

Pubertal Development among 10-Year-Olds: The Role of Parent's Attachment Style

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Abstract : For decades, attachment research examined how mothers' attachment styles shape parenting and specific aspects of child development. Only limited research addressed pubertal development from the perspective of attachment relationships. The current study focused on pubertal development at 10 years of age, as defined by Tanner (PDS), and examined the associations with both mothers' and fathers' attachment styles (ECR-S). Sixty-nine parents and their children from a medium SES participated in the study. It was found that whereas mothers' attachment was not related to the child's puberty development, fathers' attachment was associated with their daughter's pubertal development. Specifically, in girls, but not boys, advanced pubertal development was positively correlated with fathers' avoidance ($r = .37, p = 0.05$), and negatively correlated with anxiety scores ($r = -.36, p = 0.05$). This result raises the possibility that for girls, a relationship with fathers may serve as a psychological stressor, and in turn, induce concerns regarding resources and availability of interpersonal support. Such processes may contribute to different reproductive timing and strategies, including delayed and accelerated pubertal development. As more data are collected, we will be able to address with more power the role of parent's attachment in shaping the pubertal development of their young adolescents. Expanding the understanding of aspects of pubertal development -an important milestone of human development- and the possible linkages with parental attachment is important for researchers and clinicians.

Keywords : attachment style, children, gender, parents, puberty

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