

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Romantic Attachment Style and Emotional Intelligence of Adolescents with Migrant and Non-Migrant Mothers: A Correlational Study

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### Abstract

The study focused on the romantic attachment style and emotional intelligence of the adolescents with migrant and non-migrant mothers. The adolescent-respondents are the college students of the Bulacan State University whose age ranges from 16-19 years old, involved in a relationship and enrolled in the current school year 2011-2012. The findings of the study include the following: (1) the level of anxious attachment of the adolescents with migrant and non-migrant mothers were identified as “moderate anxious attachment” and “low avoidance attachment”; (2) the level of emotional intelligence of the adolescents with migrant and non-migrant mothers was determined as “high” in terms of taking responsibility, handling relationships, creativity and empathy but “moderate” in terms of personal autonomy, knowing one’s emotion and self-reliant; (3) there is no significant difference between the romantic attachment of the adolescents with migrant and non-migrant mothers in terms of anxious and avoidance attachment; (4) there is no significant difference between the emotional intelligence of the adolescents with migrant and non-migrant mothers in terms of taking responsibility, handling relationships, personal autonomy, knowing one’s emotions, creativity, empathy and self-reliant; (5) anxious attachment showed no significant relationship with the emotional intelligence of adolescents with migrant mothers while avoidance attachment exhibited significant relationship with emotional intelligence in terms of taking responsibility, handling relationships, and empathy; and (6) anxious attachment showed significant relationship with the emotional intelligence of adolescents with non-migrant mothers in terms of knowing one’s emotions while avoidance attachment exhibited significant relationship with emotional intelligence in terms of handling relationships.

**Keywords:** *Romantic attachment style, Emotional intelligence, Migrant and non-migrant.*

### Introduction

There are countless things and people that have significant contributions to one’s life. These have affected a person in some profound, meaningful and permanent way. Regardless of this, however, there is one person who has done more than anyone else, a mother. The role of a mother is immeasurable and can never be questioned. It seems that almost everyone thinks that their particular mother is the best one, and they can cite thousands of wonderful reasons that make them feel this way. It is undoubtedly true that there are many wonderful mothers out there, and they are all very important to the people that love and care for them. Growing up with mother’s unconditional love enables the children to be emotionally ready and with positive behavior towards people and society. Absence of mother, on the other hand, may have adverse effects.

It is a common knowledge that parental absence creates displacement, distractions and modification in terms of care giving arrangement. There is an emotional factor that affects the

growth of the children particularly when their mother tends to work abroad or far from their home. Nevertheless, it is also a relief to have the extended family looking after the children left-behind. However, it cannot negate the fact that the children are longing for the love and care of their biological parents, specifically mother.

Children have a different level of acceptance or tolerance of the situation depending on their cognitive and affective development. For young children, they perceive migration as a practice of abandonment of their parents while adolescents may either be open or angry [1].

There are actually varied views and experiences of experts and authorities on the romantic attachment and emotional intelligence of adolescents. These motivated the researchers to conduct the study with the end in view of determining the difference between the romantic attachment and emotional intelligence of adolescents with migrant and non-migrant

mothers as well as the relationship of the adolescents' romantic attachment style on their emotional intelligence.

### Statement of the Problem

The general problem of the study is: How does the romantic attachment style relate with the emotional intelligence of the adolescents with migrant and non-migrant mothers enrolled at the Bulacan State University during the school year 2011-20112?

Specifically, the study sought answers to the following:

- What are the characteristics of the respondents in terms of:
  - Age
  - Gender
  - Course
  - Year level
  - Birth order
  - Number of siblings
  - Mothers' occupation
  - Mothers' educational qualification
  - Years of separation with mother?
- How may the level of romantic attachment style of the adolescents be described in terms of:
  - Anxious attachment; and
  - Avoidance attachment?
- How may the level of emotional intelligence of the adolescents be measured in terms of:
  - Taking responsibility
  - Handling relationships
  - Personal autonomy
  - Knowing one's emotions
  - Creativity
  - Empathy; and
  - Self-reliant?
- Is there a significant difference between the romantic attachment style of adolescents with migrant and non-migrant mothers?
- Is there a significant difference between the emotional intelligence of adolescents with migrant and non-migrant mothers?
- Is there a significant relationship between the romantic attachment style and emotional intelligence of the adolescents with migrant and non-migrant mothers?

### Methodology

The researchers used the correlational and causal-comparative methods of research. Since the study focused on the differences and relationship of the romantic attachment and emotional intelligence of adolescents with migrant

and non-migrant mothers, the correlational and causal-comparative methods of research are deemed applicable and important. The researcher also looked into the profile of the adolescents to describe their characteristics. The researcher used validated questionnaires in gathering data and supported by interview to validate the data gathered.

## Results and Discussion

### Characteristics of the Adolescents

#### *Age*

The table reflects that the age of the adolescent-respondents ranges from 16 to 19 years old. Majority or 13 of the adolescent-respondents with migrant mothers are 18 years old. There are six (6) or 20.00% of the respondents who are 19 years old who happened to be the oldest and only one (1) or 3.30% who is 16 years old who is the youngest. As reflected also in the table, majority or 20 of the adolescent-respondents with non-migrant mothers are 19 years old while none of the respondents belongs to 16 years of age. There are, however, two (2) or 6.70% of the respondents who are 17 years old.

#### *Gender*

As presented in the table, from the 60 adolescent-respondents with migrant and non-mothers, 12 or 40.00% are male while 18 or 60.00% are female. In this study, there are equal numbers of male and female adolescent-respondents with migrant and non-migrant mothers to provide balance presentation and interpretation of data.

#### *Course*

As seen in the table, the respondents were chosen from across courses. There are 11 or 36.70% of the adolescent-respondents with migrant and non-migrant mothers who are enrolled in the Bachelor of Science in Psychology. However, majority or 12 (40.00%) of the respondents with non-migrant mothers are under the Bachelor of Secondary Education program.

#### *Year Level*

Table exhibits the year level of the adolescent-respondents which proved that the study involved the students from first year to fourth year levels. There are 14 (46.70%) and 18 (60.00%) adolescent-respondents with migrant and non-migrant mothers respectively who are 3<sup>rd</sup> year college.

#### *Birth Order*

The data disclosed that 16 (53.30%) and 14 (46.70%) of the adolescent-respondents with

migrant and non-migrant mothers respectively are 1<sup>st</sup> child or oldest in the family.

### ***Number of Siblings***

The table shows that four (4) respondents with migrant mothers and three (3) respondents with non-migrant mothers are the only child in the family. There are seven (7) and nine (9) respondents with migrant and non-migrant mothers respectively who have two (2) siblings.

### ***Mothers' Occupation***

Table also presents the occupation of mothers categorized as professional, non-professional, self-employed and unemployed. The data revealed that there are 6 (20.00%), 24 (80.00%) and none of the adolescent-respondents with migrant mothers who are professional, non-professional, self-employed and unemployed respectively. It means that majority of the migrant mothers are employed as engineer, nurse, executive assistant, secretary, caregiver and domestic helper. On the other hand, majority or 21 (70.00%) of the adolescent-respondents with non-migrant mothers are unemployed, one (1) self-employed, one (1) non-professional and 7 professionals. The data explained that non-migrant mothers are housewives who are concentrating on their duties and responsibilities to their respective husbands and children. Some of the non-migrant mothers are manager, engineer, nurse, sewer, cook and domestic helper. Mothers' Educational Qualification. The educational qualification of the respondents' mothers ranges from elementary graduate to

### ***Master's Degree Holder***

There are 17 or 56.70% and 13 or 43.30% of the 60 adolescent-respondents with migrant and non-migrant mothers are bachelor's degree holders. The data showed that the migrant mothers, despite of their degrees in college, opted to be employed as non-professional and be away with their respective families to secure them with good future. More so, none of the migrant mothers are elementary graduate but there are three (3) non-migrant mothers. On the other hand, none of the non-migrant mothers are master's degree holder but there is one (1) migrant mother who obtained the degree.

### ***Years of Separation with Mothers***

It can be gleaned from the table that the adolescent-respondents have been separated from their mothers from 3-14 years. Thus, there are seven (7) or 23.30% and only one (1) or 3.30% from the 30 respondents who have been detached from their mothers who are working abroad.

## **Adolescents' Romantic Attachment**

Table revealed that the level of romantic attachment of the adolescents with migrant and non-migrant mothers was identified as "moderate anxious attachment" and "low avoidance attachment". The "moderate anxious attachment" explains that the adolescents rarely worry about their partner leaving them. The respondents mentioned that, they always turn to their partners, instead of their mothers, to console them and help them resolve their personal problems.

According to Ainsworth [2], anxious individuals are concerned about that their partners' possibility of leaving them. But it is natural for them to experience emotional highs and lows. The table further revealed that adolescent-respondents with migrant and non-migrant migrant mothers have "low avoidance attachment". This purports that the respondents feel comfortable sharing their private thoughts and feelings with their partners. Also, the two groups of adolescent-respondents, as much as possible, communicate with their partners and disclose their dreams to know each other better and plan together for their future.

## **Adolescents' Emotional Intelligence**

It can be gleaned from the table that the level of emotional intelligence of the adolescents with migrant and non-migrant mothers was determined as "moderate" in terms of personal autonomy, knowing one's emotion and self-reliant.

The level of emotional intelligence of the adolescents with migrant and non-migrant mothers was determined as "high" in terms of taking responsibility, handling relationships, creativity and empathy. The highest mean value, however, was registered on creativity. This means that the adolescents believed that everyone have their own unique talent and ability. Which shows that the respondents respect the inherent talent of individuals which can be nurtured regardless of the presence or absence of their mothers for as long as they are aware of it and know how to use it. But it can be helpful if they receive support from their mothers and they should not be forced to be engaged in something they are not interested.

Parents should allow children to explore their creativity and to develop it. She concluded by pointing out that creative children often know early on what they want to do, but adults force them into other activities because they want their children to be well-rounded. She cautions

against this and promotes allowing a child to nurture a specific talent as far as the child can take it. Overall Mean – Moderate (migrant and Non-Migrant)

### **Significant Difference in the Adolescents' Romantic Attachment**

The data revealed that there is no significant difference between the romantic attachment of the adolescents with migrant and non-migrant mothers in terms of anxious and avoidance attachment based on the significant  $t$  values of 0.622 and 0.123 respectively. It can be deduced that the level of romantic attachment of the adolescents with migrant mothers does not differ to that of the adolescents with non-migrant mothers. Since both the adolescents with migrant and non-migrant mothers obtained moderate anxious attachment, they can adjust or cope to their anxiety. Also, since the two groups of respondents have low avoidance attachment, adolescents are not avoiding intimate relationship and they know how to handle such relationship. Although mothers played significant role in the development of the adolescents' attachment, the adolescents understand the need of being separated from their mothers and accepted the fact that working abroad is now normal if no opportunities are provided in the country where they are living. Adolescents of present generation can already cope with the complexities of the society and problems in the family brought about by the absence or presence of father or mother. The presence, however, of father and other immediate family members can compensate the absence of the mother in the family. In addition, with the advancement of the technology, the adolescents with migrant mothers can maintain their connection or attachment just like with the adolescents with non-migrant mothers through internet and phones.

### **Significant Difference in the Adolescents**

#### ***Emotional Intelligence***

The data disclosed that the emotional intelligence of the adolescents with migrant mothers showed no significant difference on the emotional intelligence of the adolescents with non-migrant mothers in terms of taking responsibility, handling relationships, personal autonomy, knowing one's emotions, creativity, and empathy and self-reliant based on the significant  $t$  values greater than 0.5 level of significance. This explains that although the mothers are working abroad the adolescent's emotional intelligence can be similar to that of adolescents with non-migrant mothers for as long as there are mutual trust, respect, and a certain warmth and rapport

with members of their families or groups. Also, the emotional intelligence and competencies of the adolescents can be enhanced or nurtured with less supervision from the father or mother because the adolescents might have higher level of emotional awareness and maturity that are important in the development of emotional intelligence. Once the adolescents are aware and can manage their own emotions and they understand the feelings of others, it may help in the development of emotional intelligence. This, however, is the premise of emotional intelligence, understanding self, goals, intentions, responses and behaviors.

Further, the absence of the mother can be accepted by the adolescents as an advantage in developing their emotional intelligence because they can learn and decide for themselves.

### **Significant Relationship**

#### ***Migrant Mothers***

The table revealed that anxious attachment showed no significant relationship with the emotional intelligence of adolescents with migrant mothers. On the other hand, avoidance attachment exhibited significant relationship with emotional intelligence in terms of taking responsibility, handling relationships, and empathy based on the significant  $r$  values of -0.386, -0.701 and -0.570 respectively. This means that the lower avoidance attachment of adolescents with migrant mothers, the higher their emotional intelligence in taking responsibility, handling relationships and empathy.

#### ***Non-Migrant Mothers***

The table revealed that anxious attachment showed significant relationship with the emotional intelligence of adolescents with non-migrant mothers in terms of knowing one's emotions as reflected on the significant  $r$  value of 0.041. However, the coefficient value of -0.376 exhibited reverse relationship. This explains that the lower the anxious attachment of adolescents with non-migrant mothers, the higher their emotional intelligence in taking responsibility.

The table also revealed that avoidance attachment exhibited significant relationship with emotional intelligence in terms of handling relationships based on the significant  $r$  value of 0.023. Noteworthy of attention, however, is the coefficient value of -0.414. This means that the lower avoidance attachment of adolescents with non-migrant mothers, the higher their emotional intelligence in handling relationships [3-7].

## Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

- There is no significant difference between the romantic attachment of the adolescents with migrant and non-migrant mothers in terms of anxious and avoidance attachment.
- There is no significant difference between the emotional intelligence of the adolescents with migrant and non-migrant mothers in terms of taking responsibility, handling relationships, personal autonomy, knowing one's emotions, creativity, empathy and self-reliant.
- There is no significant relationship between

anxiety attachment and emotional intelligence of adolescents with migrant mothers. However, avoidance attachment exhibited significant relationship with emotional intelligence in terms of taking responsibility, handling relationships, and empathy but not on personal autonomy, knowing one's emotions, creativity and self-reliant.

- There is a significant relationship between anxiety attachment and emotional intelligence of adolescents with non-migrant mothers in terms of knowing one's emotions. Also, there is a significant relationship between avoidance attachment and emotional intelligence in terms of taking responsibility.

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