

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILE OF ADOLESCENTS WITH DIFFERENT TYPES OF ATTACHMENT TO THEIR PARENTS*

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Abstract

The article presents an analysis of the adolescent's personality from the perspective of the relationship formed with parents/peers, secure/insecure attachment and self-perception of masculine/feminine traits. The interaction and weighting and statistical analysis of the variables are also presented: trust, communication, sense of abandonment, extraversion, openness, consent, consistency, etc. For the first time, a correlation is made between the type of attachment to parents, peers and the type of relationship in adolescence. Investigations are carried out to identify whether or not there is interdependence between variables.

The research was focused on studying the impact of parental attachment on relationships in adolescence. In the literature, adolescence is marked by critical changes in cognition, behavioral and emotional systems. Adolescents develop their own views and separate from their parents. Interpersonal relationships with parents play a primary role in the development of the person and the type of relationships he will later establish with other persons throughout life. The results show a positive correlation between the quality of attachment and the acceptable type of functional/social interaction between the research subjects and others. To develop the Psychological Profile of adolescents with secure/insecure attachment, the results of the diagnosis (block of 4 inventories) were used - 28 adolescents, aged between 16 and 19 years. The paper presents the profile of adolescents with secure/insecure attachment. The results of this study contribute to a better understanding of the role that attachment plays in the formation of relationships with others in the early age period.

Key words: Attachment; Adolescent; Communication; Self-confidence; Abandonment.

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1. Introduction: Describing the dynamics of age-related development

The problem of adolescence was and continues to be the topic of prediction for numerous researchers and specialists in the field of psychology, pedagogy, ethics, family law, as it represents one of the most important phases of human development. Psychologists characterize adolescents (Priceputu, 2014, p.102) by hypersensitivity, by the characteristic of motivational and affective conflicts through the lens of cultural and social integration, by participating in groups with common concerns and specific cultures (adolescent subculture). The author urges the environment, so that at this age, the adolescent's needs to search for identity, personal values, to gain emotional independence from parents, the need to experience a variety of behaviors, attitudes and activities are accepted. In the activity of training and development of the personality (Pavelcu, 1972, pp. 93-103), points out some characteristics of adolescence, highlighting psychological and social features: self-affirmation, autonomy, independence, aspirations and ambitions, isolation and loneliness, egoism and altruism, etc.

Describing the dynamics of age-related development, Erikson (2015, p. 67) identifies eight stages, each of which has to choose one of two developmental options, which are in antagonistic relationships. The choice of a "positive pole" contributes to the formation of a positive developmental achievement and leads to the harmonious formation of the personality. In the first stage, corresponding to the infantile age, the positive pole is the feeling of trust, which means trust in the constancy and continuity of relations with a significant adult, the presence of security. The further development of the personality depends on the formation of this basic feeling of trust in the world. The scientist postulated (Crittenden, 2002, p. 9) the existence of "trust", which appears and is formed due to the caring attitude of the mother, as the basis of the harmonious development of the personality. If during the first years of life the child feels satisfied with the adults' answers/reactions to the behaviors they develop, then the type of attachment called secure will be structured, which corresponds to what E. Erickson calls trust.

So, studies carried psychologists (Cheianu-Andrei, Russu, 2016, p. 126) show that if the child receives enough warmth and parental care when he needs it, it determines:

- a) development of self-esteem, belief in the goodwill and receptivity of others;
- b) forming favorable relationships with others during adulthood;
- c) the accumulation of positive experience for parental behavior in the future - behavior patterns;
- d) the continuation of the intellectual and emotional development of the child more harmoniously, reducing the risk of mental retardation.

Similar to western psychologists, L.S. Vygotsky (Yaremchuk, 2005, pp. 551-554) mentions that any human psychic function appears in development twice, once in the external plane, shared between people, and only then moving to the internal plane. This statement explains the role that the adult follows. Thus, the adult acts as the child's first partner in interaction, creating the necessary conditions for human development.

According to researcher Lisina (Yaremchuk, 2005, p. 17), communication, from the point of view of activity, as a special type of communicative activity, presents "the interaction of two (or more) people, who combine their efforts with the aim of establishing relationships and to achieve common result".

Hypothetically, we assume that secure attachment meets high levels of trust in parents, positive communication with them, and low levels of feelings of abandonment.

Carrying out the ascertainment experiment, we analyzed the data obtained, by means of mathematical and statistical methods that allowed us to develop the Psychological Profile of adolescents with secure/insecure attachment, thus achieving one of the proposed objectives.

In order to delineate personality traits in relation to the type of attachment (secure/insecure) and the type of relationship, we analyzed the results obtained during the psychodiagnosis, carried out between December 2018 and March 2019, in which 187 adolescents, aged between 15 and 19 years: 88 male subjects and 99 female subjects.

Later, justifying the development of a psychological profile of adolescents with secure/insecure attachment to their parents, we resorted to comparing the results obtained by the female and male subjects on the scales of the applied inventories.

To develop the psychological profile of adolescents with different levels of attachment, we selected high and low attachment subjects from the entire sample. As a result, we obtained two groups of adolescents - 28 adolescents with a high level of attachment and 13 adolescents with a low level of attachment to parents. Statistical processing was performed based on Fisher's ϕ^* Criterion and t-test.

2. Material and methods

✓ The ascertainment experiment was oriented to the application of the instrument: the Inventory of Attachment to Parents and Peers (Armsden & Greenberg - IPPA), which evaluates the types of attachments to parents and friends. The inventory contains three scales/dimensions: Co-communication, Trust and Sentimental abandonment.

✓ The Inventory of Interpersonal Problems (Horowitz, Alden, Wiggins and Pincus) is aimed at identifying the types of problems that appear in interpersonal relationships during adolescence.

✓ The Big Five questionnaire (Barbaranelli, Caprara, Rabasca, Pastorelli) evaluates the personality traits: "Extraversion", "Neuroticism", "Openness to experience", "Friendship" and "Conscientiousness".

✓ The Gender Roles Questionnaire (Bem, adapted by Bouvard, in 2009) is for the delimitation of feminine, masculine traits and the desirability of an individual.

3. Discussions

Analyzing the results of the diagnosis made, according to the criterion of the gender difference in adolescents with different levels of attachment to their parents, we can note the following features, shown in Figure 1.

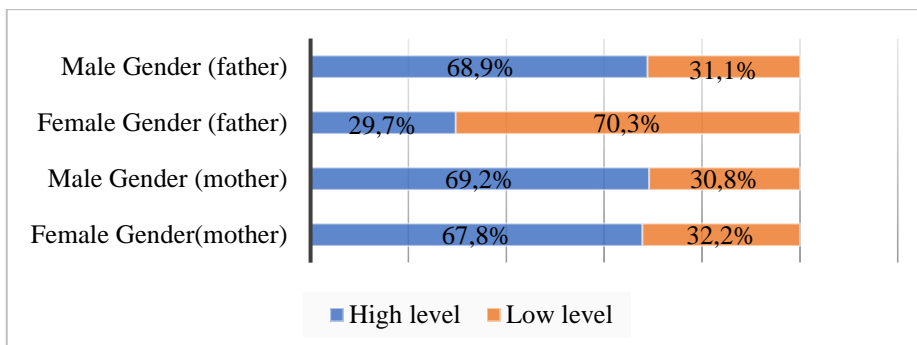


Figure 1. Distribution of male and female adolescent's attachment weight in relation to mother and father

In the figure above, we observe the weight by levels of the attachment of male and female adolescents in relation to mother and father. We notice that the high level of attachment to the mother is characteristic for both teenage girls and boys.

Analyzing the results with the help of the t test, according to the gender differences in the relationship with the father, in the groups of subjects on the Father scale, we observed significant statistical differences in the Trust in father dimension ($t=3.152$; $p=0.002$).

The statistical data of the Communication with father dimension show us that teenagers communicate more closely with their fathers than female adolescents ($t=3.179 < p=0.002$).

The obtained results allow us to conclude about the trust of male adolescents towards their father than that of female adolescents. The statistical processing shows a significant correlation on the Father scale, on the Trust dimension ($t=3.152$; $p=0.002$). The statistical results of the dimension

Communication with father indicate us about the more appropriate communication of male adolescents with father compared to that of female adolescents ($t=3.179 < p=0.002$).

Applying Fisher's ϕ^* Criterion, we statistically analyzed the differences in attachment to mother and father from a gender perspective (see Table 1).

Table 1. The results of the weighting of the scales of the Inventory of Attachment to Parents and Peers, in adolescents with high and low levels of attachment to mother and father

Attachment level	Attachment to mother		Attachment to father	
	M, %	F, %	M, %	F, %
high	69,2	67,8	68,9	29,7
low	30,8	32,2	31,1	70,3
Fisher's ϕ^* criterion	0,0083 ($p>0,005$)		3,024 ($p<0,001$)	

Thus, it was demonstrated that there is a significant difference between the level of attachment to father for female adolescents and male adolescents ($F = 3.024$; $p = 0.001$): the low level of attachment to father is specific to female subjects, compared to male subjects. Adolescents of both genders show an equally high level of attachment to the mother, and male subjects are more attached to the father.

The results obtained can be explained by the advancement of some socio-emotional requirements from childhood or neglect by parental figures. The effects of the attachment type are long-lasting and reflect on self-identity, the need for safety, the need to be guided especially when the behavioral experiences specific to the "insecure" attachment type are internalized. Following the discussions (qualitative interpretation) of the results, we concluded that: teenagers are not interested in relationships with their parents; parents instill in them a sense of mistrust; they are afraid that they will be rejected by their parents; they do not prefer to externalize their feelings and emotions; they become anxious when they feel the proximity of parents/relatives, etc.

Thus, subjects with an "insecure" attachment type are at risk of experiencing inner conflicts, inadaptability in relation to the existing situation or the inability to cope with new social roles. In contrast, subjects with "secure" attachment do not lose their ability to function in a healthy manner, even when supported at a distance by their parents.

Investigating the issue of interpersonal relationships from the perspective of attachment to parents, we performed a statistical analysis of differences using the Student t-test.

To determine the existence of significant differences between the sample groups (male and female), we performed the t-test for independent samples. Following the t-test, we obtained significant differences ($t=3.011$; $p=0.004$) on the "PA" scale (dominant), which indicates that male subjects denote a higher level than female subjects. On the "BC" (vindictive) scale, statistical differences ($t=3.410$; $p=0.001$) indicate that male adolescents have a higher level than female adolescents. Male subjects demonstrate a higher level than female subjects ($t=2.055$; $p=0.045$) on the "DE" scale (distant) and on the "NO" scale (intrusive) ($t=2.045$; $p=0.049$).

Crittenden (2002) mentions, when attachment "figures" are available, present and responsive to a child's needs, it creates safe space for them to explore. The child understands that the world is a safe place, is able to remove obstacles, has someone to get help from if he needs it and asks for it, can have good relationships with others. If these things do not happen and the parents are not supportive, the child understands that the world is unsafe, does not believe in his ability to face challenges, learns that the world is a dangerous place and needs various strategies to cope and survive.

In order to investigate the relationship between personality traits in adolescents with secure and insecure attachment to parents, we administered the Five Factor Questionnaire that measures the level of the following dimensions: Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Instability and Openness. Later, the results served as material for developing a psychological profile

of adolescents with secure attachment to their parents and a psychological profile of adolescents with insecure attachment to their parents.

The results of the analysis of the ratio of average values in adolescents, depending on the level of attachment to the mother, are presented in Figure 2.

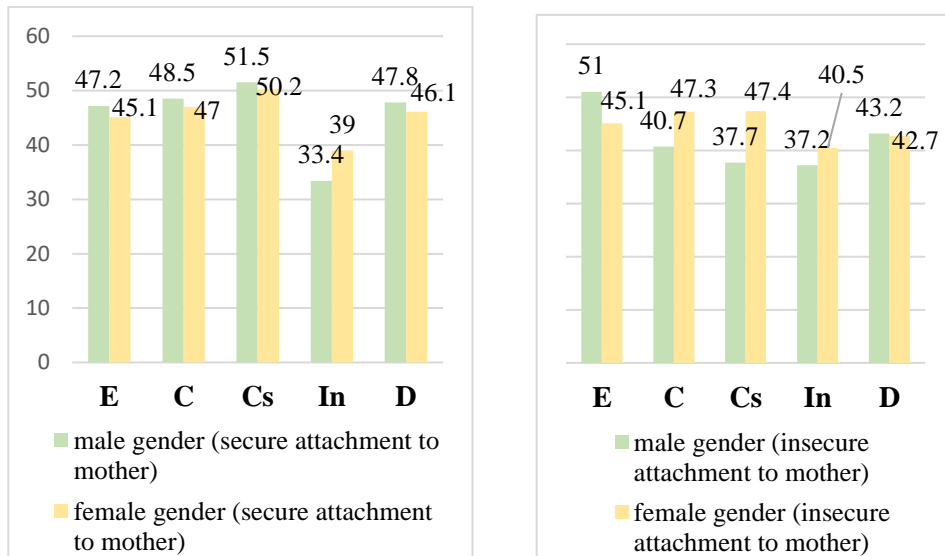


Figure 2. Average results according to the Five Factor Questionnaire in adolescents with secure/insecure attachment to mother

We observe that adolescents with secure attachment show emotional instability, while gender differences are observed in this parameter. Male adolescents demonstrate more emotional stability than female adolescents. However, among adolescents with insecure attachment there are gender differences on the scale: "Extraversion" –male adolescents are more extraverted than female adolescents. On the "Conscientiousness" and "Consciousness" scales – female adolescents show a higher level than male adolescents.

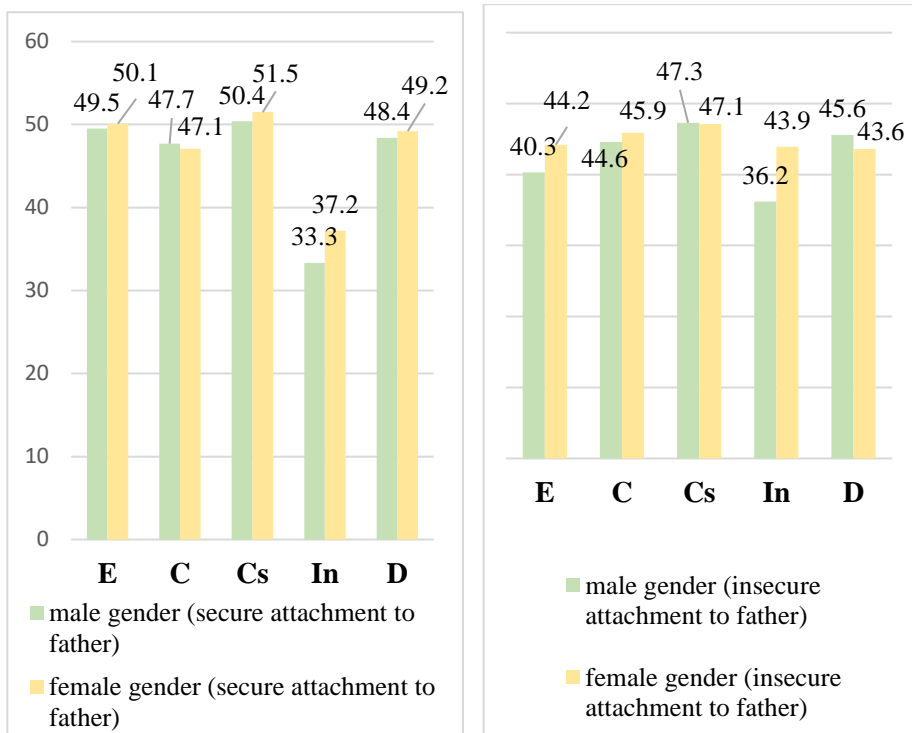


Figure 3. Average results according to the Five Factors Questionnaire in adolescents with secure/insecure attachment to father

Analyzing the results of the ratio of average values of female adolescents, depending on the level of attachment to the father, presented in Figure 3, it is observed that in male adolescents with secure attachment, characteristics such as: emotional instability, extraversion and conscience are less expressed.

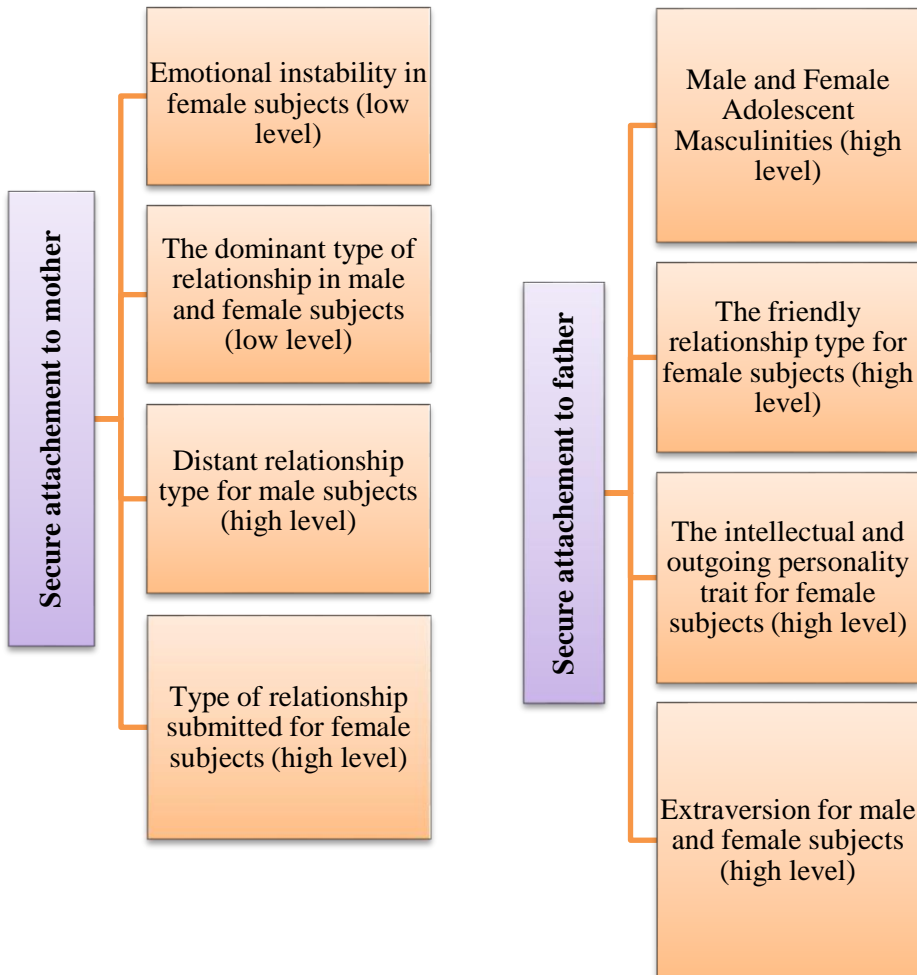
Differences are evident, from a statistical point of view, for the personality traits of adolescents depending on the level of attachment to their parents, especially regarding the attachment to the father of the female subjects.

Analyzing the obtained data, we notice that male subjects with a high level of attachment to their mother have a higher level on the "Consciousness" scale compared to peers with a low level of attachment to their mother ($t = 4.044$; $p = 0.002$).

Male adolescents with a high level of attachment to their father have a higher level on the "Extraversion" scale compared to peers with a low level of attachment to their father ($t = 2.947$; $p = 0.007$).

Female adolescents with a high level of attachment to the father have a high level on the scale "Extraversion" ($t = 2.403$; $p = 0.022$), "Conscientiousness" ($t = 2.034$ $p = 0.05$), "Openness" ($t = 2.131$; $p = 0.04$), as well as low level on the "Emotional Instability" scale ($t = -2.545$; $p = 0.016$) compared to peers with a low level of attachment to father. The generalization of the research results allows us to

develop the personality profile of adolescents with secure and insecure attachment to their parents.



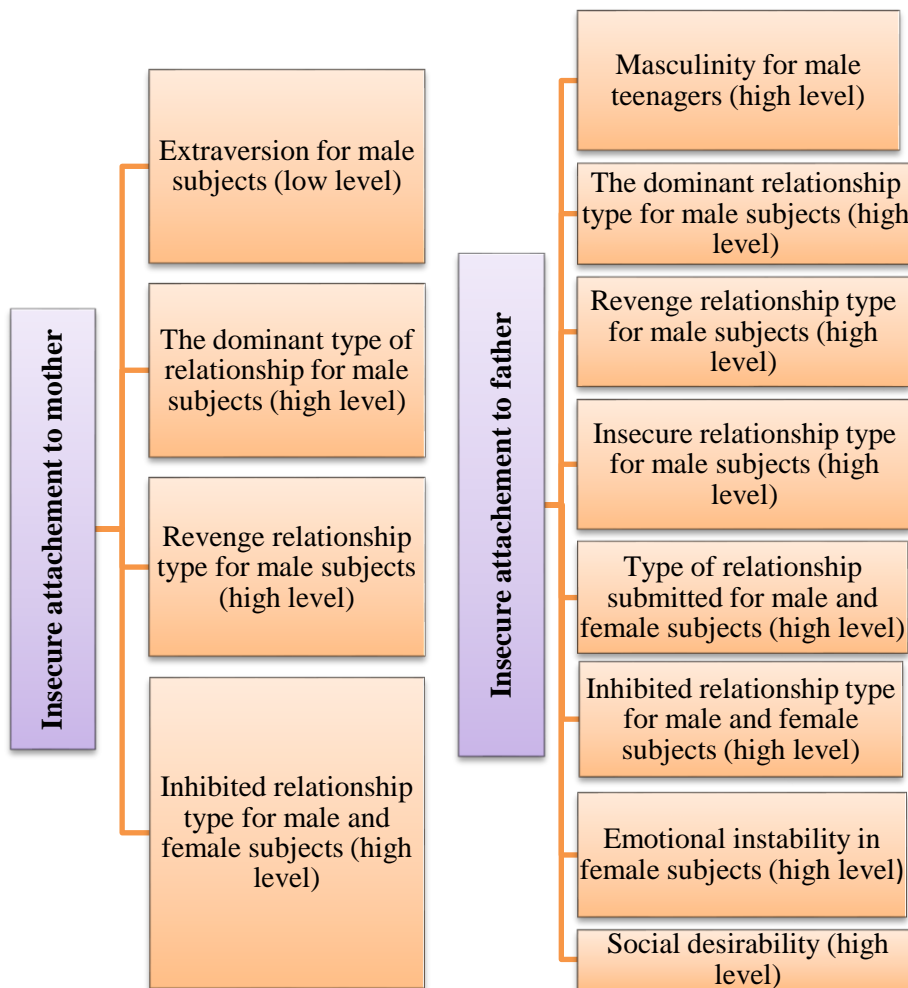


Figure 4. Psychological profile of male and female adolescents with secure/insecure attachment to mother and father

Thus, in Figure 4, we observe that male adolescents with secure attachment to their mother are characterized by: accepting others and their opinions, without controlling and manipulating them. These teenagers also find it difficult to show love and be responsible to others. They find it difficult to show their feelings, affection. Female adolescents have difficulty setting boundaries for others, find it difficult to say "no" and are emotionally balanced.

Adolescents with secure attachment to father, regardless of gender, are characterized by extraversion and masculine personality traits. Female adolescents are open, have difficulty setting boundaries, want to please everyone, neglecting their own desires, and get overwhelmed by other people's problems, showing care and friendship.

Male adolescents with insecure attachment to their mother are shy, have difficulty initiating social contacts and demonstrating their feelings and tend to please others. They are also controlling and manipulative, trying to influence and change others. They are revenge-oriented and quarrelsome. Female adolescents with insecure attachment to their mother have similar characteristics.

Male adolescents with insecure attachment to father are insecure arguers, submissive, yielding, introverted, and socially avoidant. Female adolescents with insecure attachment to their father are characterized by emotional instability, introversion and difficulties in relating to others.

Thus, when attachment "figures" are available, present and responsive to the child's needs, it creates safe space for him to explore.

4. Depending on the gender of the subjects

4.1. Male adolescents who demonstrated a high level of weight in the "Communication" and "Trust" dimensions of the "Dad" scale denote a high level of attachment to the father, which allows us to find out about the development of positive thoughts about others, for that the father represents the first other in the child's life. He is the first person different from himself and it is the mother and father who will generate thoughts about the outside. Adolescents with a low level on the "Feeling of Abandonment" scale with a high level of attachment to the father, show assertiveness and self-confidence, possess enthusiasm and activity, sensitivity to others and their needs, openness to culture and creativity. At the same time, these adolescents are related to "good" mental health, extraversion and performance.

These teenagers (Șchiopu, 1997) have difficulties in maintaining long-term relationships, in demonstrating their own needs, it is difficult for them to communicate what they want, they consider themselves insecure, they cannot assume a leadership role and they overcome their anger poorly.

They are characterized by the desire to be peplac to others. It is their shyness that makes it difficult for them to initiate social contacts. Adolescent males who demonstrated a high level of weight on the "Communication" and "Trust" dimensions of the "Mother" scale and a low level of "Feeling of abandonment" denote a high level of attachment to the mother. Male teenagers are characterized by positive thoughts about themselves.

The explanation comes from attachment theory, where the responsibility for self-thoughts, whatever gender the child has, rests with the mother.

4.2. Female teenagers who demonstrated a high level of weight in the communication and trust dimensions, denote a high level of attachment to their parents, behavioral manifestations in relationships with those around them acquire an increased sensitivity towards others. They show competence, organization and have a developed sense of duty, motivation to achieve. In the analysis of the results, with a high weight are the traits: assertiveness, warmth, positive emotionality.

Adolescent girls are prone to rely on relationships with others as emotional support, respectively, to be concerned with the harmony of relationships. Psychologists (Wallin, 2010) mention that attachment to the father makes it easier for the daughter to find a partner. The statistical results obtained allow us to find the lower level of attachment to the father from female adolescents compared to male adolescents, which allows us to conclude about difficulties in maturing daughters for a relationship. The comparative analysis of the results, in the type of relationships, denotes female subjects who encounter difficulties in lasting relationships, they reveal that they keep others at a distance and do not demonstrate their feelings and affection.

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