


Importance of Secure Attachment and the Parent-Child Bond in the Physical and Emotional Development of Children

Importancia del apego seguro y el vínculo padres-hijos en el desarrollo físico y emocional de los niños

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Abstract

The primary objective of this study was to design an intervention plan focused on secure attachment and strengthening the bond between parents and children to positively influence child development. This plan is tailored for parents and prospective parents of the Los Tamarindos-Portoviejo community in Ecuador. The significance of secure attachment and solid bonds in childrearing and development is emphasized. Despite the inherent challenges, it's crucial to implement this approach thoroughly. The research, of a qualitative nature, was based on interviews with families. The findings highlighted shortcomings in parenting, notably an overprotective pattern that impacts the core of parental relationships. This underscores the pressing need to promote family educational strategies to enrich attachment styles, thus contributing to the holistic development of the child.

Key words: Secure Attachment; Bonds; Family; Upbringing.

Resumen

El objetivo principal de este estudio fue diseñar un plan de intervención enfocado en el apego seguro y en fortalecer el vínculo entre padres e hijos para influir positivamente en el desarrollo infantil. Este plan está orientado hacia los padres y futuros progenitores de la ciudadela Los Tamarindos-Portoviejo, Ecuador. Se destaca la importancia del apego seguro y de vínculos firmes en la crianza y desarrollo de los niños. A pesar de los desafíos implicados, es crucial implementar este enfoque de manera íntegra. La investigación, de naturaleza cualitativa, se basó en entrevistas con familias. Los hallazgos indicaron deficiencias en la crianza, destacando un patrón de sobreprotección que afecta el núcleo de las relaciones parentales. Esto subraya la imperiosa necesidad de impulsar estrategias educativas familiares para enriquecer los estilos de apego, contribuyendo así al desarrollo holístico del niño.

Palabras clave: Apego seguro; vínculos; familia; crianza.

INTRODUCTION

The construction of an individual's personality is a process intrinsically linked to his or her development. Several variables are involved in this complex process, such as genetic predisposition, temperament, socialization process, environment, significant life events, education and family. Each of these factors has a unique relevance. As Romero & Romero (2022) rightly point out, along with genetic predisposition, it is essential to underline the influence of the first relationship with a primary caregiver, be it mother, father or another individual.

Bowlby, in his attachment theory, stresses the inherent relational nature of human beings. He argues that the formation, development and loss of affective attachments directed toward specific people generally follow a certain order. In this context, Santos and Larzabal (2021) emphasize that the first attachments established during childhood and transmitted to adolescence have a significant permanence, as they act as secure and stable sources for the individual.

To consolidate a solid attachment in children and ensure the formation of bonds that promote optimal development, they must constantly interact with a central figure in their lives. Healthy bonding demands that the caregiver, whether it is the mother or another caregiver, demonstrate empathy, manage anxiety appropriately, be available to the child and avoid being intrusive. It is crucial to avoid hasty interpretations of the child's reactions that may invalidate the child's personal experiences. These qualities are fundamental to cultivating a secure attachment, which acts as a protective bulwark against emotional vulnerabilities.

Establishing a secure attachment has a profound impact on a child's self-esteem, boosting their confidence and autonomy. In addition, this type of attachment provides them with the necessary tools to manage their emotions and strengthen their sense of personal security. It is through this relationship that the infant begins to become familiar with their family's culture, mainly through their language of origin (Giraldo-Montoya *et al.*, 2017). These emotional bonds, vital for the infant's survival throughout human evolution, continue to influence an individual's emotions, thoughts, and goals, shaping his or her intimate relationships throughout life.

Emotional connections play a crucial role in the evolution of our perspectives, behaviours, and self-perception. These connections equip the individual to meet social, academic, and everyday challenges. Attachment, in this sense, becomes an essential pillar in our interactions with others and is vital for the continuity of the human species. Building this attachment requires parents to have a deep understanding of their children's signals and communications, establish a foundation of security and trust, respond to their needs, provide affection and time, and care for their physical and emotional well-being.

As this bond is established, the infant begins to gain independence, explores his or her environment with confidence and displays cognitive, emotional and social skills to the fullest. Based on these initial interactions, the child forms mental schemas about how to relate to the world around him. These patterns often persist throughout life and guide the type of relationships he or she will establish in adulthood.

A secure and healthy attachment is ideally modelled on maternal empathy. When the mother interprets and responds appropriately to the child's signals, communication is established that is attuned to the needs of the child (Pineda, 2021).

Those with secure attachment develop a mindset that values both trust in others and trust in themselves. They see themselves as worthy of attention and love. These individuals can identify their own needs, manage emotions without resorting to aggression, are socially active, bond easily, actively seek information, are adaptive in their thinking, and generally have healthy self-esteem, among other positive qualities (Hernández *et al.*, 2019).

As a result of the problems identified, we are faced with the following question: How can the bond between parents and children be strengthened to promote secure attachment behaviours in the families of Ciudadela Los Tamarindos in Portoviejo?

The value of this research lies in its approach aimed at deciphering and understanding the attachment relationship established between parents and children within the family and how this relationship influences the physical and emotional development of children. This study has a remarkable social significance. It is widely

accepted that a safe, enriched and violence-free childhood environment, together with the presence of a solid and stable primary attachment figure, is essential for the development of a healthy and balanced personality. Thus, this study acquires special relevance by offering direct benefits to the families that were part of the research.

The main objective of this work was to elaborate an intervention plan focused on secure attachment and the relational dynamics between parents and children. The intention behind this intervention is to influence the development of children positively, and it is specially designed for parents or those who are about to become parents in Ciudadela Los Tamarindos de Portoviejo.

METHODOLOGY

This research is based on the interpretative paradigm, seeking the interconnection of the diverse elements of the types of attachment and bonds that influence the development of children. A democratic and communicative relationship and participation are encouraged between the parents and the researcher (Finol & Vera, 2020).

The study adopted a descriptive character with a qualitative approach based on a literature review where the theoretical method was applied. Qualitative research combines different methods and techniques, serving as tools to collect data that, in turn, are used in inferences, interpretations, explanations and predictions.

An exhaustive search of articles and academic papers in both Spanish and English was conducted, focusing on studies published in the last five years. For this search, keywords such as secure attachment, secure bonding, child physical development, child psychosocial development and intrafamily relationships were used. Various sources were accessed, such as the Internet, books, specialized journals, and graduate studies, among others. Relevant information was extracted from recognized databases such as Scielo, Redalyc, PubMed, Elsevier, Cochrane and Google Scholar.

From the literature review, essential information was obtained that facilitated the performance of a deductive analysis. Criteria were established to

select the literary material, focusing on its relevance, language (Spanish and English), relevance and timeliness. This information was organized in a matrix with details such as authors, titles and year of publication, generating a table called "Summary of studies for bibliographic review".

In addition, data collection techniques such as observation and interview were used. These techniques allowed us to obtain a detailed picture of the realities of the families studied. Special attention was paid to bodily expressions to understand family bonds better.

The focus was on the population of Ciudadela Los Tamarindos, the first and second stage of the Andrés de Vera Parish in Portoviejo, Province of Manabí. Of 124 families with children under 10 years of age, 36 of them were selected by random probability sampling. One representative from each family answered questions focused on child development and the relevance of attachment and bonding in such development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Attachment

Attachment is described as an emotional connection established with a particular individual, which endures over time, driving the search for closeness with that person. This relationship is evident during the first year of a child's life, regardless of cultural background (Aguilar, 2019). Although the manifestations of attachment are not unique to humans, it is uniquely human in the crucial role it plays in the future development of personal emotional skills. This includes the quality of social interactions, self-worth, emotional well-being and, additionally, the way in which bonds are established with offspring and loving relationships in adulthood.

Characteristics of attachment

The bond that is established in the early stages of life presents distinctive peculiarities: it is unequal, where the adult provides and provides shelter, while the infant pursues it (in contrast, connections between adults tend to be balanced, where both participants contribute and provide mutual care). According to Moneta (2019), this bond includes a behavioural aspect, where physical closeness is explicitly sought for the

purpose of feeling safe. In addition, it contains a cognitive element, which involves a permanent evaluation of the context and the attachment figure, and an emotional component, impregnated with feelings arising from this assessment, such as happiness, anger, and concern, among others.

Bowlby's theory of attachment

The existence of the attachment theory is attributed to the British psychoanalyst John Bowlby (1907-1990). At the end of World War II, the World Health Organization conducted research on the needs of homeless children where Bowlby dealt with mental health problems, presumably exposed to the effects of maternal deprivation. In *Maternal Health and Mental Health* (1951), he exposed the adverse effects of maternal image deprivation and suggested ways to prevent such deprivation (Guido, 2019).

John Bowlby based part of his research on observations of children in institutions that lacked maternal presence, noting that these children exhibited various emotional disturbances. As a result, he prepared a report for the World Health Organization (WHO) during that time, highlighting the relevance of the affective bond between mother and child and the ideal maternal care for the proper growth of the child. In addition, Bowlby indicated that children who showed emotional or behavioural problems, and even adolescents with delinquent tendencies, tended to have a history of early and extensive separations from their maternal figures.

The main points considered in John Bowlby's theory are the maintenance of proximity (being close to people with whom there is attachment), safe refuge to seek comfort and security in the face of danger or threat, a secure base to explore the world, and anguish due to separation, which is generated by absence (Vallejos, 2019).

Types of attachment

The psychologist and child development researcher Mary Ainsworth has studied 12-month-old children in Uganda and Baltimore (strange circumstances), giving way to research that would give rise to various attachment styles or typologies. Based on the inferences drawn from the survey, she hypothesized that there are three types of attachment: secure, anxious (insecure), avoidant, and ambivalent (insecure). Some research suggests that avoidant and

ambivalent attachment styles (anxious or insecure categories) may precede aggressive behaviour.

Secure attachment arises when the infant feels confident because of constant manifestations of protection, affection and effective availability. In contrast, ambivalent attachment is manifested when such availability, both physical and emotional, is erratic, i.e., not constant or not always accessible. In the case of disorganized attachment, the parent or caregiver responds in a misaligned manner to the child's needs. In contrast, in avoidant attachment, little ones tend to elude their caregivers without showing a definite inclination to be cared for either by their parents or by strangers (Ministry of Education, 2019).

Importance of secure attachment in child development.

Secure attachment bonding contributes positively to parenting skills, as it focuses on attention, essential care, and how to attend to the infant's needs. For this reason, psychoeducational programs designed to reinforce attachment offer support to those parents who face challenges in this area, providing them with useful tools to play their role as caregivers and strengthen that affective connection with their children (Lara & Quintana, 2022).

Consequences of attachment deficiency

Within the context of attachment theory, and following the line promoted by social and personality psychology, it is emphasized that, depending on individual particularities, people adopt different emotional regulation strategies in the face of stressful circumstances. Thus, it is suggested that people with a secure attachment use what is known as a primary strategy, which is distinguished by the search for closeness with their attachment figure in order to obtain comfort and protection. However, in those with insecure attachment styles, the tendency to intensify or suppress their attachment needs prevails (secondary strategy). The latter is employed with the aim of protecting their emotional integrity, either from possible helplessness in the case of hyperactivation or from rejection in the case of deactivation (Guzmán-González *et al.*, 2016).

Hyperactivation in the need for closeness is based on the perception that keeping distance may be risky or suggests possible helplessness. In

contrast, deactivation tactics are common among individuals who show high levels of the avoidance dimension. These individuals are characterized by trying to block or repress unpleasant thoughts and emotions. In other words, they tend to inhibit attachment-related behaviours due to fear of the negative consequences that being close to their attachment figure might bring. Thus, they seek to limit their interaction with that figure, both in reality and in their thoughts (Vigo, 2021).

People with pronounced avoidance patterns tend to employ defence mechanisms to exclude thoughts or block traumatic memories. They frequently show a lack of recognition of their own hostile emotions, establishing barriers between different mental systems and showing a dissociation between their responses at the conscious and unconscious levels. These individuals often repress unfavourable emotions, distancing themselves from their own emotions and from situations that evoke attachment, holding back their feelings and avoiding seeking support. In addition, they often overestimate their ability to handle situations on their own, exhibiting overconfidence in their abilities (Muñoz, 2017).

People with fearful attachments face particular challenges with regard to emotional regulation and interpersonal relationships. Some of these characteristics are discussed below:

Low levels of affective expressiveness and emotional warmth: These individuals often have difficulty showing or sharing their emotions with others. This holding back may be the result of past experiences in which the expression of emotions was not well received or resulted in negative consequences.

Inhibition of negative emotional expression: Despite feeling intense emotions, these people often avoid expressing them, especially if they are negative. This withholding is due to fear of rejection or conflict with others.

Differences with the disengaged style: Although fearful attachment and disengaged attachment individuals share the tendency to repress negative emotions, the underlying reason is different. People with disengaged attachment tend to minimize or avoid the importance of relationships and emotions in general. In contrast, people with fearful attachments feel emotions intensely but are afraid to express them.

Limited use of reappraisal: Re-evaluation is an emotional regulation strategy that involves thinking about a situation in a way that changes its emotional significance. However, due to low self-esteem and a negative view of themselves, people with fearful attachments often feel that they cannot handle or reappraise conflicting situations effectively.

Negative self-perception: A key feature of fearful attachment is a negative view of oneself, meaning that these individuals tend to view their abilities and worth critically. This may manifest as doubts about their ability to handle challenging or conflicting situations and may influence their reluctance to seek support or help.

Understanding these characteristics is essential to addressing the emotional and relational needs of individuals with fearful attachments. Recognizing and addressing these challenges can lead to healthier relationships and better emotional regulation (Iglesias & Del Castillo, 2018).

Attachment theory

Bonding refers to the mental connection between the child and his or her caregiver, commonly his or her mother. Emotions such as crying and laughter facilitate children's connection with their caregivers. This bond provides an emotionally stable foundation upon which more advanced relationships are built. Studies suggest that poor bonding can hinder emotional and social progress throughout life.

In the text "Maternal Care and Mental Health," it is stated that this bond is the association that begins in early infancy and is crucial to the healthy growth of the individual. It is formed when there is a continuous and emotional connection between mother and child, where the child sees his or her mother as a constant and powerful source of security (Hikal, 2020).

The stages are:

Initial Stage: Arises between birth and eight weeks. During this time, the infant sees the mother as its primary focus of interest.

Attachment development: It manifests between eight weeks and six months. At this stage, children begin to relate to others in their environment, such as relatives or family friends.

Consolidated bonding: Occurs between six and 24 months. Here, a distinguishing feature is the child's obvious discomfort when separated from his or her mother.

At about the same time that infants form strong emotional connections with a caregiver, they sometimes show emotional responses that may surprise or even worry those nearby. Two typical fears are identified in infancy: 1) Restlessness with strangers and 2) Fear of separation.

Restlessness with strangers is how infants and toddlers react to meeting someone they do not recognize. Fear of separation is how they feel when they are taken away from those to whom they are attached.

Bowlby argues that these fears are due to the fact that many of the scenarios infants face can be seen as warnings of risk. These situations, throughout evolutionary history, have often been linked with threats, so infants have an instinctive reaction of fear or avoidance. Once they can differentiate between the familiar and the unfamiliar, these fears may include unfamiliar faces and being removed from familiar peers.

Unlabeled phase: Manifests between 25 months and three years of age. During this period, the mother is seen as a separate entity, giving rise to a new dynamic in their relationship.

Positive and negative development of attachments

Within the realm of bonding, certain types of attachments can be detrimental. One such relationship is that of the "absent attachment", in which the caregiver appears to be emotionally absent, indifferent and neglectful. Although this may propel the child toward early independence, he or she may lack the emotional support needed to interact adequately with his or her environment. Another problematic situation is "affectionate constriction." Here, the caregiver tends to be overly protective and maintains a high level of emotional closeness. This can result in a child being overwhelmed by too much protection and love, potentially limiting his or her ability to develop autonomy. Finally, there are situations of "control without affection." In these circumstances, the caregiver exercises strong supervision over the child but without the affectionate component. It is as if there were constant vigilance but without the presence of a real affectionate bond (Rhodes, 2020).

Parent-child bonding

The consolidation of a secure attachment is fundamental for emotional well-being and the creation of lasting affective relationships. Those children who identify with the fourth attachment category, called disorganized or disoriented attachment, show a clear difficulty in managing anxiety in their mother's absence. Moreover, upon her return, they do not seek her comfort. These children exhibit erratic behaviours, either seeking to move closer to or away from their maternal figure. Developmental experts argue that these early manifestations of emotional regulation, whether functional or distorted, act as initial models that will define future individual approaches to emotion regulation.

Child development

Child development refers to the changes that occur in the evolution of boys and girls during their early years. These changes are manifested both physically and psychologically, encompassing advances at the cognitive, sensory, motor, emotional-adaptive and social levels (Santi, 2019).

It is essential to highlight that the family is the main scenario where this development is gestated. It is at home where the initial knowledge originates, allowing the construction of the individual. Here, characteristics and traits that facilitate social interaction are moulded. According to Suárez Vélez (2018), the family has a primary role in preparing its members to assume social responsibilities, control impulses, instil values and establish meaningful personal development goals. It is through this socialization process that children become equipped to be active participants in the community. In this context, parents have an inescapable responsibility in the socialization of their children.

Although there is no manual on how to raise children, parents must focus on fostering both the physical and emotional development of their children. It is a comprehensive task which demands dedication and a deep understanding of the emotional responsibility involved.

Today, emphasis is placed on the processes that shape child development. Certain characteristics of attachment allow the development of competencies that will be valuable in the future. It is in early childhood when it is most beneficial to establish a secure attachment, given the brain

plasticity of this stage, where nerve cells multiply rapidly, facilitating emotional, motor, cognitive and social learning.

The learning experiences and knowledge that children acquire in the family are essential for their social interaction. Parenting patterns influence attachment, and this, in turn, determines the educational styles that will influence child development.

Rodríguez & Muñoz (2017) argue that, in these contexts, the mother plays a preponderant role in the infant's development, as she is generally the main caregiver and protector during the first years of life. This relationship requires sensitivity, correction and discipline to promote optimal child development and strengthen secure attachment.

Providing emotional support is essential to validate children's emotions, especially when they are negative. This validation demonstrates to children that their parents care about their well-being, offering protection and security. However, current societal dynamics have led many parents to devote more time to their jobs, relegating the care of their children to others. Huayamave et al. (2019) assert that positive relationships with parents determine child well-being.

Finally, a child who grows up in an environment of insecurities or affective deprivation is likely to perpetuate these patterns later in life, going through turbulent adolescence and reaching adulthood without having developed the capacity to offer genuine affection to others.

López and Periscal (2021) argue that the insecurities generated by insufficient emotional attention during childhood begin to manifest themselves clearly in early adolescence. This situation is due to the fact that emotional security and social relationship skills are directly related to perceptions of insecurity originating in the parent-child relationship. These perceptions, in turn, may explain the emotional difficulties experienced by young people and how they interact with their peers.

Within this framework of providing emotional security to children, it is essential not only to validate their emotions but also to guide them in their understanding of the world and the social reality in which they find themselves. It is crucial to engage in dialogue with them about their

perceptions and opinions about themselves and their environment. This not only helps them to structure their thoughts better but also fosters their independence in essential areas of their lives.

While there are decisions that will always fall to parents due to a child's limited capacity for discernment, it is wrong to assume that children cannot develop decision-making skills from an early age. A common area of debate between parents and children lies in everyday choices such as the selection of toys, the clothes they want to wear, and the places or people they want to interact with.

It is critical to establish in what contexts a child can exercise autonomy in their decisions within the home. This task requires an interdisciplinary approach in which even professionals such as the paediatrician play a crucial role, offering guidance and cooperation. According to Martakis et al. (2018), recent research suggests that, around the age of 12, children attain considerable decision-making ability. However, this ability is enhanced or limited by the degree of emotional intelligence the child has developed. At all times, the child's decisions must be supervised and considered by a responsible adult, ensuring that his or her opinion is taken into account and valued.

Importance of attachment and bonding in child development

Secure attachment, originating from the caregiver's sense of protection, affection and availability, is essential for a child's physical and emotional development. It is through this bond that minors acquire fundamental values, such as solidarity and respect, which are crucial for their mental health and social adaptation (Anchundia & Navarrete, 2021).

However, many parents, due to a lack of knowledge or advice on secure attachment, may engage in overprotective practices or, on the contrary, establish little bonding with their children. Both extremes are harmful. Overprotection, in particular, limits the autonomy of the child, preventing his or her full development towards adulthood.

It is natural for children to seek closeness to their parents, either as a matter of affection or as a necessity for survival. However, it is vital to differentiate these motivations. As they grow

older, some children express a desire to spend time with their parents, reflecting a secure attachment.

Unfortunately, in today's society, affection is not always encouraged in parental relationships. Many children perceive their parents' guidance as critical or questioning, which can lead to rebellious or defiant attitudes. Parents must address these behaviours with understanding and love, providing appropriate guidance.

Hinojosa and Hernández (2021) point out that, although the educational environment has a role in the affective sphere, the real formation takes place at home. Behaviour patterns and changes in children's personalities are influenced by the affectivity they receive. Adequate attachment provides them with emotional security, while the lack of it leads them to seek security in the presence of others.

Guidance activities to improve secure attachment and parent-child bonding

Secure attachment is a fundamental pillar for the emotional and physical development of children. According to recent research findings, several counselling strategies can be adopted to strengthen this parent-child bond.

First, parents must show open affection toward their children. The manifestation of affection and acceptance is fundamental for the child to feel that he or she is loved and valued. In addition, the inclusion of parents in daily activities, whether at home or school, allows children to feel supported and understood.

Communication also plays a crucial role in this relationship. It is necessary to encourage open, non-judgmental dialogue, where emotions are validated, and experiences and feelings are shared. This can strengthen the relationship and generate an atmosphere of trust between parents and children.

On the other hand, although the duties and responsibilities of parents can be overwhelming, it is essential to dedicate quality time to children. They need to understand that, despite their busy lives, their parents will always find space to be with them. This sends a powerful message about their importance in their parents' lives.

Discipline and teaching values are equally essential. However, care must be taken in the way these lessons are transmitted to ensure that the child develops a sense of respect and learns to behave appropriately both at home and in society.

It is equally vital to promote autonomy from an early age. Avoiding overprotection and teaching children to face their fears and understand reality are necessary steps in their emotional development and independence.

However, not every moment in a child's life will be easy. Therefore, parents need to be attentive to any crisis or abnormal situation that may arise. In these scenarios, be bold and seek outside help. Professional intervention may be necessary to address and resolve situations that are beyond the family's ability to manage.

CONCLUSIONS

The relationship between secure attachment and the integral development of children has been a topic of extensive study in psychology and pedagogy. From the research conducted on the "Importance of secure attachment and the parent-child bond in the physical and emotional development of children", we have confirmed, without a doubt, that a secure attachment acts as a cornerstone for the adequate emotional and physical development of minors. This type of attachment creates an environment in which the child feels secure, loved and trusted, which facilitates healthy exploration of the world and positive emotional adjustment.

However, when analyzing the specific context of the Los Tamarindos-Portoviejo neighbourhood in Ecuador, we find an alarming reality. Instead of observing a predominance of secure attachment, we detected a deeper inclination towards ambivalent attachment. This tendency is rooted in the parenting practices adopted by families in the region and in behavioural patterns that are inadvertently transmitted to children. For example, it is possible that some parents, due to their own parenting experiences or socio-cultural factors, have yet to have the opportunity to learn to form secure attachments and thus replicate ambivalent patterns with their children.

The presence of ambivalent attachments in childhood is of concern, as inconsistency in these attachments can trigger a number of challenges for the child. They may face difficulties in regulating their emotions, developing social skills and feeling confident in their future relationships. This lack of security in primary relationships, therefore, impacts their ability to form healthy attachments later in life, including adolescence and adulthood. The consequences of this are vast, ranging from difficulties in interpersonal relationships to potential challenges in the workplace or academia. In essence, the absence of secure attachment in infancy can have long-term ramifications that extend well beyond childhood.

It is vital to emphasize the promotion of counselling activities within families that highlight the relevance of secure attachment. These activities should be designed with the purpose of instructing parents on best parenting practices and how to foster healthier relationships with their children. Similarly, it would be beneficial to encourage the active participation of parents in workshops and activities that address communication, positive discipline, and parenting skills development. In addition, it is essential to consider the intervention of professionals in the areas of psychology and pedagogy to support and guide families in circumstances where bonding and attachment are compromised or affected.

Contribution to scientific knowledge

This work has provided a detailed perspective on the nature of attachment in specific families in Los Tamarindos-Portoviejo, Ecuador. By identifying and analyzing the predominant tendencies and their possible causes, this research contributes significantly to the understanding of family dynamics and the importance of secure attachment. It further highlights the urgent need for intervention strategies that focus on strengthening family bonding and secure attachment. Limitations of the study:

The research had its limitations. Mainly, by focusing only on families in the Los Tamarindos-Portoviejo neighbourhood, the ability to generalize the results to other contexts or regions is reduced. Although the qualitative approach adopted provides value, it is also subjective and may not capture all the complexities related to attachment and parent-child bonding.

Author contributions

Josselyn Andreina Sánchez Vélez: Conceptualization, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Research, Methodology, Resources, Supervision, Validation, Writing - original draft, Writing: proofreading and editing

Oscar Elías Bolívar Chávez: Conceptualization, Research, Methodology, Validation, Visualization, Writing - original draft, Writing: proofreading and editing

Conflicts of Interest:

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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