechanism towards close relationships in such manifestations as emotional unavailability, coldness, and rejection due to receiving the same emotional unavailability from their parents in childhood. Due to the fact that parents are the first role models for children, the way they communicate with their kids further teach them how to behave and how to feel about close relationships.

Literature Review:

Marcel A. de Haas et. Al conducted a study and used AAI (Adult Attachment Interview) according to which adults who are in stable and trustworthy relationships, recalled their childhood interactions with parents as “warm” and “emotionally available”, (1994). The study created a link between the past experiences and the present adult behaviors to explain the attachment style theory and understand the most basic patterns of anxious, avoidant, and anxious-avoidant attachment styles. Other half of the participants developed defense mechanisms towards emotional intimacy, which was the result of neglect or abusive relationships with parents in childhood. In his

“Attachment theory”, writer and psychologist John Bowlby explains that emotionally available caregivers unconsciously teach children to relate securely to any forms of relationships, and those relationships do not cause anxiety, fear, detachment, or other negative emotions as soon as children enter adult relationships, (1969). For those people who have secure attachment styles, emotional deep connections in relationships are not threats to their “well-being” because their conscious and unconscious mind have not developed defense mechanisms towards emotional connections which used to cause harm and pain to them in their childhood due to their parents.

“Good Partner, Good Parent: Responsiveness Mediates the Link Between Romantic Attachment and Parenting Style” on the basis of SEM (Structural Equation Modeling) examines caregiving systems which are authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive, (A. Millings & J. Walsh et al., 2012). To understand the interconnectedness between parenting styles and attachment styles it is important to dig deeper into the psychology of parents. Authors of this article study the two main styles of parenting which are authoritarian and authoritative, the latter of which is considered as the healthiest form of parenting communication since it is characterized both by parents’ realistic expectations without pressure and, at the same time, warmth and close emotional connection with children, (Millings & Walsh, 2012). The foundation for a healthy self-esteem and identity for a child, first of all, depends on reactions, praise, and support of parents; a nurturing environment, where a child’s emotional needs are met, makes the child more open to other relationships, especially romantic relationships in adulthood. The surveys included in this article, which were focused on interviews of 125 couples with children, prove the existence of a close link between parenting styles and

attachment styles of their children. While the authoritative parenting style was taken as an example of a healthy and balanced communication with children, authoritarian parenting style is what creates the soil for the seeds of anxious, avoidant, and anxious-avoidant attachment styles due to the disbalanced dynamic between parents and children. Authoritative parenting can be exaggeratedly called as childhood mistreatment, since it partially or, sometimes, completely disregards the emotional needs of a child and causes psychological traumas, starting from self-esteem issues and ending with depression in adulthood. These psychological traumas coming from childhood induce children to become either avoidant or anxious in their further relationships, (Lisa Cohen & Firouz Ardalan et al., 2017, “Attachment anxiety and avoidance as mediators of the association between childhood maltreatment and adult personality dysfunction”). A child who was neglected or, even worse, emotionally abused by parents will be more prone to developing personality disorders, which will make it challenging to enter healthy relationships because he/she will, unconsciously, expect the same neglect and negative treatment from their partners.

Such aspects and questions concerning the ways parents communicated with their children as “warmth and involvement”, “democratic participation”, “verbal hostility”, “active or passive participation in children’s life” should be asked to parents to analyze the factors that influenced their children to behave in certain ways in their relationships, (C. Robinson et al., 2001, “The Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire”). Mother’s role is particularly important in forming attachment styles, (John Bowlby, 1969). If a child had a “cold” or “emotionally unavailable” mother figure who did not fully participate in his life, both physically or emotionally, a child will

develop unhealthy behavioral patterns in their relationships in such manifestations as toxic attitude, manipulations, verbal or physical abuse, emotional unavailability, and devaluation of partner. In the worst scenario, the child will completely avoid any forms of close relationships and intimate connections as a defense mechanism and response to childhood trauma he got from his mother figure. On the contrary, another response to an avoiding or absent mother is the development of anxious attachment style, which is characterized by clinginess, anxiety as well as a constant reassurance, validation, and attention from partner so that an individual will fill the void and the fear of abandonment.

I will conduct the quantitative research which will embrace the evaluation of parents of both groups: those who are parents of pre-school children and those whose children are already teenagers; parents will fill the survey of PSDQ (Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire) to shed a light on the details of their early communication with their children. This questionnaire will require honest answers and details that will lead to qualitative data concerning the link between their behavior and the ways their children interact with each other. After getting the results of questionnaires, different focus groups will be developed in accordance with whether the family dynamic is authoritative, authoritarian, or permissive to demonstrate the specific characteristics that each of this parenting style has. Moreover, questions from “Cross-Cultural adaptation, validity, and reliability of the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire”, (T. Oliviera & D. Costa, 2018) will be also included in the research since it includes insightful questions as “I use physical punishment as a way of disciplining our child”, “I am responsive to our child’s feelings or needs” and many other relevant and helpful questions for this research paper.

Main research question:

This study will focus on the main questions of why and how certain parenting behaviors lead to the shaping of anxious, avoidant, and secure attachment styles in their children, and how these attachment styles are, further, manifested in relationships in adulthood. In other words, this research paper will draw parallels between childhood experiences with parents and the behavior adults show in their own romantic relationships in accordance with their childhood experiences. The main goal is to introduce the psychological concept of attachment styles and to prove the existing connection between them and children's early interactions with parents on the basis of John Bowlby's Attachment Theory (1969). I will introduce and explain the following important questions about attachment theory: what role parental communication plays in developing secure versus anxious and avoidant attachments, how parental emotional availability/ unavailability affects a child's ability to form romantic relationships and intimate connections, and what are the distinct characteristics of parents such as neglect, praise, and acceptance that contribute to the growth of anxious, avoidant, and secure attachment styles.

Attachment theory is fundamental on individual and interpersonal levels because it explains unconscious patterns of behavior which people show towards their partners. By understanding its basis and identifying one's own attachment style, an individual can avoid problems in his/her romantic relationship as well as become more self-aware, emotionally mature, and confident. For Armenian parents, in this particular

case, this research can become as a guide book to reflect on their parenting styles, understand their children's emotional needs, and be more affectionate and careful with their children to help them develop secure attachment styles. The target audience are Armenian teenagers/ adults and their parents, and this research paper will connect the Western theory concerning attachment styles with the practical real-life examples of Armenian families who may not even be fully aware of the existing attachment and parenting styles. I believe, it will be a life-changing opportunity for Armenian teenagers and their parents to, first of all, get to know themselves better, to delve deeper into the causes of their relationship problems, to connect their adult experiences with childhood, understand both their partners' and their own needs, and properly navigate their emotions in relationships. Since this topic of research is not widely discussed, explored, and accepted in Armenian contexts and culture, it will be an interesting journey for Armenian people to learn about the influence of the parenting style on the choices and actions people make in their close relationships while being either an avoidant, anxious, or secure.

Methodology:

I will use a mixed methodology, including a theoretical part which will explain in detail the concept of attachment styles relying on psychological studies of psychologists and sociologists such as John Bowlby (who introduced the idea of attachment styles) as well as a practical part, which will include thorough questionnaires both for parents and teenagers/ adults. The questionnaires will include a variety of questions concerning individuals' behaviors in

romantic relationships, while other type of a questionnaire, a Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (PSDQ), will be distributed to parents and their children, who are already teenagers and adults. The main part of the qualitative research will be the comparison between the honest answers of parents, who will have to confess their methods of parenting, and the answers of their children concerning how their parents treated and raised them, as far as they will be able to remember their childhood memories connected with parents. The questionnaires and their results will meet the confidential needs and will be kept anonymously; their results will be used solely for the purpose of determining parenting styles and connecting them with their children's attachment styles. At least twenty teenagers and their parents, accordingly, will be asked to answer the questions. After the results, if the participants will not object, they will be separately invited to a small talk/ interview to tell more details about their current relationships (the teenagers) or upbringing styles (the parents) to gather more insightful details and connect them with the generally accepted ideas about attachment and parenting styles introduced by the psychological studies in this research paper. These small interviews can also serve as small psychology sessions for parents and their children, regardless the fact that in Armenian society it is not a usual topic of discussion.

In addition, to make this journey more engaging and interesting for Armenian parents and their children, an interactive exercise will be suggested to them: both sides will be asked to write about the same one important and emotional event in their family dynamic, whether positive or negative, from their own perspective, further, the perspectives will be compared to see how a parent and a child (teenager/adult) felt about that event and how it is similar to/different from each other.

The challenges in qualitative research can be the following: the first challenge will be the fact that parents should answer the questionnaire as honest as possible, however, some parents may be reluctant to accept their mistakes in their children's upbringing, which may affect the final results of the PSDQ and may not reflect the whole picture of the parenting style. The parents may feel pressured to answer some questions; they may deliberately choose other "socially-right" answers to avoid social judgment. Due to the fact that the PSDQ questionnaire which was made and conducted by researchers C. Robinson, B. Mandleco, S. Olsen and C. Hart in 2016, is aimed at exploring authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting styles, the results of the target parents' answers should relate to either one of these three existing main parenting styles. It is important for parents to answer the questions honestly, trying to remember the details of their upbringing styles. Another challenge can be the fact that teenagers/adults may not recall their childhood relationships with parents. In this case, another questionnaire will be distributed to them; this questionnaire will not demand the reflections of their childhood, it will focus on honest answers specifically about their tendencies, attitudes, feelings, behavior patterns, desires, and fears in their close romantic relationships (AAI, Adult Attachment Interviews by Marcel Haas, Marian Bakermans-Kranenburg, 1994). This specific questionnaire will "diagnose" the anxious, avoidant, or secure attachments in teenagers/ adults, which will be further compared to the honest reflections of their parents on the basis of the results of the PSDQ questionnaire.

The sixty-two questions of the PSDQ test will be distributed to either both parents, or one parent, if one of the parents will refuse to take the test. It could happen due to multiple social or personal reasons; for example, an Armenian father can refuse to take the test if his perspectives on children upbringing are different from the Western ideology, and he does not agree with the attachment theory due to not being fully aware of it. However, a friendly and

comfortable environment will be created for parents, and before taking the questionnaire, I will get to know both parents and teenagers. Moreover, I will ensure them that the questionnaires are confidential and anonymous. I will also include additional brief educational sessions, with the consent of parents and teenagers, to engage them in this psychological topic; they will be able to use this project as a certain guide book for learning about attachment and parenting styles and the close intricate connection between them.

PSDQ (Parenting Style Dimension Questionnaire):

Parents will be asked to answer the questionnaire with the following statements:

Make two ratings for each item; (1) rate *how often your spouse* exhibits this behavior with your child and (2) *how often you* exhibit this behavior with your child.

SPOUSE EXHIBITS BEHAVIOR:

- 1 = Never
- 2 = Once In Awhile
- 3 = About Half of the Time
- 4 = Very Often
- 5 = Always

I EXHIBIT THIS BEHAVIOR:

- 1 = Never
- 2 = Once In Awhile
- 3 = About Half of the Time
- 4 = Very Often
- 5 = Always

Parents will be asked to “rank” themselves and their partners in their children’s upbringing to understand whether they practiced authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, or uninvolved parenting style, (according to “Good Partner, Good Parent: Responsiveness Mediates the Link Between Romantic Attachment and Parenting Style”, A. Millings & J. Walsh et al., 2012). While taking the test, parents will be able to reflect on their early communication with children, by trying to remember the details of the upbringing, moreover, it will help parents to look at those communication from different perspectives, which will show their “mistakes” in communication with their children.

[He] [I]

- ___ ___ 1. [He encourages] [I encourage] our child to talk about the child's troubles.
- ___ ___ 2. [He guides] [I guide] our child by punishment more than by reason.
- ___ ___ 3. [He knows] [I know] the names of our child's friends.
- ___ ___ 4. [He finds] [I find] it difficult to discipline our child.
- ___ ___ 5. [He gives praise] [I give praise] when our child is good.
- ___ ___ 6. [He spans] [I span] when our child is disobedient.
- ___ ___ 7. [He jokes and plays] [I joke and play] with our child.
- ___ ___ 8. [He withholds] [I withhold] scolding and/or criticism even when our child acts contrary to our wishes.
- ___ ___ 9. [He shows] [I show] sympathy when our child is hurt or frustrated.
- ___ ___ 10. [He punishes] [I punish] by taking privileges away from our child with little if any explanations.
- ___ ___ 11. [He spoils] [I spoil] our child.
- ___ ___ 12. [He gives] [I give] comfort and understanding when our child is upset.
- ___ ___ 13. [He yells or shouts] [I yell or shout] when our child misbehaves.
- ___ ___ 14. [He is] [I am] easy going and relaxed with our child.
- ___ ___ 15. [He allows] [I allow] our child to annoy someone else.
- ___ ___ 16. [He tells] [I tell] child our expectations regarding behavior before the child engages in an activity.
- ___ ___ 17. [He scolds and criticizes] [I scold and criticize] to make our child improve.
- ___ ___ 18. [He shows] [I show] patience with our child.
- ___ ___ 19. [He grabs] [I grab] our child when he/she is being disobedient.
- ___ ___ 20. [He states] [I state] punishments to our child and does not actually do them.
- ___ ___ 21. [He is] [I am] responsive to our child's feelings or needs.

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- ___ ___ 22. [He allows] [I allow] our child to give input into family rules.
- ___ ___ 23. [He argues] [I argue] with our child.
- ___ ___ 24. [He appears] [I appear] confident about parenting abilities.
- ___ ___ 25. [He gives] [I give] our child reasons why rules should be obeyed.
- ___ ___ 26. [He appears] [I appear] to be more concerned with own feelings than with our child's feelings.
- ___ ___ 27. [He tells] [I tell] our child that we appreciate what the child tries or accomplishes.
- ___ ___ 28. [He punishes] [I punish] by putting our child off somewhere alone with little if any explanations .
- ___ ___ 29. [He helps] [I help] our child to understand the impact of behavior by encouraging our child to talk about the consequences of his/her own actions.
- ___ ___ 30. [He is] [I am] afraid that disciplining our child for misbehavior will cause the child to not like his/her parents.
- ___ ___ 31. [He takes] [I take] our child's desires into account before asking the child to do something.
- ___ ___ 32. [He explodes] [I explode] in anger towards our child.
- ___ ___ 33. [He is] [I am] aware of problems or concerns about our child in school.
- ___ ___ 34. [He threatens] [I threaten] our child with punishment more often than actually giving it.
- ___ ___ 35. [He expresses] [I express] affection by hugging, kissing, and holding our child.
- ___ ___ 36. [He ignores] [I ignore] our child's misbehavior.
- ___ ___ 37. [He uses] [I use] physical punishment as a way of disciplining our child.
- ___ ___ 38. [He carries] [I carry] out discipline after our child misbehaves.
- ___ ___ 39. [He apologizes] [I apologize] to our child when making a mistake in parenting.
- ___ ___ 40. [He tells] [I tell] our child what to do.
- ___ ___ 41. [He gives] [I give] into our child when the child causes a commotion about something.
- ___ ___ 42. [He talks it over and reasons] [I talk it over and reason] with our child when the child misbehaves.
- ___ ___ 43. [He slaps] [I slap] our child when the child misbehaves.
- ___ ___ 44. [He disagrees] [I disagree] with our child.
- ___ ___ 45. [He allows] [I allow] our child to interrupt others.

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- ___ ___ 46. [He has] [I have] warm and intimate times together with our child.
- ___ ___ 47. When two children are fighting, [he disciplines] [I discipline] children first and asks questions later.
- ___ ___ 48. [He encourages] [I encourage] our child to freely express (himself)(herself) even when disagreeing with parents.
- ___ ___ 49. [He bribes] [I bribe] our child with rewards to bring about compliance.
- ___ ___ 50. [He scolds or criticizes] [I scold or criticize] when our child's behavior doesn't meet our expectations.
- ___ ___ 51. [He shows] [I show] respect for our child's opinions by encouraging our child to express them.
- ___ ___ 52. [He sets] [I set] strict well-established rules for our child.
- ___ ___ 53. [He explains] [I explain] to our child how we feel about the child's good and bad behavior.
- ___ ___ 54. [He uses] [I use] threats as punishment with little or no justification.
- ___ ___ 55. [He takes] [I take] into account our child's preferences in making plans for the family.
- ___ ___ 56. When our child asks why (he)(she) has to conform, [he states] [I state]: because I said so, or I am your parent and I want you to.
- ___ ___ 57. [He appears] [I appear] unsure on how to solve our child's misbehavior.
- ___ ___ 58. [He explains] [I explain] the consequences of the child's behavior.
- ___ ___ 59. [He demands] [I demand] that our child does/do things.
- ___ ___ 60. [He channels] [I channel] our child's misbehavior into a more acceptable activity.
- ___ ___ 61. [He shoves] [I shove] our child when the child is disobedient.
- ___ ___ 62. [He emphasizes] [I emphasize] the reasons for rules.
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Apart from the fact that this PSDQ questionnaire have been previously examined and used in the psychological researches which are mentioned in this research paper, each of these questions is aimed at looking deeply into parent-child communication. For example, the question "I encourage our child to talk about his troubles" will make parents who are taking this survey, to look at their attitude towards their child from a different perspective and from a "third" side. There are more intimate questions which may cause inconvenience for parents while they are taking this PSDQ survey, such as

“I guide our child by punishment more than by reason”. The “provocative” questions of this tone are, indeed, essential for getting the final results and analyzing the authoritative, authoritarian or permissive parenting styles. The questions are not the easiest to answer, however, they have been written by psychologists and have been underwent many Western families. Each question embraces certain emotions and actions of parents, and they require honest answers. They show all the angles of child-parent interactions.

Moreover, such questions as “I know names of our child’s friends”, “I give praise when our child is good”, “I joke and play with our child” are connected with another important aspect of child-parent relationship: parental involvement in child’s life. All of the aforementioned factors which are proven by the theory and which are triggering children’s attachment styles, are directly or indirectly embraced in all of these 62 questions. It will help me connect the theoretical part of the paper with the practical real-life examples to identify the link between parents’ communication with children and attachment style theory.

PSDQ and Armenian parents

The practical part of this project was aimed at understanding whether the theories of attachment styles introduced by the mentioned authors and psychologists (de Haas, Millings &

Walsh, Lisa Cohen and others) can be applied to the Armenian families and dynamics between parents and their children. Firstly, it is crucial to mention that it is, generally, implied that a traditional Armenian family is thought to have authoritative and authoritarian parenting style, where parents can be both strict and criticising towards their children (authoritarian) but at the same time balancing it with understanding and warmth (authoritative). One aspect of the project was to understand the pattern of parenting style specifically in the Armenian society and to draw parallels between the responses of parents and their children, accordingly. As mentioned earlier, the questions of PSDQ were created by psychologists and specified for understanding parenting style from a professional point of view, that is why I included all of the questions without any changes for the targeted Armenian parents. Even though due to the limited time, the number of respondents was much lower than I expected (25 parents instead of 50), there is an evident pattern in their parenting style. The prevalent parenting style is authoritative mixed with some patterns of authoritarian. To be more specific, almost 18 parents answered positively to the following questions: "I punish by taking privileges away from our child with little if any explanations" (Q.10), "I yell when my child misbehaves" (Q. 13), "I criticise to make my child improve", (Q. 17), "I help our child understand the impact of behaviour by encouraging him to talk about the consequences of his actions" (Q. 29), "I tell my child what to do", (Q. 40), "I use threats as punishment with little or no justification" (Q. 54) . When analysing the possible causes for authoritarian and authoritarian parenting styles, from psychological and cultural perspectives, most Armenian parents "inherited" the strict authoritarian views on children's upbringing from their own parents (grandparents) and due to fact that an individual repeats the behaviour that he/she saw in their childhood from their own parents, it is not surprising that the authoritarian patterns of parenting style are still, to some extent present in modern parenting styles. The use of

punishment without explanation, strict rules, and authority over emotions, most probably, came from the Soviet principles of upbringing and stayed to this day in most Armenian families. However, from the results of the PSDQ tests it could be also noticed that such parenting styles as “permissive” (with low demands and forcing strict rules) and “neglectful” (where parents are not involved and give a low-effort communication to their children) are not prevailing in the main parenting styles of Armenian parents. To be more specific, such questions as “I find it difficult to discipline our child” (Q. 4), “I tell the child expectations before activities” (Q. 16), “I help the child understand consequences” were answered positively which means that discipline and rules are still prevailing in the communication between Armenian parents and their children. However, it could be assumed that, in this case, the parenting style would be authoritarian, if such questions as “I am responsive towards my child’s feelings” (Q. 21), “I show patience with my child” (Q. 18), “I give comfort to my child when he is upset” (Q. 12), “I show sympathy when my child is hurt or frustrated” (Q. 9) were not answered positively as well. These results show that even though most Armenian parents adhere to authoritarian patterns of parenting styles, they also show sympathy and understanding towards their children due to traditional family values and, in general, humanitarian approach towards upbringing and care for children. I must also consider the fact that the questions were quite intimate and “uncomfortable” for those parents who could be stricter and more demanding towards their children and for those who were emotionally or physically absent from their children’s lives; however, the anonymous status of the PSDQ questionnaire allowed parents to answer as honest as possible to the questions. Some of the questions felt confusing for at least 10 parents whom I handed in the questionnaire. For example, questions about “Punishing without explaining” (Q. 10, Q. 28, Q. 54), sounded quite provocative and, when parents approached to me, I had to explain that the

questions simply reflect whether the parents had a good communication and close contact with their children to explain and talk to them before punishing or judging. On the other hand, questions concerning giving warmth and comfort to children such as “I take child’s desires into account” (Q. 31) which were answered positively are accompanied with positive answers into such questions as “When our child asks why he has to conform, I state because I said so or I am your parent” (Q. 56). In other words, from my own conclusions, which could be subjective due to a limited number of participants, it can be seen that Armenian parents try to find a balance between demanding and nurturing, between authoritarian, authoritative, and, to some extent, permissive parenting styles. Most Armenian parents strive for authoritative parenting approach because exactly this approach towards children can foster a healthy, understanding, and, simultaneously, supportive environment for children to evolve and view interpersonal relationships as secure and balanced. Armenian parenting styles was also studied by A. Melissa Nazarian-Sehorn, who states that, indeed, the prevalent parenting style in Armenian families is considered to be authoritative, where responsiveness and nurturing is mixed with clear expectations and respect between parents and children, (2021, “Childhood Attachment within the Armenian population and how it translates into adulthood relationships”).

Case Studies

As mentioned earlier, this project is aimed at understanding the details of communication between parents and their children, hence, while the quantitative data collected from PSDQ tests for parents’ side and Adult Attachment surveys is expected to show the general patterns and statistics, the qualitative data in the form of short interviews are needed for this

project to delve deeper into the core memories from childhood both from parents' and their child's perspectives. For this purpose, several case studies were conducted with the participants' personal desire and consent, where a parent and child (teenager, adult) answered to several questions and told some in-depth stories about their relationship with each other and, later, an adult would also describe his/her current relationship status and attachment style in romantic relationships. For this case study, the PSDQ and AAI tests were not necessary, the qualitative data was collected from personal insights and stories. The names of the participants will not be mentioned for the confidentiality clause. The important aspect of the case study is to pinpoint other factors that could, possibly, influence an attachment style: anxious, avoidant, secure, and anxious-avoidant, apart from the parenting style and relationship with parents.

After taking the AAI (Adult Attachment) test, where several questions about parents are also included, participant G. noticed a “mismatch” between his attachment style and the attitude and relationship style that he received from his parents. To the questions from AAI test, “Do you remember your parents as understanding and supportive towards you?” and “Did you parents show you what a healthy and respectful relationship looks like”, G. answered “Yes”. However, his answers to the questions connected with his own relationships and attachment were quite unstable and “avoiding”; to the question “Do you feel comfortable when talking about your feelings with your partner” he answered “No”. That is when I decided to conduct a case study exactly with this participant, since the patterns between parent-child relationship and attachment style were not quite connected at this time. He remembered his parents to always be emotionally responsive and open towards his feelings, both of the parents were physically present and supported him in all aspects of his life, they did not punish him neither emotionally nor physically, and they were not too demanding with him. In contrast, he grew up being emotionally

distant and avoiding in romantic relationships. That is why we tried to understand other external environmental and social factors that could contribute to his avoiding attachment style, such as issues with peers in early teenage years, cultural norms as well as personal characteristics and temperament. The fact that G. is 23 years old and never had a serious romantic relationship or close emotional connection with friends and family members, we assumed that he, indeed, has avoiding attachment style which was, however, not triggered by his parents' upbringing style, traumatic childhood experiences, or emotional neglect. The role of social norms, which are deeply rooted in Armenian patriarchal society, was major in the formation of his avoiding attachment style. The social norms concerning masculinity and gender roles made him perceive emotions and intimate emotional connections as weakness and as something "not masculine", and those principles became so rooted in his daily life and the formation of his "masculine" personality, that he, unconsciously, isolated himself from all forms of emotional connections, including romantic relationships. He became used to superficial connections with women that did not demand responsibility and emotional closure from him, and whenever he feels that relationship is going on another, more serious level, he retreats and withdraws into his work life to not let emotions become too intense for him. In other words, he perceives intimate relationships as potential threats for him. Later on, we found out that, when he was a young boy, his family members, not necessarily father and mother, taught him to be resistant and strong and not to cry when he wanted to only because "he is a boy and boys should never cry like girls". He grew up with an unconscious urge to suppress his emotions to be accepted and respected by his friends and family members, and it this "unhealthy" attitude was, certainly, reflected on his perceptions of relationships. It was quite a fascinating case study both for me and him; for me, to learn another not less crucial element of the formation of an attachment style, and for him, to

discover that there is such a thing as an attachment style and to identify his own type to be able to work on for improving the quality of his relationships and better understand his emotional needs or fears. When the interview was over, I recommended him to not view relationships as infringement to his freedom, rather, to try to maintain at least one close connection with a friend that he trusts the most to gradually get used to it and to feel emotionally safe as much as it is possible in his case.

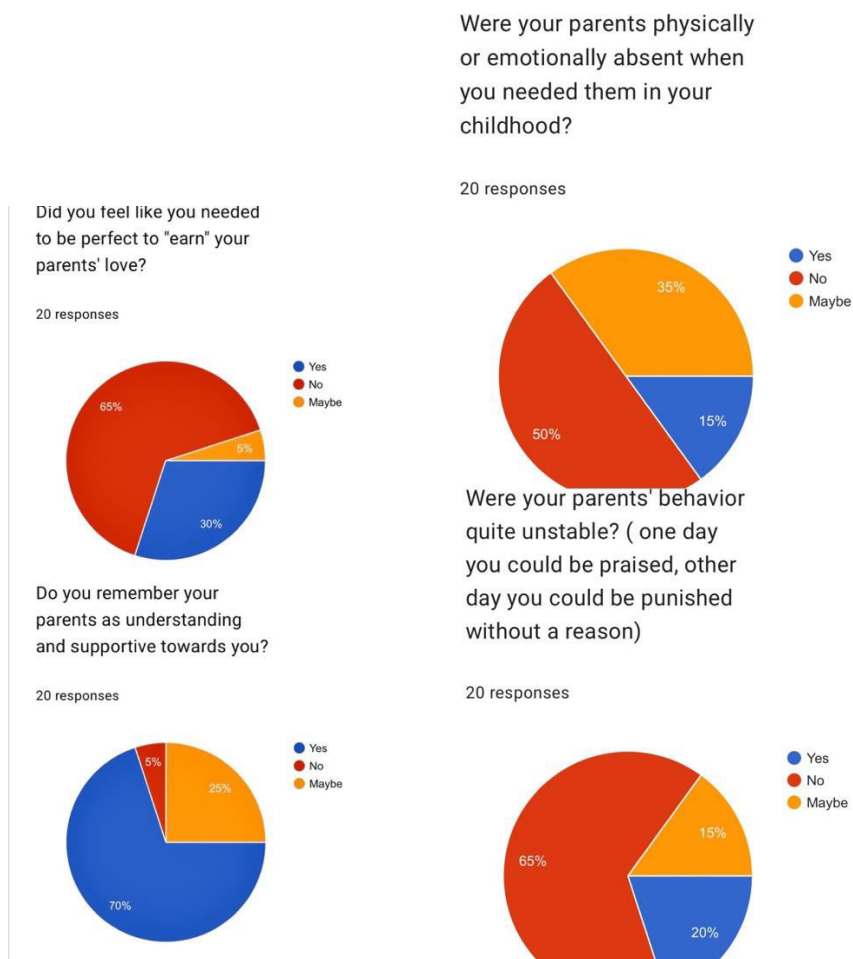
Another case study was conducted with M. who is a 23-year-old young girl who was grew up with her siblings and grandparents. Since her early childhood, her parents were always travelling abroad due to their careers, and she confessed that she does not remember spending too much time with them. As she grew up, she spent most of her time at school and college doing her best at studies and being a straight “A” student. Moreover, she was the eldest daughter of her family and had to take care of her three younger siblings. These factors formed a strong and independent character and made her reliant solely on herself without emotional and physical support of close people. As we delved deeper into the intimate details of her personal life, she believed that she has anxious-avoidant attachment style because she was both extremely insecure that one day her partner is going to leave her which triggered her “clingy” behavior, and, simultaneously, she was avoiding her partner at the times when she felt she is becoming too dependent on him. When we analyzed these patterns of behavior, we came to the conclusion that, unfortunately, the inevitable fact that her parents, particularly her father figure, were physically and emotionally absent in her early stages of life, when an individual’s perception of relationships is at the peak of its evolvement, she developed an anxious attachment towards her romantic partner who reminds her of her father. In addition to that, the anxious attachment, in her case, is followed by avoidant patterns, which were developed as a defense mechanism towards

situations and people which can, potentially, harm the ego and independence that her fragile childhood version created to survive. Anxious-avoidant attachment style is considered as the most complicated type of attachment, because a person, factually, needs and craves the closure and emotional connection with a partner, but, due to the past “traumas” and circumstances, a person’s psyche develops a barrier towards that longing in order to avoid disappointment and vulnerability. In this case, M. confessed that she, indeed, needs that romantic relationship but her past made her too insecure to be able to view that relationship from a healthy and emotionally balanced perspective. M. does not believe that she does not need to be “perfect” and a “people-pleaser” to make her partner stay with her. Moreover, due to her independent nature, she is afraid of losing her control over the relationship and emotions, which will, again, hurt her ego and self-esteem. M’s case was a vivid classic example of the “Attachment Theory” introduced by psychologist John Bowlby (1969); parents’ emotional unavailability and physical absence are, still, a major contributing factor for an attachment style, which, in this particular case, showed itself in an anxious-avoidant attachment. At the end of this insightful interview, I suggested M. to work on her traumas with a therapist to be able to control her anxiety and security in her relationship and not blame her partner for the “mistakes” that her parents made. Moreover, since I studied this aspect of human psychology for a long time before doing this project, I also recommended her to work on her self-confidence and self-love by engaging more in her passions and hobbies so that her emotional well-being will not be reliant on her partner, and it would work effectively for the both sides of the relationship.

Adult Attachment Survey

The Adult Attachment Survey was sent to a group of students in the age group of 19-23. This survey includes a combination of questions related to both the teenagers' attachment style and the according parenting style that they received in childhood from their parents. The survey includes such questions as "Do you avoid deep emotional connections?", "Do you often worry that people close to you will leave or stop caring about you", "Do you get panicked if someone you love pulls away" and many others for identifying the attachment style patterns in Armenian youth. For each attachment style: anxious, avoidant, secure, and anxious-avoidant there were selected 10 questions for each of them. In addition to that, to correlate the attachment patterns with parenting style patterns, such questions as "Did your parents show you what a healthy and respectful relationship looks like", "Were your parents' behavior quite unstable" and many others were included in the survey to shed a light on the adults' memories about their early relationships with parents.

From the analysis of the responses, most teenagers/adults were raised by their both parents, they have siblings, and, in general, they received an "authoritarian" and "authoritative" parenting styles. The charts below show that most Armenian parents, regardless of the strict rules and discipline, showed warmth and understanding towards their children and did not pressure them to be "perfect" in order to gain their love and care. Those who took the survey mentioned the answers where they remember their parents as, mostly, emotionally responsive, however, they could not always share their feelings with them.



Most of the questions concerning parents' warmth and involvement in their lives were answered positively by the young adults, and if we draw parallels between answers to the questions about the parents and the questions about their own behavior and perceptions in romantic relationships, a pattern can be noticed. As we can see from the chart above, most Armenian young adults answered that they do not feel that they need to be "perfect" to make their partners stay with them; in other words, those young adults who were raised in households where emotional availability, moral support and understanding were consistent from their parents' side, developed mostly a secure attachment style, where they do not need to avoid emotional closure because of the fear of being hurt, neglected, or abandoned by their partners.

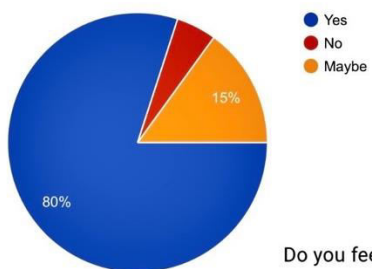
Overall, out of the 20 responses, it can be concluded that most Armenian teenagers were raised in authoritative environments where parents provided them both with high levels of warmth and, at the same time, control and child-parent strict distinction, even though authoritarian patterns still remain in Armenian traditional family. Most Armenian parents are physically and emotionally present in their children's lives which serves children a good example of a healthy stable relationship without anxiety and avoidance. However, the fact that many parents still adhere to such upbringing principles as "You need to do that because I said so" explains the fact that half of the respondents' (40%) answered positively to the question "Do you get very emotional or feel panicked when someone pulls away from you?" as well as answered positively to "Can your mood fully depend on your partner?". It explains the "anxious" patterns of relationships that are developed in young Armenian adults; children still learn from their parents that they need to seek their approval and warmth through good behaviour and morals. Hence, even though the results of the survey show that most Armenian young adults have secure attachment styles, there are still some patterns of anxious attachment style in such aspects as depending on a partner. However, it is also interesting that the answers show that young adults/teenagers are not afraid of emotional closure and being intimate and open with their romantic partners. Most of them developed a secure attachment with some emotional inconsistencies (due to the authoritarian parenting style).

To summarise the analysis of the Adult Attachment Questionnaire, it can be assumed that most Armenian teenagers/young adults have stable secure attachment styles which allow them to maintain healthy relationships with enough emotional closure and warmth, however, many of them also have a mixture of anxious attachment style due to

the overprotective behaviour of their parents and, at times, limitations to their independence and own decisions in life, which makes them reluctant to depend on their romantic partners. Moreover, even though most respondents believe that they are "worthy of love" without the need of being perfect, their parents taught them that this love is often "conditional" which means there is still a fear of abandonment in romantic relationships.

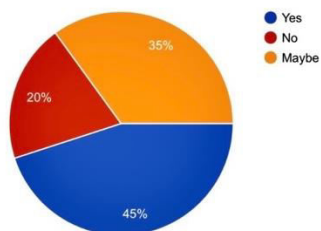
Do you believe that you are lovable and you deserve to be loved back?

20 responses



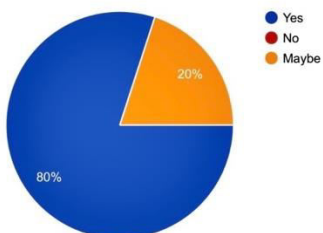
Do you feel really comfortable when talking about your feelings with your partner?

20 responses



Do you feel safe being your true self around close people (partner)?

20 responses



The chart from the AI questionnaire above shows another interesting pattern: most young Armenians do not have any signs of the avoiding attachment style. It can be, prevalingly, due to the fact that their parents were physically and emotionally present in their childhood, and children did not need to develop defence mechanisms against emotional vulnerability and openness in close relationships. Logically, as it was stated earlier, authoritarian parenting style is the most widespread one in Armenian families, which require the full presence of parents, especially mother, in the lives of young children. Even though the overprotective and controlling side of the authoritarian style can result in anxious attachment style patterns, nevertheless, at least children do not develop avoiding style which would prevent them from having stable healthy relationships where they would feel comfortable and loved. Avoiding style, in other words, is highly unlikely to be developed in an Armenian traditional family; it can evolve in young adults either for other environmental reasons or if both parents are emotionally detached (which turned out to be uncommon in most Armenian families). As the final charts of the Adult Attachment Survey shows, most young adults express their feelings, talk openly to their partners, and prefer healthy reliable and “emotional” relationships without avoidance and emotional neglect. At the same time, due to authoritarian patterns of parenting style which, traditionally, include high control and demand from children, evolve anxious patterns as well. A young adult who heard such phrases as “I sacrificed a lot of things for you” (a typical phrase of an Armenian parent) may evolve “anxious but loyal, loving but desperate” type of attachment which will, ultimately, turn into either a secure or anxious attachment style or a mixture of both, if not being aware of the patterns. It may create a perception that relationships must be emotional and stable but also “conditional” and something that requires work and patience.

Overall, if we consider traditional family values that are present in Armenian society, it becomes logical and understandable why exactly authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles are prevailing among modern Armenian families, and, correspondingly, why most Armenian young adults have secure attachment style combined with patterns of anxious attachment style. Once again, Armenian parents use authoritative family dynamics, where there is a balance between giving warmth and emotional availability to their children and, at the same time, demanding respect and obedience from children, as well as authoritarian parenting style the “toughness” of which result in anxious patterns within romantic relationships of Armenian young adults.

The main findings of this capstone project, in fact, surprised me with the patterns that I noticed in correlation between parenting style and its corresponding attachment style. The focus group of the project showed that almost 80% of Armenian teenagers, luckily, developed a secure attachment style, however, with some notes of anxious attachment style which was, presumably, triggered by “anxious” family dynamics or, as in the example of the case study, due to other external factors that do not have a connection with a parenting style. It is also worthy to mention that avoidant attachment style is quite a rare phenomenon in the Armenian society due to the “over-involvement” of parents in children’s lives rather than their absence or a cold unavailable behavior. Both the Adult Attachment questionnaire as well as one of the case studies demonstrated the fact that if there is an avoidant attachment style, it is most probably triggered by other factors rather than a certain parenting behavior. It can be due to the fact that in Armenian society it is quite inappropriate to not be involved in a child’s life, regardless of the idea that this involvement can be, sometimes, too pressuring, overwhelming, and “anxious”.

Attachment styles are essential elements in our lives which do not solely affect our romantic relationships or relationships with friends and family members, but also are deeply rooted in our deep unconscious and reflected on our own self-image, self-esteem, and perception of emotions. The main goals of this project are to, first and foremost, shed a light on the whole concept of “Attachment Styles” explained by psychologists and introduce the close link between attachment styles and parenting styles to make people more conscious about their styles of behavior in relationships. Secondly, the project is aimed at making people, specifically Armenian young adults in this particular case, learn about their attachment style to be able to control it and improve both their emotional well-being and, if necessary, their attitudes and interaction styles with their partners, by either learning from their parents or, vice versa, recognizing their past “mistakes” and changing the patterns by “hacking” their own attachment style in case it is not a “secure” one.

In other words, as a realistic example, a 21-year-old Armenian girl will not blame herself for her anxious behavior in a romantic relationship when her partner acts distant or “disinterested”, rather, by being aware of her attachment style, and, most importantly, its roots and causes, she will try to control her jealousy or other patterns of anxious attachment style to not turn her relationship into a “toxic” and overwhelming one. She will dig deeper into her childhood, where her authoritarian parents showed their love and affection through control, or where she had to prove her worth to her parents, so her “love language” is shown through control and reassurance instead of a secure stable communication, emotional availability, and healthy boundaries. All of these nuances are crucial to know for those people who struggle with forming and maintaining relationships without “self-destruction”, anxiety, and avoidance. By combining global psychological context based on scientific evidence and cultural features of a traditional

Armenian family, people will learn the main tendencies of attachment styles and will have more control over this essential aspect of their lives.

Challenges, limitations, and further research

The major challenges that I faced during this capstone project were cultural, psychological as well as challenges with time and awareness of people. For example, the PSDQ tests that were distributed to Armenian parents (with a total number of 20) caused discomfort for parents due to many “intimate” questions concerning their children’s upbringing, punishment, and emotional unavailability, regardless of the fact that the questionnaire was anonymous. Since the PSDQ tests were in printed versions and translated into Armenian, I was present in most of the scenarios where parents were filling out the questionnaire with a confusion on their faces. At that time, it felt that they were psychologically pressured to remember the details of their behavior and attitude towards children. Moreover, it took quite a lot of time to explain to each of the parent the meaning of the project and the concept of attachment styles and what role they will have in this project. It is essential to mention that 20 respondents are quite subjective numbers for this project, however, it is due to the limited scope of time and it was done for the purpose of finding “patterns” and general trends in parenting styles. In the case of parents, the sensitive psychological questions and the unawareness of this topic were the main challenges apart from the quantitative data which was necessary for a bigger picture in this project.

Another issue connected with quantitative data was the number of respondents for the assessment of attachment style in young adults which number reached only to 20. This Adult Attachment survey was sent to one particular group: university students (18-23 years old) and included too many questions, as many of them stated later and gave their feedback on these questions. The problem with the survey was both quantitative and qualitative; it was supposed to be linked to parenting style as well, therefore, two surveys were put into a single but longer one, which took more time from the participants to take than it was originally planned. Further research is essential for this project to develop a more objective concept about the correlation between attachment style and parenting style. This project would benefit from more face-to-face interviews with parents and their children where they could provide more details about their close relationships. Certainly, larger and more diverse groups of parents and teenagers are needed (from rural areas as well) for reliable quantitative statistics necessary for general trends, and interesting qualitative data which could explain other environmental factors of attachment styles.

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