

# The Influence of School Residential Status on Attachment and Fear of Intimacy among Young Adults

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**Abstract** - This research explores the influence of school residential status on attachment and fear of intimacy among young adults. Factors affecting Attachment and Intimacy are attachment style, Quality of caregiving, Family cohesion, Characteristics of the child and Family's internal working model. A sudden and irrevocable loss of primary attachments often leads to a significant trauma experienced by children sent to boarding school at a young age. The dependent variable was attachment and fear of intimacy. Attachment is affection, fondness or sympathy for someone or something and Intimacy means the feeling of closeness and bond in young adults in all kind of relationships. The independent variable was school residential status and gender. The study was conducted on young adults between 20-40 years of age and they participated in the study voluntarily. The study adopted a snowball and convenience sample of adults who either did their schooling from boarding or were day-scholars. The hypotheses stated that there were significant difference in the attachment and intimacy depending on the varying residential status of school and gender. Also it was hypothesized that there was interaction effect of school residential status and gender on attachment and intimacy. Relationship structure (ECR-RS) and Fear of Intimacy Scale (FIS) were the highly reliable tools used for the study. However, the analysis involving Two-way ANOVA of the participants (n=100) indicated that school residential status and gender only influenced attachment but not intimacy. It was also found that there was no interaction effect of school residential status and gender on attachment and intimacy among young adults.

**Index Terms** - boarding, day-scholars, attachment, intimacy.

## INTRODUCTION

For centuries, boarding school has been a significant feature of education systems. A sudden and irrevocable loss of primary attachments which may lead to a significant trauma experienced by children sent to boarding school at a young age. They may come across bullying, inappropriate behaviour and

sexual abuse, by staff and peers, may follow and so new attachment figures may become unsafe. In order to survive in the system, a defensive and protective disengagement of oneself may seem appropriate; the child hides his true identity. This pattern distorts intimate relationships and usually continues into adult life. The analysis of 'privileged' child trauma sent to boarding school at a tender age is termed as Boarding School Syndrome (Joy Schaverien, 2011)."

A psychological split between the 'boarding school-self' and the 'home-self' may result from dissociative amnesia due to the unconscious coping mechanisms that the boarding school students have adopted. This pattern may become a part of the adult life, causing difficulties in intimate and close relationships, and depression and separation anxiety amidst other forms of psychological distress. The meaning of attachment is affection, fondness or sympathy for someone or something whereas intimacy is a process in which social partners interact, as a result of sharing feeling (personal and private thoughts) come to feel appreciated, understood and care for each other. In a dating relationship, the phrase "intimacy" is a subjective term. Because of their upbringing, gender, or educational level, different people may have different interpretations of the word. Some may believe that closeness refers to the couple's affection, while others may see it as a sign of trust.

Factors affecting Attachment and Intimacy are attachment style, Quality of caregiving, Family cohesion, Characteristics of the child and Family's internal working model. The study is expected to focus towards the psychosocial growth of the boarding child and its influence on their social and academic life and also reverse the impact of surviving at their tender age in boarding school environment. It is also a great task to find out effective approach of the day scholars' verses boarding scholars towards life experiences and personality development. The present study aims to

find out the influence of school residential status on attachment and intimacy among young adults. The study also aims to find out the gender difference on attachment and intimacy.

Attachment theory in psychology originated due to the extraordinarily work done by John Bowlby (1958). He initially worked in a Child Guidance Clinic in London as a psychiatrist, where he treated many emotionally deprived children. While working there he understood the importance of the child's relationship with their mother in terms of emotional, social and cognitive development. Specifically, it shaped his belief about the link between early infant separation with the mother and later problems in relationships and maladjustment.

The triangular theory of love was given by Eric Erikson. This theory tried to explain intimacy, commitment and passion. This theory can be easily understood in terms of main three components which can be viewed in shape of triangle and every vertex of triangle cover one component. The three components are intimacy (as the highest vertex of the triangle), decision/commitment (as the right-hand vertex of the triangle) and passion (as the left vertex of triangle). All these components work in different ways, formulate and define this theory.

Schaverien (2004) researched to find out a cluster of behaviours and symptoms, which he classified as 'Boarding School Syndrome'. The negative and traumatic experiences of the children sent to boarding at an early stage may cause trouble in the establishment of new relationships in the later stages of life. The protective encapsulation of the real self prevents the individual from accepting and revealing the true identity.

#### METHODS

The Influence of School Residential Status on Attachment and Fear of Intimacy among Young Adults. Specific Objectives. 1. To study the influence of school residential status on attachment among Young adults. 2. To study the influence of School residential status on intimacy among young adults. 3. To study the influence of gender on Attachment among young adults. 4. To study the influence of gender on intimacy among young adults. 5. To study the interaction effect of School residential status and gender on attachment among young adults. 6. To study the interaction effect of school residential status and

gender on intimacy among young adults. Hypothesis. H1: There will be significant influence of school residential status on Attachment among young adults. H2: There will be significant influence of school residential status on Intimacy among young adults. H3: There will be significant influence of gender on Attachment among young adults. H4: There will be significant influence of gender on Intimacy among young adults. H5: There will be significant interaction effect of school residential status and gender on Attachment among young adults. H6: There will be significant interaction effect of school residential status and gender on Intimacy among young adults.

The present study adopted an ex-post facto research design. A 2\*2 factorial research design was adopted. It is an empirical investigation in which the researcher draws the inference regarding the relationship between the variables on the bases of such independent variables whose manifestations have already occurred. The ex-post facto research design attempts to trace an effect that has already occurred to its probable causes. It means that the research had been conducted after the occurrence of the events. The independent variables for the study are Status of school and Gender. The Dependent Variable of the study are Attachment and Intimacy. Operational Definition. Boarders. A child who lives away from its parents for education and is cared by a person or an institution receiving payment. Day-Scholar. A child who attends daily classes at a boarding school or non-boarding school but goes home in the evenings. Attachment. The literal meaning of attachment is affection, fondness or sympathy for someone or something. Intimacy. Feeling of closeness and bond in young adults in all kind of relationships. Young Adulthood. A period when individuals have completed their growth and are ready to assume their status in society, i.e. those in range of 25-40 years of age. Sample. For the present study, the sample was Indian young adults in the age range of 20-40. A total of 120 Indian young adults in the age range of 20-40. The sample was selected through Non-random Snowball sampling and convenience sampling technique. Inclusion criteria. Participants in the age range of 20-40. Boarders who studied between grade 1-10<sup>th</sup>. Participant who attended boarding, were day-scholars or both. Day-scholars who studied in non-boarding schools throughout their schooling period. Participants who were single. Participants who were proficient in English. Exclusion criteria. Non- English

speaking young adults. Participants who attended boarding in senior secondary i.e. grade 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>. Participants, who were married, separated or widow. Participants who had some physical or psychological issues were taken for the study. Fear of intimacy scale. The scale was constructed and standardized by Carol J Descutner and Mark H Thalen in 1990. The scale consists of 35 items divided into two parts i.e. 30 items in part A and 5 items in part B. It has a 5-point Likert scale ranging from '1- Not at all characteristics of me' to '5- Very characteristics of me'. The maximum possible score is 175 and the minimum being 35. Relationship Structure (ECR-RS) questionnaire. The scale was constructed and standardized by R. C. Fraley, N. G. Waller, & K. A. Brennan, in 2011. It was designed to assess attachment dimensions in multiple contexts. It is a self-report instrument and consists of 9 items to with respect to four targets i.e. father, mother, best friend and romantic partner. It has a 7-point Likert scale ranging from '1- Strongly disagree' to '7- Strongly agree'. Procedure. Young adults in the age range of 20-40 were approached for obtaining participants for the study through online platform. They were sent the link of Google form and informed consent of the participants was taken. Participants meeting the criterion for inclusion were briefed regarding the study and their socio demographic details was collected. Instructions for the age appropriate questionnaire was given to the participants and the duly filled questionnaires was collected. The data was entered in SPSS, descriptive statistics was analysed and kurtosis and skewness was calculated. The statistical technique used was two-way ANOVA, done twice. Analysis of variance is a technique to test the overall difference among the two-sample means. Informed consent was taken from each participant of the study. Consent was prepared for this purpose. Participants were assured of confidentiality of data. The data obtained for this study was used solely for academic purposes.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present research studies the influence of school residential status on Attachment and fear of intimacy among young adults. the sample consisted of 120 Indian young adults and two-way ANOVA was used for the analysis. The following are the results of the same.

Table 1

*Test of between-subject school residential effects*

Dependent Variable	Source	df	F	Sig.
ECR-RS	Type of schooling	1	3.780	0.055
FIS	Type of Schooling	1	0.004	0.947

*Note.* ECR-RS= Relationship Structure.

FIS= Fear of Intimacy Scale

The first objective of the study was to study the influence of school residential status on attachment among Young adults. The proposed hypothesis was that there will be significant influence of school residential status on Attachment among young adults. Results indicate that, there is a significant difference on attachment among young adults who went to boarding and young adults who were day scholars. In other words 'the Influence of school residential status on attachment is significant at 0.05 level of significance.

However, the second objective of the study was to study the influence of school residential status on intimacy among young adults. The corresponding hypothesis was that there will be significant influence of school residential status on Intimacy among young adults. Two-way ANOVA results for the same showed that there is no significant difference on intimacy among young adults who went to boarding and young adults who were day scholars.

Table 2

*Test of between-subject gender effects*

Dependent Variable	Source	df	F	Sig.
ECR-RS	Gender	1	9.129	0.003
FIS	Gender	1	4.521	0.036

*Note.* ECR-RS= Relationship Structure.

FIS= Fear of Intimacy Scale

The third objective of the study was to study the influence of gender on attachment among young adults. The corresponding hypothesis was that there will be significant influence of gender on attachment among young adults. The results of two-way ANOVA carried out to test the stated objective and hypothesis showed that there is significant difference on attachment between males and females. In other words, the influence of gender on attachment is significant at 0.05 and 0.01 level of significance.

However, the fourth objective was to study the influence of gender on intimacy among young adults. The corresponding hypothesis was that there will be

significant influence of gender on Intimacy among young adults. Two-way ANOVA results for the same showed that there is no significant difference on intimacy among males and females. In other words the influence of school residential status on intimacy is insignificant at 0.05 level of significance.

Table 8

*Test of between-subject interaction effects*

Dependent Variable	Source	df	F	Sig.
ECR-RS	Gender*Type of schooling	1	3.296	0.073
FIS	Gender*Type of Schooling	1	0.832	0.364

*Note.* ECR-RS= Relationship Structure.

FIS= Fear of Intimacy Scale

The fifth objective of the study was the interaction effect of School residential status and gender on attachment among young adults. The corresponding hypothesis was there will be significant interaction effect of school residential status on Attachment and intimacy among young adults. The interaction effect of school residential status and gender on attachment is insignificant at 0.05 level of significance, thus rejecting the fifth hypothesis.

The sixth objective of the study was the interaction effect of School residential status and gender on intimacy among young adults. The corresponding hypothesis was there will be significant interaction effect of school residential status and gender on Intimacy among young adults. The interaction effect of school residential status and gender on intimacy is insignificant at 0.05 level of significance, thus rejecting the sixth hypothesis.

#### FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The research intended to study the influence of school residential study on attachment and intimacy among young adults. By using the Relationship structure (ECR-RS) questionnaire we were able assess the influence of school residential status and gender on attachment. Incorporating the Fear of intimacy (FIS) scale, we were able to assess the influence of school residential status on intimacy among young adults. Previous studies indicate that the scales used are highly reliable. Overall, the research indicates that there is significant influence of school residential status and gender on attachment among adults but not

significant influence on intimacy. The findings also show that there is no interaction effect of school residential status and gender on attachment and intimacy.

#### LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Some limitations of the present study include the limited sample size. A large sample could not be recruited due to restricted mode of communication i.e. online mode. The unequal distribution of the collected sample, 79% of it falling in the range of 20-24 and no participant belonging to the age range of 35-40 limited the scope of the study. Therefore, the results of the study are not accurate representation of the sample falling in the range of 25-40 years. Another limitation is the study being retrospective in nature that includes forgetfulness bias i.e. they might ignore or forget some of the potential confounding factors of the past. The retrospective nature of the study also affects the interpretation of the study.

#### SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

There is wide scope for the above research. Future studies could replicate this study and use a voluntary sample, instead of a convenience sample, to avoid misrepresentation. A large sample size could be utilized to gain accurate insights with equal representation of sample in the range of 20-40 years. Domains such as attachment style and variables such as loneliness, level of trust, depression, anxiety and personality can also be studied to find the deep understanding of impact of abandonment of children of young age when sent to boarding school. These findings can be very useful in understanding the prolonged effect of childhood abandonment issues in adulthood leading to various mental health issues.

#### CONCLUSION

For centuries, boarding school has been a significant feature of education systems. A sudden and irrevocable loss of primary attachments which may lead to a significant trauma experienced by children sent to boarding school at a young age. Existing studies suggests that the negative and traumatic experiences of the children sent to boarding at an early stage may cause trouble in the establishment of new relationships in the later stages of life. The aim of the

study The Influence of School Residential Status on Attachment and Intimacy among Young Adults. To achieve the same, data was collected from 100 young adults belonging to the age group of 20-40 years using snowball and convenience sampling method. The sample consisted of unmarried young adults who did their schooling either from boarding or were day scholars. Further to obtain the data The Relationship structure (ECR-RS) questionnaire and the fear of Intimacy scale (FIS) were administered to the participants along with a form specifying socio-demographic details. The collected data was then analysed using the two-way ANOVA test. The results of the study indicate that there is significant influence of school residential status and gender on attachment among adults but not significant influence on intimacy. The findings also show that there is no interaction effect of school residential status and gender on attachment and intimacy.

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