ATTACHMENT, GENDER AND THE TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP

TEACHER ATTACHMENT STYLE, STUDENTS' GENDER AND PERCEIVED

QUALITY OF

TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP

by

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Children's school performance and socioemotional development is influenced by classroom climate and particularly emotional support offered by teachers. Also, boys and girls socialize differentially which suggests that students' gender may play a role in how teachers relate to them. One theoretical model that could shed more light on the implications of teacher-student interactions is attachment theory. Hence, the current study aimed to explore the association between teachers' attachment style and the teacher-student relationship along with the impact of gender differences on how teachers relate to students. Students' gender was investigated in terms of its potential effect on teacher attachment orientation too. The study employed three main instruments: the Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised Questionnaire (ECR-R)

was used to measure attachment style, the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale - short form (STRS) was administered twice to assess gender differences while the modified version of the same survey was used to evaluate classroom climate. Using correlation analysis, paired t-tests and MANOVA procedures, results indicated that teachers with higher levels of attachment-related anxiety perceived higher levels of conflict existing in their classrooms. Additionally, consistent with previous research, teachers were shown to have a more conflictual relationship with boys than with girls. Finally, differences in how securely attached teachers relate to male and female students compared to insecurely attached teachers were not found to be significant. Implications for future studies and clinical practice are discussed too.

Keywords; attachment theory, attachment style/ orientation, teacher-student relationship, gender differences

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Chapter One

Introduction

While at the London Child Guidance Clinic, John Bowlby studied a number of cases involving child delinquents who experienced difficulty in forming intimate relationships to others. His findings indicated that the children's family histories included serious disruptions such as maternal separation before the age of five. Based on these observations, he concluded that the quality of the parent-child relationship in the early years of life serves a fundamental role in the child's future mental health; and that disruptions in the provision of parental care can impact behavior profoundly both in the immediate and the distant future (Bowlby, 1944; Fraley & Shaver, 2008). In later seminal work, Bowlby (1952, 1958, 1969/1982b, 1982a) undertook, among other things, the study of 'maternal deprivation' which refers to the absence of a warm, close and continuous relationship with one's own mother. However, maternal deprivation did not present itself only in the physical separation of the mother and the child but in the lack of the loving care a young individual needs to receive at home. In congruence with his first findings, such deprivation could hinder typical personality development and the ability to form relationships (Bowlby, 1952).

In order to fully understand the importance of one's early life social experiences in human development, Bowlby reviewed the corpus of theory of different disciplines and perspectives. He studied the literature on psychodynamic theory (Freud 1940, 1965), ethology (Harlow & Zimmermann, 1959; Hinde,1966; Lorenz 1935), cognitive psychology (Piaget, 1953), and control systems theory (Craik 1943; Young, 1964). Thus, 'Attachment theory' was the resulting theoretical

framework that emerged by converging findings from all the above domains (Bowlby 1958, 1969/1982b, 1973, 1980, 1982a).

Attachment Behavioral System and Attachment Behaviors

Two major concepts, proposed by Bowlby (1958, 1969/1982b) and Ainsworth (1964, 1967, 1969; Ainsworth & Wittig; 1969; Ainsworth & Bell, 1970), that define Attachment theory are *attachment behaviors* and the *attachment behavioral system.* Attachment behaviors are behaviors that seek to establish proximity and contact with an attachment figure (an individual that supports, protects and cares for the child) (Ainsworth, 1969; Ainsworth & Wittig; 1969; Fraley & Shaver, 2008). Even though they are unable to differentially direct them to a specific person initially, a very young infant exhibits proximity-promoting behaviors in the form of crying, sucking, rooting and smiling. Other such behaviors that emerge in later development through interactions between the mother and the infant include following, clinging, and calling. When attachment behaviors are discriminately aimed at the mother, it can be said that the infant has become attached to her (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970). In accordance with the ethological and evolutionary theory, attachment behaviors are adaptive responses that occur upon separation from the attachment figure in order to reestablish proximity. Bowlby (1958, 1969/1982b) postulated that an infant could secure higher chances of survival through engaging in attachment behaviors if they remained in close proximity to an attachment figure.

Consequently, still in an evolutionary and ethological perspective, natural selection favoured the development of the attachment behavioral system (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970; Bowlby 1958, 1969/1982b; Draper & Beisky, 1990; Fraley & Shaver, 2008). The attachment system can be described as an affectional tie between two

persons or animals that connects them in space and is long-lasting (Bowlby 1958, 1969/1982b, 1982a). The system tries to achieve and maintain proximity either physically or by establishing communication even across distance. It is important to note that the development of attachment does not rely primarily on drive reduction (Bowlby, 1969/1982b; Ainsworth, 1969). The utmost goal of the attachment system is to increase an individual's level of felt security, i.e. provide them with a sense that the world is safe and reassure them that protection will be available when needed so that exploration of the world can occur unobtrusively and without fear (Bowlby, 1969/1982b; Sroufe & Waters, 1977). As Ainsworth (1969) clearly states, attachment could be used as another word for love.

Additionally, though attachment behaviors may become heightened or diminished depending on the circumstances, the attachment behavioral system endures over time even in unfavorable situations (Bowlby, 1969/1982b, 1982a; Ainsworth, 1969). Hence, the infant-caretaker attachment has been seen as serving important biological functions that support the survival of the species. The fact that the defenseless infant requires protection and support in times of need from the attachment figure in order to safely reach a reproductive age led researchers to infer that the genetic code promotes infant behaviors that will develop a physically and emotionally close infant-mother relationship (Ainsworth, 1969; Ainsworth & Bell, 1970; Draper & Beisky, 1990; Fraley & Shaver, 2008; Schaffer & Emerson, 1964; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2008).

Attachment behavior develops in four main phases (Ainsworth, 1969; Bowlby, 1952, 1969/1982b). The first one involves the child orienting itself to anyone close to it along with tracking them visually, grasping, smiling, turning their head and reaching to them indiscriminately. Simultaneously, the infant appears to be biased

toward responding to human stimuli, such as the human voice, more readily, looking at objects that move and approaching the familiar but later avoid the strange. During the second phase, orientation and signaling is directed to at least one distinct figure. The same amicable behavior from phase one continues here as well but crying upon maternal separation, smiling, vocalization, and greeting responses are displayed differentially and more markedly toward the infant's mother. In the third phase, which is characterized by proximity maintenance to a discriminated figure, attachment is highly evident; due to advances in locomotion, the infant approaches, clings, follows and climbs upon the attachment figure differentially. Moreover, the mother can now be used as a secure base for further exploration of the world; the baby's comportment is partly shaped by expecting its mother's behavior (Ainsworth, 1964, 1967, 1993). In the fourth phase, a reciprocal relationship has been developed. The child gradually realizes their mother's behavior and actions and attempts to alter them to better suit their own. Thus, the responsibility for proximity maintenance no longer burdens the mother solely; it is maintained equally by both parts.

When a threat is detected, whether real or symbolic, the attachment behavioral system becomes activated so that the child will seek to restore proximity to an attachment figure (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2008). The primary strategies of the attachment system will be used first (Main & Solomon, 1990); they include all of the attachment behaviors described previously and will continue to emerge until security is reestablished, and hence the system will be 'switched off'. If primary attachment strategies do not succeed in bringing the child close to the parent, distress and insecurity are confronted with secondary attachment strategies (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Cassidy & Kobak, 1988; Main &Solomon, 1990). These can be expressed as hyperactivation or deactivation. During the former, proximity-seeking bids are

increased for attention, support and protection to be provided even forcibly; the objective is for the attachment figure to become more consistent in their provision of care. In deactivation, which has been characterized as 'compulsive self-reliance' (Bowlby, 1969/1982b), the child attempts to avoid or reduce the pain caused by insensitive parents who appear to disapprove closeness and vulnerability.

Internal Working Models

Another essential element in Bowlby's theory is that of internal working models which was greatly influenced by Piaget's schema theory (Fraley & Shaver, 2008) and the control systems approach (Young, 1964). In 'Attachment and Loss', Bowlby (1969/1982b) first discussed the idea of a cognitive map that animals must have in order to survive. This map entailed information about the environment surrounding an individual as well as their own skills and capabilities. However, because the term was likely to allude only to a static topographical knowledge of the world and one's self, it was later replaced by the term 'working model'. In fact, the working models are two; one which is referred to as environmental model and the other as organismic. Such models, found in the brain, undertake the transmission, storage and manipulation of useful information that will facilitate making predictions about how to achieve one's goals (concerning attachment). Furthermore, a working model needs to be built according to data available in the environment, cover both already experienced and potential realities, possess accurate representations of one's world so that predictions will be accurate too, and be elaborate enough in order for a great number of possible future situations to be included. It is crucial that both models are kept updated. Only small and gradual changes are required although significant changes in the environment (such as marriage, the birth of an offspring or the loss of a loved one) may necessitate greater modifications.

Focusing particularly on the child-caretaker relationship, working models of attachment, or internal representations, have been used to describe the process by which children internalize experiences with primary attachment figures in such a manner that attachment relations early on in life become the prototype for future relationships beside the familial ones (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Bowlby, 1973; Brumbaugh & Fraley, 2006). In this context, the environmental working model mentioned above refers to the image a child creates for other people whereas the organismic one is concerned with the image of the self. Working models are shaped by conscious and unconscious elements and are immensely affected by the quality of the interactions with one's caretakers (Birmingham et al., 2017; Collins & Read, 1994; Fraley & Shaver, 2008; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2008). The attachment system is designed to fit all of the caretakers' characteristic behaviors so that solid expectations and reactions in these specific relationships can be formed.

Bowlby (1973) postulated that the degree of availability, responsiveness and sensitivity a caretaker will exhibit when the child is in times of need can influence the variability found in working models, and thus in the way the attachment system functions. Therefore, when one's attempts in establishing proximity and finding support are met by an available, sensitive and responsive attachment figure, then the child experiences security and their proximity-seeking efforts will increase. Nonetheless, when such attempts encounter unavailability, impassivity and indifference, security is not felt and proximity seeking cannot be viewed as a strategy to regulate distress. On the contrary, attachment-related doubts concerning trust may emerge (Fraley & Shaver, 2008; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2008).

By virtue of the fact that the child will have a very high number of interactions with their attachment figures, there can be numerous episodic representations of

others and the self that will vary depending on whether security was attained or not and which secondary attachment strategy was used to combat insecurity (Bosmans et al., 2018; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2008). Cognitive development and experience facilitate the formation of broader and more abstract representations with attachment figures. Eventually, generalized working models are created to illustrate relationships overall. Thus, there appears to be a hierarchical structure of working models (Overall et al., 2003; Sibley & Overall, 2008). The more accessible model will be the one that has been experienced more frequently in the past and has become the more representative one; it is this model that provides knowledge about intimate relationships, social interactions and regulation of negative emotions (Bowlby, 1973).

Infant Attachment Styles

Despite Bowlby being thought of as the founder of Attachment theory, Ainsworth also contributed immeasurably to the development of the concept with the introduction of the laboratory-based Strange Situation Procedure (SSP), which measures children attachment in the parent-child relationship, becoming one of her most significant contributions (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Van Rosmalen et al., 2015). In the Strange Situation (Ainsworth & Wittig, 1969; Ainsworth et al., 1978), 12-to-18-months-old infants and their parents were invited to the laboratory and through the course of eight scripted episodes they were continually separated and reunited while a stranger was present when the parent was absent. The idea was that the unfamiliar environment, the stranger and the departure of the caregiver would prompt stress and elicit attachment behavior from the children. The majority of children exhibited distress upon separation with the parent, but were actively searching for them when they returned and were easily comforted by them. These children were classified as *secure*. The second pattern that emerged involved children that appeared

uncomfortable at first and became intensely upset when the parent left the room; they were not easily soothed when the parent reappeared and showed both a desire to be comforted but "punish" the parent too. This category of children was defined as *insecure ambivalent/ resistant*. The third classification was termed *insecure avoidant*. Low levels of distress upon separation with the attachment figure and avoidance of contact with the parent once reunited were displayed by avoidant children (Fraley & Shaver, 2008; Van Rosmalen et al., 2015).

Ainsworth's research (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970; Ainsworth et al., 1978; Ainsworth & Wittig, 1969) produced empirical evidence for Bowlby's theory of how attachment behavior presents itself in patterns both in safe and novel situations (Fraley & Shaver, 2008). The differences between the three types of attachment outlined above were predicted by the interactions between caretakers and infants in their first year of life (Ainsworth et al., 1978). For example, securely attached children were more likely to have responsive and sensitive parents while insecure ambivalent/ resistant and insecure avoidant children tended to be cared for by parents who were insensitive, inconsistent or even rejecting to their children's needs (Birmingham et al., 2017; Draper & Beisky, 1990; Duschinsky, 2015; Grossman et al., 1985; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2008). Bowlby (1969/1982b) placed a strong emphasis on experiencing security in the parent-child relationship since a secure attachment was considered to be the basis for regulating negative emotions, personal growth and mature independence. However, insecurely attached children are unable toconcentrate on developing their skills and capabilities, exploring their surroundings or forming intimate relationships because of a felt lack of support (Bowlby, 1973).

Main and Solomon (1986, 1990) proposed a fourth infant attachment type for the SSP called *disorganized/ disoriented*. These children exhibited conflictual

behaviors in which they both attempted to establish physical proximity and escape the parent or appeared disoriented concerning their surroundings. Such behaviors entailed contradictory affective states, apparent apprehension towards the caregiver, stereotypic or misdirected motions and even dissociation. Those placed in this category receive a second placement in one of the rest three classifications because the disorganized behavior happens only for a short amount of time and along with other reactions typically found in the other three categories (Duschinsky, 2015; Steven Rholes et al., 2016). Research examining parental behavior of disorganized children suggested that frightened and frightening parenting (Main & Hesse, 1990; Van Ijzendoorn et al., 1999) as well as helpless, withdrawing (Duschinsky, 2015; Lyons-Ruth et al., 2013) and dissociative (Abrams et al., 2006) caregiver attitudes were associated with the disorganized/ disoriented attachment type. Also, Cicchetti and Barnett (1991) and Van Ijzendoorn et al. (1999) found a strong link between the disorganized/ disoriented attachment classification and parental abuse or neglect.

Measures of Adult Attachment

Even though the infant-parent relationship was Bowlby's predominant concern, he (Bowlby, 1969/1982b) proposed that attachment influences the human experience from 'the cradle to the grave'. In a subsequent publication, he purported that despite its significance in early life, the attachment system remains active throughout human life and characterizes one's proximity-seeking thoughts and behaviors when in need (Bowlby, 1988). During the 1980's, researchers gradually became more interested in exploring how attachment may manifest beyond infancy or childhood and a number of new measures exploring attachment in adolescence and adulthood emerged (Fraley & Shaver, 2008; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2008).

Following the developmental research tradition, the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) was constructed so that adolescents' and adults' internal working models that evolved based on their experiences with parents would be studied (George et al., 1984; Main et al., 1985). The hour-long interview entailed questions about the participants' childhood and produced transcripts that were used to categorize them in three distinct classifications that corresponded to the initial patterns Ainsworth devised: *secure* or *autonomous*, *dismissing* (of attachment), *preoccupied* (with attachment). A secure or autonomous individual would describe their parents as available and responsive and/ or would be able to clearly and coherently recall memories, though negative, with the parents. A dismissing person would minimize the significance of relationships and would remember only a few certain experiences with parents. Finally, individuals classified as preoccupied would exhibit extreme concern about relational uncertainty and hold negative memories which would be recalled with anxiety or anger (Main et al., 2008). It is worthy to note that one's AAI classification can predict their child's attachment type in the SSP which further suggests that attachment dynamics can be intergenerationally transmitted while genetics play only a limited role in this transmission (Behrens et al., 2016; Main et al., 2008; O'Connor, 2005; Raby et al., 2013; Roisman et al., 2007; Verhage et al, 2016).

The attachment system and classifications that Bowlby and Ainsworth had extensively examined were also researched by social and personality psychology researchers in the context of romantic relationships (Fraley & Shaver, 2008; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2008). Hazan and Shaver (1987) were among the first to apply attachment theory in this type of adult relationships. Participants were distributed three short descriptions of behaviors and feelings found in intimate partnerships that required

them to evaluate their most significant romantic relationships; the descriptions were similar to the Ainsworth infant attachment patterns. Hazan and Shaver (1987) theorized that, as with the parent-child relationship, romantic relationships are attachments as well; romantic love serves a biological purpose to promote attachment in an adult sexual relationship that is likely to produce an infant who would be in needof trustworthy care. Interestingly, they concluded that attachment continuity is not necessarily the rule and continuity of the attachment system between childhood and adulthood is subject to change due to experience (such as friendships and love relationships) that allow for revision of internal working models (Bowlby, 1969/1982b). Although there have been scholars that support the stability of attachment styles across time (Fraley, 2002; Waters et al., 2000a, 2000b), change in attachment has been maintained by others (Birmingham et al., 2017; Dansby Olufowote et al., 2019; Johnson, 2004; Marmarosh & Tasca, 2013).

Gradually, the measurement and conceptualization of attachment patterns shifted from categorical to dimensional (Fraley & Shaver, 2008; Riley, 2010; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2008). Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) developed a new model based on a four cell matrix that conceptualized attachment types in a two-dimensional space: anxiety of close relationships and avoidance of intimacy. By using both interviews and self-reports, participants were categorized in one of the following four classifications: *secure* (low anxiety and low avoidance), *anxious-preoccupied* (high anxiety and low avoidance), *dismissive-avoidant* (low anxiety and high avoidance), *fearful-avoidant* (high anxiety and high avoidance). Furthermore, the horizontal anxiety axis was overlaid with positive and negative thoughts about the self and the vertical avoidance axis with positive and negative thoughts of others. Another study that expanded the conceptualization of attachment measurement in dimensions was

conducted by Brennan et al (1998). Responses on a great number of attachment- related statements indicated that there are two principal attachment-style dimensions: attachment-related anxiety and attachment-related avoidance. High scores on the former involved people who were preoccupied with their partner's availability, attentiveness, and responsiveness and resorted to hyperactivating affect-regulation strategies to cope with distress. On the contrary, a high score on the latter suggested that people preferred to be self-reliant, avoided showing vulnerability to others and used deactivating attachment strategies. A securely-attached adult would score low on both dimensions (i.e., they would feel less worried about their partner's availability and be more comfortable with intimacy).

A well-established two dimensional scale is the Experiences in Close Relationships (ECR) scale developed by Brennan et al (1998) along with the Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised (ECR-R), a revised version of the ECR devised by Fraley et al (2000) (Fraley & Shaver, 2008). Both instruments are self-reports that provide scores of romantic attachment on avoidance and anxiety and have been shown to be reliable and valid (Crowell et al., 1995; Sibley et al., 2005). Such improvements of self-report measures further encouraged the reconceptualization of attachment styles within a continuous model in which behaviors are influenced by attachment patterns and circumstances (Fraley & Spieker, 2003; Fraley et al., 2000; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Riley, 2010).

Teacher Attachment

Since the attachment behavioral system accompanies humans throughout their lives (Bowlby, 1988), it is reasonable to think that people will continue to search for a certain type of care from others even as adults, such as through a romantic

relationship (Riley, 2009). Most research on adult attachment has been focused on romantic partnerships (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Fraley et al., 2015; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Holland et al., 2012; Möller et al., 2006; Riley, 2009; Weisskirch & Delevi, 2011). Over the years, adult attachment has been researched in the context of the workplace (Richards & Schat, 2011; Scrima et al., 2015; Scrima et al., 2017), religion and spirituality (Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2008; Jankowski & Sandage, 2014; Sandage et al., 2015), body image and eating pathology (DeVille et al., 2015; Forsén Mantilla et al., 2018; Powell et al., 2018; Ty & Francis, 2013) and sports (Dizdari & Seiler, 2020; Levental et al., 2021) among others. Another major area that attachment theory has expanded into is education and the teacher-student relationship (Kesner, 2000; Lifshin et al., 2020; Riley, 2009, 2010; Sher-Censor et al., 2019).

As Bowlby (1982b) himself had stated, the most important adult in a child's life, besides their parents, is the child's teacher. Students expect their teachers to function as a predictable secure base that will facilitate learning and exploration of the world; in this sense, the teacher may function as a caregiver and the students as care seekers (Bosmans et al., 2018; Lifshin et al., 2020; Riley, 2009, 2010). Research has shown that teachers may serve as provisional attachment figures at school but studentsdo not necessarily form attachment bonds to their teachers (Bosmans et al., 2018; Dewitte et al., 2019; Schuengel, 2012; Verschueren & Koomen, 2012). An attachmentbond can be defined as a long-lasting connection between two individuals both of whom consider each other unique and interchangeable with no one else (Ainsworth, 1989). The teacher-student relationship hardly fits this definition; it is not exclusive orenduring (or as exclusive and enduring as between parents and their children) because students change teachers every school year depending on the educational system and are obliged to share the teacher with their fellow classmates. Additionally, middle and

high school students come into contact with a number of teachers every day (Kesner, 2000; Verschueren & Koomen, 2012). Also, even though educators are likely to act as caregivers and invest emotionally in their relationships with the students, these aspects of their profession are limited and the predominant role is instructional (Howes & Hamilton, 1992; Kesner, 2000). If an attachment bond is to be finally developed, that will depend on various factors such as the child's age and vulnerability; younger and more vulnerable children tend to have their attachment system activated more easily and possess reduced self-regulation abilities requiring adult help which will promote growth and survival (Bosmans et al., 2018; Verschueren & Koomen, 2012).

Even though the teacher-student pair may not necessarily involve an attachment of the student to the teacher, the latter still needs the former in order to build and maintain their professional identity (Riley, 2009, 2010). The dyad is a complex one because of the unequal sharing of power in favor of the teacher from a legal perspective. However, the student can obtain a great amount of power as well because the learning identity of the student can continue to exist even in the absence of an educator while the opposite is not true. In fact, one of the primary aims of a teacher is to render themselves unnecessary by producing independent students who can grow and evolve on their own; this responsibility implies a future separation from the child which may be hard to espouse. As a result, the teacher may become the care seeker while children in the classroom may assume the role of the caregiver (Riley, 2009, 2010).

In light of the uniqueness of the teacher-student dyad, attachment-oriented research has highlighted the importance of the affective characteristics of the teacher-student relationship such as teacher sensitivity and responsiveness (Schuengel, 2012;

Verschueren & Koomen, 2012). More specifically, the internal working models of a teacher in relation to individual students can shape the quality of their relationship due to their effect on the behavioral sensitivity a teacher will exhibit toward the child (Split et al., 2012; Verschueren & Koomen, 2012). In other words, teachers' attachment to their students may influence how they relate to them emotionally as well as reflect their own developmental attachments (Riley, 2010). This could be partially supported by drawing a parallel to research conducted on psychotherapists' attachment styles and their relationship with their patients (Sher-Censor et al., 2019). A therapist's attachment orientation, past experiences with their caregivers and self- awareness have been displayed to be correlated to their attunement to clients which in turn affects the therapeutic process and outcomes immensely (Peter & Böbel, 2020). Furthermore, the quality of the therapeutic relationship (as rated by clients), levels of empathy and negative countertransference were influenced by the therapist's attachment style (Steel et al., 2018). The following paragraphs of this section will be areview of studies on teachers' adult attachment patterns and classroom climate.

A study conducted by Man and Hamid (1998) on Chinese pre-service teachers' adult attachment style indicated that teachers with a preoccupied, dismissing and fearful attachment orientation exhibit lower levels of self-esteem than securely attached individuals. When teachers were introduced to hypothetical classroom situations, their attachment pattern was related to causal attributions of events in terms of internality, stability, and globality dimensions. Moreover, teachers with a secure attachment showed an enhanced ability to assess both negative and positive elements of the classroom climate, and were more objective when evaluating teacher failure while the ones with an insecure attachment tended to minimize classroom failure and did not consider teachers responsible for it. Another attachment style study examined

the attachment history of pre-service teachers in relation to the student-teacher relationship (Kesner, 2000). In this study, the focus shifted from a categorical model to measuring attachment history based on recollections of past experiences with attachment figures in terms of separations, threatened separations, discipline, parent-child interactions and relationship with peers. Relationship with students was assessed in terms of conflict, closeness and dependency. Findings indicated that teachers who disclosed more positive perceived attachment history with their parents reported developing secure relationships to their students more frequently; also, teachers' childhood memories of less punitive parental discipline were correlated with higher levels of perceived closeness in their relationship with their students.

Ripski and his colleagues (2011) investigated the association between adult attachment style of pre-service teachers and the quality of their interactions with students. Attachment orientation was assessed in terms of four subscales (secure, preoccupied, dismissive, fearful) while classroom climate was observed through the lens of teacher sensitivity, behavior management, appreciation of student input and student engagement among others. They concluded that adult attachment patterns were not predictive of pre-service teachers' interactions with their students. They hypothesized that the professional training teachers were receiving at that time may have been hiding their personality characteristics including attachment. Conversely, Sher-Censor et al. (2019) examined how special education teachers and their attachment style may be associated with the provision of emotional support in the classroom. Adult attachment orientation was evaluated in terms of the degree of anxiety and avoidance a teacher would report while emotional support was measured in the same way Ripski et al. (2011) assessed classroom climate. The findings of this study suggested that avoidance was correlated with lower levels of positive climate

and teacher sensitivity towards students' needs and mood whereas the association between anxiety and less positive classroom climate was only slightly significant. Finally, another teacher attachment style study explored the link between teachers' attachment and the teacher-child relationship (Lifshin et al., 2020). Adult attachment was measured on the continuum of anxiety and avoidance while children's attachment was evaluated in light of the child's perceptions on maternal responsiveness, availability, reliability and communication. In this study, it was the students who assessed teacher responsiveness. Lifshin et al. (2020) proposed that teacher avoidance was associated with students' perceptions of their teacher as less responsive while teacher anxiety did not imply less responsive caring in the classroom though it did cultivate school avoidance.

The Teacher-Student Relationship

As was discussed earlier in this paper, children will not necessarily form an attachment bond to their teachers because of the mostly instructional nature of the relationship and other contextual factors. Still, if the teacher-student dyad involves an emotionally supportive educator, this relationship can have a significant impact on the child's development (Brock & Curby, 2016; Jensen et al., 2019; Koomen & Jellesma, 2017; Mason et al., 2017; Ruzek et al., 2016). Emotionally supportive teachers are typically described as warm and caring, attentive and appropriately responsive to the emotional needs of their students along with showing sincere interest in the students' perceptions (Jensen et al., 2019; Ruzek et al., 2016). By virtue of the fact that classroom climate is subject to fluctuations, two important aspects of the classroom setting are the extent and the consistency with which emotional support is provided (Brock & Curby, 2016). A close teacher-child relationship along with providing emotional support steadily and continuously helps students predict future interactions

with the teacher, endorses social competence, enhances school performance (Curby et al., 2013), decreases teacher victimization and enhances attendance (Harvey et al., 2012). In addition to these, increased classroom emotional support has been shown to strengthen self-regulation, prosocial behaviors and academic skills (Hamre, 2014), and predict higher motivation and engagement in middle school classrooms (Ruzek et al., 2016). Also, teachers themselves appear to recognize that a strong and solid relationship with learners as well as consistent emotional effort from their part and student reciprocity are crucial to student's learning (Fitzsimmons et al., 2021).

During the 1990s and in the following decades, the teacher-student dyad started being researched primarily by assessing the relationship as perceived by teachers (Timmermans et al., 2019). More specifically, since the study of Pianta et al. (1995), a new type of classroom climate measurement dominated relevant literature, which is called the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS; Pianta, 1992, 2001). This is a teacher rating scale which has been utilized extensively in preschool and primary education settings (Koomen et al., 2012; Verschueren, 2015). STRS has been constructed on the following three domains that derive from previous attachment research: closeness, conflict and dependency. Closeness involves the warm and positive feelings the teacher and the student share as well as the trust the student experiences in approaching their teacher. Conflict represents the lack of mutual support in the teacher-student partnership while dependency refers to an excessive reliance of the student on the teacher (Koomen & Jellesma, 2017).

Based on this measure, it has been established that a perceived higher degree of closeness is correlated with greater student psychosocial adjustment and cognitive processing, enhanced attitude towards task completion, improved mathematics and language performance, popularity with classmates, and less withdrawal, aggression,

or hyperactivity (Ahnert et al., 2013; Birch & Ladd, 1997; Buyse et al., 2009; O'Connor et al., 2011; Palermo et al., 2007; Thijs et al., 2012). However, associations between greater levels of conflict and reduced classroom participation, lower grades in language and mathematics, limited prosocial behaviors, more aggressive, disruptive and hyperactive behaviors along with discipline issues were identified (Birch & Ladd, 1997, 1998; Lee & Bierman, 2018; Palermo et al., 2007; Pianta et al., 1995; Thijs et al., 2012). In congruence with results on conflict, perceived dependency detected in high levels in the classroom has been associated with less positive attitudes towards school, less prosocial behavior, more withdrawal and loneliness, along with an increased degree of aggression and hyperactivity (Birch & Ladd, 1997, 1998; Palermo et al., 2007; Thijs et al., 2012).

In a recent longitudinal study, Mason et al. (2017) investigated the association between the quality of the teacher-student relationship (TSRQ) and academic achievement of students. They found TSQR could predict school achievement (namely in math and reading) and that math and reading achievement could predict future changes in TSQR, especially in the case of low achievers. Such findings have been supported by previous literature too. When students feel taken care of and appreciated, they will be more engaged in the learning process (Battistich et al., 1997) and especially low achieving learners' academic pathways can be predicted by TSQR (Roorda et al., 2011). Interestingly, another study demonstrated that low school performance upon school entry predicted higher levels of conflict with the teacher whereas school achievement was correlated with increased student-teacher closeness (Jerome et al., 2009). Thus, there is strong evidence that there may be a reciprocal relationship between the two variables (Mason et al., 2017). The above results

accentuate the importance of good rapport between students and teachers in students' academic trajectories.

For good rapport to be built, Hagenauer et al. (2015) support that teachers' emotions are a crucial factor in the equation too. The same researchers claim that teachers' interactions with their students can provoke strong positive and negative feelings and O'Connor's (2006) study indicated that teachers' accounts of intense emotional experiences in their teaching career were the result of their interactions with students. Further research has shown that teachers' positive emotions, such as delight and satisfaction, are highly correlated with certain students' behaviors like a breakthrough in the learning process or expressing appreciation of teacher's help (Hargreaves, 2000). On the contrary, Chang (2013) demonstrated that negative feelings, such as anger and irritation, were often associated with students' misbehavior or poor discipline which can impact teachers' enthusiasm (Kunter et al., 2011). The above point to the realization that there is a strong relation between positive teacher-student relationship, students' behavior and teacher emotions. Thus, the formulation of amicable teacher-student relationships can impact a teacher's well-being which will probably induce students' positive feelings, well-being and their learning process too (Hagenauer et al., 2015).

Another recent study by Hajovsky et al. (2017) utilized the STRS (Pianta, 1992) to examine the longitudinal reciprocity between TSQR and school achievement across both sexes. More specifically, they explored the reciprocal relationship between closeness and conflict while also measuring reading and math achievement in elementary school. Their findings indicated that latent closeness decreased for both boys and girls over time though more so for boys, while latent conflict remained higher for boys than for girls but remained generally stable for male and female

students. Additionally, it was found that math achievement had an impact on TSQR whereas there were not any such findings for reading. The study concludes that students' current level of performance can significantly influence teacher-student relationships.

Gender Differences in the Classroom

Even though boys and girls are formally provided with the same academic opportunities, gender differences are evident in children's school performance, motivation and career aspirations (Kollmayer et al., 2018). The development, acquisition and internalization of gender roles appear to be a universal process which is called sex typing; all cultures view this phenomenon as a component of typical development and as the fruit of distinct socialization procedures during early life years (Liben & Bigler, 2002; Solbes-Canales et al., 2020). Sex typing can impact one's educational progress and development, their perceived abilities (though they may not reflect their real abilities), and their personal and professional goals and ambitions (Kollmayer et al., 2018). These differences among children lead to the formation of gender stereotypes which postulate that each gender is associated with specific personal characteristics and behaviors (Solbes-Canales et al., 2020). Thus, girls and boys are inclined to behave in accordance with what culture dictates as pertinent to their gender (Bertrand & Gestwicki, 2015; Kollmayer et al., 2018).

The classic debate between nature against nurture is highly relevant in this discussion. Despite the presence of minor biological differences between sexes, exposure to different environmental variables as well as the interaction between human biology and the environment establishes different paths for boys and girls (Liben & Bigler, 2002; Solbes-Canales et al., 2020). Gender differentiation can be

explained through three significant kinds of theories (Liben & Bigler, 2002). The first one supports that true biological differences exist between males and females based on hormones, differences in the brain and sex-linked genes. This approach states that human evolution has led men and women to face distinct adaptive problems and thus natural selection promoted different characteristics for either sex (Beani & Zuk, 2014; Wood & Eagly, 2013). Additionally, culturally mediated and universal values concerning masculinity and femininity may originate from human genetics while genes may have an influence on how sex-typed attributes are constructed (even though the environment has a great impact too) (Iervolino et al., 2005).

The second type of theory emphasizes the importance of the environment in the development of gender roles. This approach advocates that, besides human biology, males and females undergo different socialization and learning procedures that produce gender differences (Liben & Bigler, 2002). Based on learning theories, boys and girls grow up under different environmental experiences in which sex-related behaviors are either reinforced or punished by attachment figures, teachers, peers and equals (Beaman et al., 2006). Furthermore, social learning theories have shown that observation and imitation are processes through which children understand their environment (Bandura et al., 1963). In this context, boys and girls observe what is appropriate for their gender, imitate how people they identify with behave and are attentive to the feedback these responses elicit from the environment through vicarious learning (Endendijk et al., 2018).

Gender constructivism is the third group of theories. In this context, personality development entails the creation of gender identity and roles (Solbes-Canales et al., 2020). Children develop a gender scheme (male and female) which, similar to all schemata, processes and organizes future information based on this

classification; once a child realizes which group they belong to, they start to associate with certain behaviors according to their gender (Halim et al., 2013). From then on, children utilize gender schemes to shape their identity and expect to encounter certain attributes from the people they interact with.

Gender differences in educational environments have been well documented (Bertrand & Gestwicki, 2015; Gansen, 2018; Granger et al., 2016; Jackson, 2007; Kollmayer et al., 2018; Solbes-Canales et al., 2020). In schools, an uneven gender system is propagated time and again because students learn to organize and define gender through teacher-student interactions. Examples of the above include explicit and implicit instructions on how to behave 'properly' according to one's gender along with enforcement of these rules through disciplinary interactions (such as oral reprimands) when gender norms are violated (Bertrand & Gestwicki, 2015; Gansen, 2018). Hence, gender stereotypes are transmitted through a 'hidden curriculum' which involves subtle messages and expectations about subordination and power dynamics depending on the child's gender (and socioeconomic status and ethnicity too) (Solbes-Canales et al., 2020).

Thus, there is evidence to suggest that teacher-student interactions tend to vary with students' sex being the mediator (Jones & Dindia, 2004). It has been reported that boys are responded to, have permission to call out, and are called on more often than girls (Hutchinson & Beadle, 1992; Myhill, 2002). Furthermore, male students tend to receive more teacher attention because they have been shown to misbehave more often than female students, especially in primary school (Brophy & Good, 1974). Conversely, girls have been documented to be less disruptive and as more high achieving than boys (Servoss, 2014; Kollmayer et al., 2018). Interestingly, Kesner (2000) reports higher levels of perceived conflict and lower levels of closeness

between teachers and male students which is congruent with typical teachers' perceptions of boys as more aggressive in nature than girls (Gansen, 2018; Solbes-Canales et al., 2020). In accordance with Kesner's research (2000), studies indicate that teachers perceive their relationship to girls to be warmer and less conflictual than to boys (Baker, 2006; Silver et al., 2005) making it possible that the quality of the teacher-student relationship increases educational benefits for girls while the contrary may be true for boys either temporarily or permanently (Hajovsky et al., 2017).

The Current Study

The above review of the literature indicates that attachment theory is well-founded in the research of various relational conditions that affect both children and adults. Frequently, attachment theory has proved helpful in educational research because it provides insight into the complexity of the dynamics in the classroom. Due to the theory's focus on relational processes and the implications of an emotionally supportive educational setting in learning, the application of attachment theory in education appears to be important. As discussed previously in this paper, attachment orientation is interrelated with the development of an individual's various internal working models which in turn influences the quality of their relationships throughout their lives. Evidence outlined earlier suggests that securely attached teachers are more likely to provide support and compassion to students compared to their insecurely attached counterparts; a warm and sensitive educator plays a significant role in children's cognitive development, as well as school and social adjustment. Additionally, gender differences have been prevalent in social as well as educational contexts; the differentiated treatment boys and girls receive at school from their teachers perpetuates gender stereotypes that have been established even before students enter the school system.

Upon reviewing studies relevant to adult attachment styles and the provision of emotional support to students, it became obvious that research on teachers' attachment orientations and the perceived quality of their interactions with students is important to help refine the understanding of the teacher-student relationship (Sher-Censor et al., 2019). Studies on gender differences in the classroom have indicated the effect of gender socialization in propagating gender stereotypes (Gansen, 2018) such as more conflictual relations and less closeness to boys compared to girls (Kesner, 2000; Baker, 2006; Silver et al., 2005). However, gender differences in the teacher-student interactions are only rarely examined separately for boys and girls (Hajovsky et al., 2017); also, to the investigator's knowledge there have not been any studies exploring how teachers' attachment style may be affected by students' gender. Therefore, this paper will examine the following: teacher attachment styles and their impact on teachers' perceptions of their relationship with students, any differences in how teachers relate to children based on students' gender and how the latter may have an association with teachers' attachment orientation when it comes to teachers having a different relationship with male and female learners.

Considering all the above, the following research questions emerged: a) what is the association between teachers' attachment style and teachers' perceptions of their relationship to students?, b) do teachers relate differentially to boys and girls in their classroom?, and c) does relating differently to boys and girls in one's classroom significantly differ based on teachers' attachment orientation?

Thus, three hypotheses were formulated: a) higher scores in insecure attachment styles, namely in attachment related avoidance and/ or attachment related anxiety, will be associated with lower levels of teachers' perceived closeness and higher levels of perceived conflict with students, b) higher levels of teachers'

perceived closeness will be reported towards female students whereas higher levels of conflict will be perceived with male students, c) teachers with a secure attachment orientation will relate differently in terms of closeness and conflict to boys and to girls in their classroom compared to teachers with an insecure attachment style.

Chapter Two

Method

Participants

To meet the needs of the present study, a convenience sample of 102 participants was recruited. Participants had to be at least 18 years old and currently employed as primary school teachers (secondary, higher education and adult education teachers were not recruited). The selection of elementary school teachers was based on the fact that primary school students are likely to interact with only a certain number of teachers throughout the academic year, and there is more time an individual educator spends with their class. Thus, there are more opportunities for attachment-like bonds to be formed between students and teachers. Employment could be either full time or part time. Additionally, a good command of English was required since the survey was administered in English. There were not any other inclusion criteria; people from any gender, sexual orientation, marital status, level of qualification or teaching experience could participate.

Procedure

Participants were recruited by the researcher of the current study during a period of one month (March - April). They were contacted online, namely by sending an invitation for participation followed by a link with the questionnaire. This invitation was forwarded to teachers employed at the primary school the investigatoris currently doing their internship. A letter of approval from the school principal was provided to the investigator before data collection started as well (see Appendix D). Furthermore, graduate students enrolled at Deree (while simultaneously occupied as elementary school teachers) were emailed too since graduate students are more likely

to be employed than undergraduates. In addition to these, the questionnaire was posted on social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram), a number of Reddit subforums (PrimaryEducationUK, ElementaryTeachers, Specialed, MusicEd, Edpsych, Matheducation, TeacherTales, Arted, SurveyExchange, CSEducation, ScienceTeachers, Samplesize, Primaryteaching, Internationalteachers, IrishTeachers and CanadianTeachers), and by using the SurveySwap platform which allows researchers to find participants by completing other researchers' surveys too. The online invitation included a brief description of the purposes of the study, the inclusion criteria (a reminder of the requirements concerning age and current employment), a short message informing participants that completion of the questionnaire will require approximately 10 minutes, and a web link that will redirect interested parties to an online informed consent form (see Appendix B). Additionally, it was clearly stated that a good command of English is required for the successful completion of the survey. Once participants provided their consent by clicking the 'next' button, a new page containing the questionnaires appeared (see Appendix A). Adebriefing form ensued upon completion of all self-reports (see Appendix C). There was not any collection of personal identifiers that would link provided data to participants. Hence, the online process that was to be applied secured participants' anonymity.

Ethical Considerations

The current research study is an independent and objective attempt at expanding scientific knowledge with quality and integrity. Before any data collection took place, the Institutional Review Board of the American College of Greece reviewed the procedure and the research process was initiated only when approvalwas granted. Furthermore, participants were ensured that the completion of the self-

reports was completely voluntary, any potential withdrawal would not incur any consequences, and that anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed. All of the above were stated clearly in the informed consent and the debriefing form that werebe provided before and after the questionnaire was completed respectively.

Instruments

The first questionnaire that participants were asked to fill in was a demographics one developed by the researcher of the current study (see Appendix A). It involved questions that solicit their gender, age, employment status, highest qualification presently held, teaching experience in years and marital status. Subsequently, four self-report questionnaires followed. The first one assessed teachers' attachment orientation (ECR-R; Fraley et al., 2000) and the next three evaluated how teachers perceived classroom climate in terms of closeness and conflict(STRS; Pianta, 1992, 2001). The first STRS assessed teachers' closeness and conflict with an individual girl from the classroom while the second assessed the same with an individual boy from the same classroom. This was used to test for the second research question about whether teachers relate differently to boys and girls in their classroom. The STRS was also completed for a third time by teachers to examine perceived closeness and conflict in the classroom as a whole (Pianta, 1992, 2001). All instruments were administered in English. A more elaborate description of the above measures follows in the next section.

Teacher Attachment Style

Teacher attachment style was measured by using the *Experiences in Close Relationships - Revised* scale (ECR-R; Fraley et al., 2000). It is a 36 items instrument which measures adult romantic attachment within the dimensions of anxiety and

avoidance. It includes two subscales each of which comprises 18 items. The first subscale evaluates attachment-related anxiety with statements such as "I'm afraid I will lose my partner's love"; the second subscale assesses attachment-related avoidance and includes items such as "I prefer not to show a partner how I feel deep down". All items are measured based on a 7-point Likert type scale within a range of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Participants were asked to select the answer which reflected best how they experience an intimate relationship in general.It was not necessary for them to be in a romantic relationship at the time they complete the scale or focus on a certain relationship when answering the questionnaire. A high score in either subscale would point to higher levels of anxiety or avoidance respectively whereas lower scores on any item would indicate higher attachment security.

The ECR-R is one of the most commonly used instruments in the measurement of adult romantic attachment (Fraley et al., 2000). It is generally recognized as a very reliable tool to be used in the assessment of close relationships as it has been demonstrated to have good psychometric properties and temporal stability (Graham & Unterschute, 2014; Mastrotheodoros et al., 2015; Sibley & Liu, 2004; Sibley et al., 2005). Particularly, it has been shown that there is increased convergent and discriminant validity; high internal consistency with Chronbach's alpha to be $\alpha=$ .93 for the avoidance subscale and $\alpha=$ .94 for the anxiety subscale; and short-term temporal stability in a period of six weeks.

Perceived Teacher-Student Relationship in Different Genders

Teachers' perceptions of their relationship to students were assessed with the *Student-Teacher Relationship Scale* (STRS; Pianta, 2001) which was completed three

times; once it was completed for the whole class, a second time for a boy in class and a third time for a girl, so that the second research question (about whether teachers relate differentially to boys and girls in their classroom) is investigated.   -

      Gender differences. Gender differences were measured using the short from of the STRS (Pianta, 2001). This is a 15 item self-report which estimates specific teacher perceptions of the teacher-student interactions. It is based on a 5-point Likert- type scale ranging from 1 (definitely does not apply) to 5 (definitely applies). It consists of two subscales one of which evaluates closeness and contains eight items while the second one evaluates conflict and comprises seven items. The closeness subscale, which refers to the affectionate side of the relationship, includes statements like "I share an affectionate, warm relationship with this child"; the conflict subscale, which represents the negative aspect of the relationship, contains items like "The child easily becomes angry at me". Concerning scoring, the mean of each of the two subscale's items needs to be counted separately.   -

      The STRS is a widely used instrument typically applied in early childhood as well as elementary school (Koomen et al., 2012; Verschueren, 2015). The short form of the STRS has been shown to have adequate psychometric properties (Zee et al., 2013). Total quality of the measurement has been demonstrated to be $a= .82$ (Losh et al., 2019). Moreover, a recent study conducted by Zee et al. (2017) illustrated that internal consistency using Chronbach's alpha was $a= .85$ and $a= .86$ for closeness and $a= .89$ and $a= .88$ for conflict in the first and second waves of measurement respectively.

      Participants were instructed to consider the extent to which each statement applied to their relationship with an individual student. For the purposes of this study,

this questionnaire was completed twice; once for an individual girl and once for an individual boy of the same classroom in order for gender differences in the teachers' perceived relationship to students to be identified in terms of gender.

Perceived Teacher-Student Relationship. This variable was measured with the modified version of the STRS described above. The closeness and conflict dimensions and all items remain the same as in the short form except that this version pertains to the classroom as a whole rather than an individual student. For example, it contains statements like "The children value their relationship with me" (representing closeness) and "Dealing with children drains my energy" (referring to conflict). Thus, teachers were instructed to reflect on their relationship with all children in their classroom. The final score for each subscale can be found by adding the items. Furthermore, internal consistency was $a= .73$ for modified conflict and $a= .72$ for modified closeness, respectively, which are similar to the psychometric propertied of the STRS - short version. Correlation between the two subscales has been shown to be -.37 (Whitaker et al., 2015).

Data Analysis

Collected data were processed by using the IBM SPSS Statistics software. First, descriptive statistics were reported to illustrate what the sample of the study looks like. In order to test the first research question of whether teacher attachment style and perceived classroom climate are associated, a Pearson's R correlations was applied between scores on attachment anxiety and avoidance and closeness and conflict. For the second research question (whether teachers relate differentially to boys and girls in their classroom) to be tested, paired samples t-tests were used to compare the means of teachers' closeness to boys and those of girls as well as the

means of teachers' conflict with boys and girls. Finally, a multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) test was employed to examine the third research question, by comparing the means of securely and insecurely attached teachers when they relate to a boy and a girl in terms of closeness and conflict.

Chapter Three

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Group Differences

The descriptive statistics of all the variables of the study for the whole sample were calculated as the first part of the statistical analysis. First, the Experiences in Close Relationships - Revised Questionnaire used to measure attachment style showed that the mean values of the attachment related anxiety and avoidance subscales were 3.25 (*SD* = 1.28) and 2.69 (*SD* = 1.14) respectively. For the purposes of inferential statistics, a new categorical variable based on these subscales was created; subjects were further classified as secure, insecure preoccupied and insecure dismissing by finding the median of each dimension (Fraley, n.d.). Second, descriptive statistics for gender differences in the context of classroom evaluated by the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale - Short Form revealed a mean value of 4 (*SD* = .72) for closeness with female students, 1.96 (*SD* = .91) for conflict with female students, 3.83 (*SD* = .77) for closeness with male students and 2.3 (*SD* = 1.14) for conflict with male students. Concerning overall classroom climate with students of all genders, which was assessed with the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale - Modified Version, the mean value of closeness was demonstrated to be 4.34 (*SD* = .48) while the mean value of conflict was 2.59 (*SD* = .81). All of the above descriptive statistics along with the sociodemographic characteristics of the study's participants are presented in Table 1.

Furthermore, an independent samples t-test was carried out to control for potential differences between male and female teachers in attachment related anxiety, attachment related avoidance and closeness and conflict levels with the whole class,

as well as with the female and male students. There was a statistically significant difference between male ($M = 4.10$, $SD = .47$) and female ($M = 4.39$, $SD = .47$) teachers in terms of class closeness; $t(99) = 2.337$, $p = .021$. This difference showed that female teachers scored higher in closeness to their class students than male teachers. Also, there was a significant difference in closeness with girls between male ($M = 3.68$, $SD = .76$) and female ($M = 4.07$, $SD = .71$) teachers; $t(99) = 2.063$, $p = .042$. Finally, there was a significant difference in conflict levels with girls between men ($M = 2.46$, $SD = 1.05$) and women ($M = 1.86$, $SD = .85$); $t(99) = -2.542$, $p = .013$ (see Table 2).

A second independent t-test conducted to assess any differences between single ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 1.09$) and married ($M = 2.81$, $SD = 1.12$) teachers in the attachment dimension of anxiety was statistically significant; $t(54) = 4.422$, $p = <.001$. Additionally, there was a significant difference between single ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 1.11$) and married ($M = 2.33$, $SD = .93$) teachers in avoidance as well; $t(54) = 4.760$, $p = <.001$ (see Table 3).

Finally, two correlational analyses were conducted to evaluate whether there was any association between the age of teachers and and their attachment style along with assessing any correlation between their teaching experience in years and their attachment orientation. The first test revealed a negative correlation between age and attachment related anxiety, $r(100) = -.25$, $p = .009$ while the second showed a negative correlation between teaching experience and attachment related anxiety, $r(100) = -.22$, $p = .0025$ (see Table 4).

Hypotheses Testing

3

First Hypothesis

In order to investigate the first hypothesis of the study, which states that teachers with higher levels of anxiety and/ or avoidance will exhibit lower levels of closeness and higher levels of conflict with their students, the Pearson correlation coefficient was employed. The statistical analysis partially confirmed the first hypothesis. It was shown that there was a statistically significant positive correlation between attachment anxiety (M = 3.25, SD = 1.28) and levels of conflict in the classroom (M = 2.59, SD = .81), r (100) = .30, p = .002. Concerning the association between anxiety (M = 3.25, SD = 1.28) and class closeness (M = 4.34, SD = .48), there was not a significant relationship between the variables, r (100) = -.104, p = .299. Also, there was not a significant correlation between avoidance (M = 2.69, SD = 1.14) and class conflict (M = 2.59, SD = .81), r (100) = .98, p = .328. Finally, the relations between avoidance (M = 2.69, SD = 1.14) and class closeness (M = 4.34, SD = .48) were not statistically significant either, r (100) = -.125, p = .212. The above results suggest that a higher score on attachment related anxiety is associated with a higher score in perceived conflict with students (both male and female) (see Table 5).

Second Hypothesis

As far as the second hypothesis of the study is concerned, which purports that teachers will perceive a higher level of closeness with female students whereas they will perceive a more conflictual relationship with male students, a paired samples t-test was used. The statistical analysis confirmed this hypothesis as the test suggested that there was significant difference in scores in terms of perceived closeness to girls (M = 4, SD = .72) and boys (M = 3.83, SD = .77) in the classroom, t (101) = 2.085, p

= .040. With regard to perceived conflict with girls ($M = 1.96$, $SD = .91$) and boys ($M = 2.3$, $SD = 1.14$) in the classroom, scores were significantly different too, t (101) = -2.559, $p = .012$. Thus, teachers reported higher levels of closeness to girls than boys and higher levels of conflict with boys than girls in their class (see Table 6a and 6b).

Third Hypothesis

For the third and final hypothesis, which presumes that securely attached teachers will engage differently in terms of closeness and conflict with male and female students in their classroom than teachers with an insecure attachment orientation, a MANOVA test was utilized. The results yielded that there was not a statistically significant difference between teachers with a secure attachment and teachers with an insecure one, (Wilk's $\Lambda = .894$, F (8,192) = 1.384, $p = .206$, partial $\eta^2 = .055$, observed power = .620) in their STRS mean scores of closeness and conflict with male and female students. According to this outcome, the evidence was insufficient to reject the null hypothesis and conclude relating differently to boys and girls in one's classroom significantly differed based on teachers' attachment orientation.

Chapter Four

Discussion

The principal aim of the present paper was to advance the overall effort that has been made in the last few decades to analyze and further interpret the perplexing and universal phenomenon of attachment orientation as it pertains to education as well as the impact of gender in teacher-student relationships in classrooms. More specifically, it was intended to explore attachment styles in terms of their influence on an educator's relationship to their students and whether student's gender play a significant role in the manifestation of the teacher-student relationship. For these purposes, attachment theory contributed as a helpful theoretical framework so as to investigate if there are any associations between classroom climate and the manner teachers relate to their significant others. The review of the relevant literature indicated that attachment related anxiety and attachment related avoidance are of major importance regarding the perceived experience of closeness and conflict with students and that teachers do relate differentially to boys and girls. Thus, it was hypothesized that there is a relationship among these three variables; attachment style, the perceived quality of the teacher-student relationship and students' gender.

The first hypothesis of this study supported that anxious and/ or avoidant attachment types would be correlated with higher levels of conflict and lower levels of closeness in the classroom. The results partially supported this hypothesis, indicating that teachers with a higher score on attachment related anxiety do perceive their relationship to their students to be more conflictual. Similar findings were reported by Morris-Rothschild and Brassard (2006) who emphasized that teachers with a preoccupied (or a dismissing) attachment orientation scored low in using

conflict management strategies that involved considering the self and others. Also, they warned that these teachers are prone to forming maladaptive relationships with their students and fostering interpersonal conflict. The explanation the authors provided centered around the idea of unregulated anxiety which arises from the individual's feelings of inability to resolve the conflict. Such levels of stress are incompatible with collaborative interactions with others and effective management of everyday tasks (Lopez, 1995).

Also, this finding appears to be in accordance with Sher-Censor et al. (2019). In their study, the anxiety dimension was shown to only marginally correlate with lower levels of positive climate (i.e., pleasant, exciting and respectful interactions among students and teachers). They explained that attachment related anxiety may be negatively correlated with regard for students' perspective too. This could potentially clarify the lack of a significant correlation between the anxiety dimension and overall closeness with the teachers' class in the current study. As indicated by Riley (2010), the preoccupied teacher, in fear of losing favour of learners they particularly like, they may find themselves over involved with preferred students. This can lead anxiously attached educators to overshare emotional experiences in an inappropriate way (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1990). Furthermore, it has been shown that individuals with a preoccupied attachment style tend to show inconsistency, intrusive behaviors and overemphasize their own uncertainty and concerns when it comes to caregiving (Lifshin et al, 2020). Thus, such comportment may push students away from their teachers and diminish the levels of classroom closeness.

A possible explanation for the non-significant relationship between avoidantly attached teachers and the closeness and conflict dimensions can be found in Riley's work (2010). The author proposed that dismissing teachers are likely to be constantly

looking for failure and misbehavior in their students while disregarding any signs of prosocial behavior due to their difficulty in trusting people (both in and out of the school environment). This way the teachers' emotional dissonance continues to be low and their inner working model of denying their attachment needs remains intact. To students' eyes, these educators appear distant and emotionally unavailable which is possible to increase their own levels of separation anxiety or even protest. Proximity seeking behaviors on behalf of students are likely to elevate the teachers' stress about intimacy and can lead them to push learners further away. Eventually, students may cling even more to their teacher which might invoke intense feelings in the latter such as anger. This vicious cycle may be repeated in some classrooms with an avoidantly attached educator varying in intensity; the friction caused by these behaviors might make their relationship more impersonal. Therefore, the lack of a secure teacher-student relationship found in the study's results may be justified based on the above.

Concerning the second hypothesis of the study, which suggested that teachers would report a perceived higher level of closeness with female students, but a more conflictual relationship with male students, it was found that there was a significant mean difference for closeness and conflict between the two genders. Thus, the hypothesis was fully supported by this study's results and this is consistent with previous literature. Kesner's (2000) examination of mean differences in his own study indicated that teacher's perceived relationships to boys were more conflictual and not as cordial as with girls. In another study, male students were reported to exhibit substantially more classroom externalizing behaviors than female students who were reportedly closer to their teachers (Silver et al., 2005). Similarly, Baker (2006) confirmed the above conclusions with her own results suggesting that girls had a more

positive relationship with educators which could consequentially predict better academic outcomes. Split et al. (2012) found that teachers in their study reported they had a more conflictual relationship with boys than with girls as well.

Since the STRS items assess teacher perceptions of the teacher-student relationship, they are naturally subject to the educator's subjective perspective and potential prejudices. Thus, a reasonable consideration that arises from the above finding is whether teachers repeat gender stereotypes which derive from true gender biases or they are merely reacting to students' actual attitude and conduct. It has been supported that teachers simply react and propagate gender stereotypes that students themselves bring to the classroom (Brophy & Good, 1990). This argument is in line with Solbes-Canales et al. (2020) claiming that students between the ages of four and nine have already internalized schemata concerning gender while they develop their gender identity simultaneously. From an adaptive perspective, children attend to society's expectations and this knowledge allows these expectations to be integrated into their identity (for instance, the association of masculinity with aggressiveness and femininity with lower levels of intelligence). Apparently, specific gender roles entering the classroom will have an influence on students' development and learning (Kurtz-Costes et al., 2014).

In addition to these, it is believed that the stereotypes found in the classroom are the same ones found in society as well (Streitmatter, 1994). As previously discussed in this paper, it has been found that teachers respond to, give permission to call out, and call on boys more frequently than they do with girls (Hutchinson & Beadle, 1992; Myhill, 2002). Also, boys are likely to receive more teacher attention because they have been found to misbehave more often than girls (Brophy & Good, 1974). Nonetheless, if perceived student-teacher relationships are associated with

students' real classroom behavior, then male students may be receiving more negative rather than positive attention from teachers. Hence, it appears that higher levels of conflict and lower levels of closeness is a disadvantage for boys (Kesner, 2000).

At this point, it should be noted that the mean differences between girls' and boys' closeness with their teachers were marginal in this study. However, it has been shown that girls are more attuned to relational variables than boys (Baker, 2006), they tend to score higher on conscientiousness and agreeableness (Brandes et al., 2020) and are generally socialized to exhibit caring and affection more often than their male counterparts (Bhatia & Salignac, 2018; Van der Graaff et al., 2017). These attitudes and traits may benefit them in the development of emotionally laden relationships with their educators. Likewise, it may be said that primary school settings are not as well-suited for boys as they are for girls since boys typically begin school being less developmentally mature and more aggressive and intense (Baker, 2006). Moreover, poorer self-regulation skills and antisocial behavior have been more prevalent in boys than girls (Split et al., 2012). Consequently, these elements may lead to higher levels of conflict for boys and higher levels of closeness for girls in the classroom.

The third and final hypothesis of the study aimed to explore whether there is a relationship between students' gender and teachers' attachment style. More specifically, it was hypothesized that teachers with low scores in the anxiety and avoidance dimensions (i.e, secure attachment) would relate differentially in terms of closeness and conflict with boys and girls in their classroom than teachers with higher scores in these dimensions. Multivariate analysis of variance did not yield a significant relationship between secure, preoccupied and dismissing types of attachment with students' gender.

A probable explanation could be found in considering that there may be other, more important factors that mediate between a teacher's attachment type and the teacher-student relationship besides students' gender. One of them could be transference which is defined as the resurfacing of existing mental representations which affects novel social interactions (Andersen & Baum, 1994; Andersen & Beck, 2000; Brumbaugh & Fraley, 2006). Despite its psychodynamic roots, the concept of transference can be appreciated through the lens of adult attachment theory too as the reemergence of past relational patterns due to the high accessibility of internal working models people have and their use as a guide in new relationships (Bowlby, 1973; Fraley & Shaver, 2008; Hazan & Shaver, 1987). In their study, Brumbaugh & Fraley (2006) discussed that even in the case where there are quite a few discrepancies between past and new relationships, individuals tend to rely on former significant relations to navigate through the novel ones. At the same time, they discovered that internal working models were employed to an even higher extent when new and previous significant others shared similar qualities. The authors concluded that working models can function both in a trait-like (i.e. apply generally) and context-specific manner. According to this literature, it would appear that students would not be that similar to previous significant others of teachers yet past mental representations could be having a potentially major effect on how they guide their interactions with them. Thus, it is speculated that the impact of transferring past personal experiences onto new may be greater than students' gender in the teacher-student dyad.

Another factor that could overshadow any influence that students' gender could have on the teacher-student relationship may be teachers' personality. Personal attributes, such as emotions and emotional intelligence, have been increasingly given

more attention for their potential to provide to students an emotionally secure classroom setting (Harvey et al., 2012; Poulou, 2016). Other major personal characteristics could include the Big Five personality traits (McCrae & Costa, 1986). It has been found that attachment related anxiety positively correlates with Neuroticism and negatively correlates with Conscientiousness whereas attachment related avoidance negatively correlates with Neuroticism (though to a lower degree than anxiety), Agreeableness, Extraversion and Conscientiousness (Noftle & Shaver, 2006). More specifically, the same researchers found that the Big Five facets of gregariousness and depression positively predicted attachment anxiety while the facet of trust and altruism negatively predicted attachment avoidance. Despite their similarities and associations, the two assessments are not redundant (Noftle & Shaver, 2006; Sibley & Overall, 2010). Interestingly enough, it has been indicated that a shared genetic component accounts for a considerable majority of the covariance between personality and attachment orientation too (Donnellan et al., 2008). Consequently, the literature detailed above could allow the investigators of the present study to infer that such personality characteristics could be having an even more important impact than the students' gender.

Preliminary tests which were conducted in addition to the main statistical analysis revealed some important findings that should be taken into consideration. The first one indicated that female teachers in this study tended to have a more positive relationship both with the whole class and specifically with girls compared to male teachers . It has been supported that women, adolescent and younger girls view their world from a relational perspective and that relationships are actually one of their most valued goals (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). Also, as described earlier in this study, social norms for women have an impact on the traditional roles they are

assigned such as the role of caring in a relationship (Bhatia & Salignac, 2018; Van der Graaff et al., 2017). This seems to explain the higher levels of closeness female teachers exhibit in the teacher-student relationship.

The same test demonstrated that male teachers perceived higher conflict levels with girls compared to female teachers although male teachers' scores in the dimension of conflict with girls were generally low. This is inconsistent with previous research that has shown that male teachers are subject to more conflictual relationships with boys rather than girls (Split et al., 2012). Thus, a higher degree of conflict between male teachers and boys would appear more reasonable due to boys' increased levels of aggression (Baker 2006; Lansford et al., 2012) and because of men's biological disposition and socialization for independence and dominance (Split et al., 2012). However, research has shown that girls often resort to relational aggression even though this type of aggression is not necessarily a "girl problem" (Eriksen & Lyng, 2018). Further research into the male teacher-female student relationship is needed to shed more light on the present findings.

A second additional test showed a significant difference in the levels attachment security married and single teachers perceived in a relationship. More specifically, married individuals were much less likely to exhibit attachment related anxiety and avoidance in comparison with singles. This finding was in congruence with previous literature which suggested that high levels of attachment anxiety and avoidance are associated with a lower probability of marriage (Yacovson et al., 2020). Complementary to that, a secure attachment orientation has been illustrated to positively correlate with commitment and relationship stability whereas insecure attachment types negatively correlate with both of these (Schindler et al., 2010). Thus, it may be speculated that because insecurely attached individuals are less likely to

commit to a long-term relationship (including marriage), they risk missing the benefit of a corrective emotional experience.

The last set of analyses indicated a negative correlation between the age and professional experience of teachers with the anxiety dimension. The possibility of a gradual and important improvement of emotional experience emerging in early adulthood and culminating with old age has been indicated by research (Burr et al., 2020; Carstensen et al., 2011). Pertinent to adult attachment, it has been shown that older individuals experience less attachment related anxiety which can be partly explained based on increased levels of maturity and self-regulation skills that improve with age (Kafetsios & Sideridis, 2006). Additionally, it may be said that the longer the time a teacher devotes to teaching (i.e. the higher their teaching experience), the more comfortable they may feel with their profession and abilities. Another possible explanation could be that elementary teachers may undergo a corrective emotional experience both because of the increased amount of time they have spent teaching but because of the number and duration of their interactions with learners (Riley, 2010). In conclusion, results from the additional preliminary analyses may provide further insight into the findings of the third hypothesis, if we consider that they constitute confounding variables that skewed the effects of students' gender on the relationship of the student-teacher dyad. For instance, female educators significantly outnumbered their male counterparts thus lower levels of conflict with girls in their classroom was found.

Limitations and Future Directions

The present study has a number of limitations that need to be taken into account in future research. First, the design of the study was cross-sectional, which suggests

that current data on attachment orientation and the teacher-student relationship could be either a continuation of a newly arising or an already established pattern. Besides the cross-sectional quality of the study, this research did not investigate causality for any of the three hypotheses, but only associations and mean differences. Thus, the results need to be seen as tentative. Because of the lack of longitudinal studies on the topic, future studies could extend this type of research with follow up data and provide more insight into the nature of these variables. Second, the lack of prior research concerning the third hypothesis may have limited the scope of the current paper, but nonetheless, presents as an opportunity for future research to explore the issue in more depth.

Additionally, data collection in the present study, due to time constrains, relied exclusively on self-report data from school teachers. This posed limitations because of biases such as selective memory (remembering or not recalling past events), telescoping (generalizing events that happened at one time as if they happened more than once), attribution (attributing positive outcomes to one's own actions and negative ones to external variables), and exaggeration (overstating the importance of certain events without support from other data) (Ataro, 2020). Similarly, there was a limited range of informants since only teachers' perspective was used to measure the variables examined in this study. The subjective perspective of teachers on the teacher-student relationship was a significant limitation in terms of the validity of the reported data. The present results were based on the one-sided responses of teachers. Future research should also involve multiple informants (teachers, class students,etc.) and methods of data collection. Future studies may include more qualitative instruments, such as structured interviews with both parties and classroom

observations (Lifshin et al., 2020; Sher-Censor et al., 2019), which were excluded from the present study due to time restrictions.

Furthermore, the statistical analysis of the data did not involve measuring Chronbach's a thus interpreting how closely related the test items were collectively may be difficult. Tests to verify Assumptions of Normality, other than the sample size, were not accounted for either. Additionally, even though adequate in size, the current sample was not necessarily representative. A final limitation was that the survey was posted online and thus international participants were recruited. Even though this is a strength of the study, nationality was not asked for in the demographics questionnaire, because initial planning of the study only involved Greek residents. However, due to lower than expected response rates, the survey was distributed also on Reddit which attracts users worldwide. Therefore, it would be difficult to detect possible cultural bias that may be underlying the present findings, hence generalizability is reduced (Levesque, 2011). Future studies should control for such methodological limitations by registering nationality and including equal proportion of male and female teachers in their sample.

This paper can have implications not only for future research but clinical practice too. The present findings could be utilized in key interventions in such settings as professional training for teachers, mentoring programs and supervision (Sher-Censor et al., 2019) with the purpose to enhance the teacher-student relationship quality through the lens of attachment theory (Riley, 2010; Lifshin et al., 2020). Past attachment oriented interventions applied in education have been shown to improve the relationship between students and teachers (Williford et al., 2016). Even though changing a teacher's attachment style may be difficult, such interventions could help insecurely attached teachers ameliorate the counterproductive

or negative aspects of their attitude towards learners. For instance, avoidant educators could learn through training, guidance or counselling to foster a more empathetic and caring classroom environment for their students, while anxious teachers could learn to set boundaries when it comes to their excessive sharing and display of emotions. Nonetheless, the context of interventions for teachers should be certainly considered, because variables such as the size of the class, access to staff support and resources can both assist and hinder the interventions depending on the circumstances (Lifshin et al., 2020). In addition to these, school or teacher interventions should have a gender informed component which will provide education on the different developmental and social pathways boys and girls go through and will consequently help learners create a more positive self-identity (Zaman, 2008).

Conclusion

The teacher-student relationship has been researched quite a lot both in the past and recently because of its significance in the academic trajectory and socio-emotional development of learners while gender differences in the classroom have been documented for a very long time too. The current study has attempted to further explore and contribute to research by providing evidence about the impact of teachers' attachment and students' gender on the relationships of the teacher-student dyad. Higher levels of attachment related anxiety in teachers were shown to be associated with higher levels of classroom conflict, while female teachers appeared to be closer with their students compared to male teachers who had a more conflictual relationship with them. These results indicate that for the teacher-student relationship to be improved, interventions should be designed to include attachment theory and research as well as gender sensitivity training programs.

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Table 1 *Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Sample*

	N (%) (*n*=102)	Mean	SD
Gender			
Females	81.4% (83)		
Males	17.6% (18)		
Other	1% (1)		
Age			
18-24	16.7% (17)		
25-34	49% (50)		
35-44	20.6% (21)		
45-54	11.8% (12)		
Above 54	2% (2)		
Employment Status			
Full-time employment	87.3% (89)		
Part-time employment	12.7% (13)		
Education			
Bachelor's degree	45.1% (46)		
Master's degree	41.2% (42)		
Teaching certificate	10.8% (11)		

PhD   2.9% (3)

Teaching experience

0-2   23.5% (24)

3-5   29.4% (30)

6-10   21.6% (22)

11-15   12.7% (13)

16-20   4.9% (5)

21 or more   7.8% (8)

Family Status

In a relationship, not married   28.4% (29)

Single, never married   19.6% (20)

Married   36.3% (37)

With kids   14.7% (15)

Without kids   1% (1)

Attachment Orientation

Secure   53.9% (55)

Insecure preoccupied   36.3% (37)

Insecure dismissing   9.8% (10)

Table 2 *T-test Analysis Exploring Differences in Study's Variables (i.e, Male and Female Teachers)*

	Females		Males		t-test analysis	
Variables	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	p
Attachment Anxiety	3.33	1.31	2.81	1.11	1.577	.118
Attachment Avoidance	2.77	1.17	2.33	1.01	1.461	.147
Class Closeness	4.39	.47	4.10	.47	2.337	.021*
Class Conflict	2.56	.85	2.73	.59	-.756	.451
Closeness with girls	4.07	.71	3.68	.76	2.063	.042*
Conflict with girls	1.86	.85	2.46	1.05	-2.542	.013*
Closeness with boys	3.86	.83	3.68	.46	1.225	.227
Conflict with boys	2.23	1.17	2.50	.86	-.914	.363

* $p < .05$.

Table 3 *T-test Analysis Exploring Differences in Study's Variables (i.e., Single and Married Teachers)*

	Single Teachers		Married Teachers		t-test analysis	
Variables	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	p
Attachment Anxiety	4.18	1.09	2.81	1.12	4.422	<.001
Attachment Avoidance	3.66	1.11	2.33	.93	4.760	<.001

Table 4 *Pearson Correlations between Age and Teaching Experience in Years with*

Attachment Style

	Age	Teaching Experience	Attachment Anxiety	Attachment Avoidance
Age	-	.749**	-.258**	-.145
Teaching Experience	.749**	-	-.222*	-.052
Attachment Anxiety	-.258**	-.222*	-	.699**
Attachment Avoidance	-.145	-.052	.699**	-

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

Table 5 *Pearson Correlations between Class Closeness and Class Conflict with*

Attachment Style

	Class Closeness	Class Conflict	Attachment Anxiety	Attachment Avoidance
Class Closeness	-	-.388**	-.104	-.125
Class Conflict	-.388**	-	.302**	.098
Attachment Anxiety	-.104	.302**	-	.699**
Attachment Avoidance	-.125	.098	.699**	-

* p < .05.

** p < .01.

Table 6a *Paired T-test Statistics on the Differences in Study's Variables between Closeness with Boys and Girls and Conflict with Boys and Girls*

	Mean	SD
Girls Closeness	4.00	.72
Boys Closeness	3.83	.77
Girls Conflict	1.96	.91
Boys Conflict	2.30	1.14

Table 6b *Paired T-test Analysis Exploring Differences in Study's Variables between*

Closeness with Boys and Girls and Conflict with Boys and Girls

			Paired Differences	t	df	p
	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean			
Closeness with Boys - Closeness with Girls	.1715	.831	.082	2.085	101	.040*
Conflict with Boys - Conflict with Girls	-.3375	1.33	.131	-2.559	101	.012

* p < .05.

Table 7 *Multivariate Analysis of Variance Investigating the Relationship between Insecure Attachment Types, Closeness with Boys and Girls and Conflict with Boys and Girls*

Variable	Secure		Dismissing		Preoccupied		$F_{(8,192)}$	η^2
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Closeness with Girls	4.00	0.71	4.12	0.68	3.96	0.76	.186	.004
Conflict with Girls	1.82	.86	1.98	.64	2.18	1.02	1.718	.014
Closeness with Boys	3.87	0.79	3.61	0.62	3.83	0.79	.468	.009
Conflict with Boys	2.07	1.04	3.04	1.23	2.44	1.17	3.649	.069

<center>**Appendix A**</center>

<center>**Current Study's Questionnaires**</center>

<center>**Demographics Questionnaire**</center>

What is your sex?

- Male

- Female

- Other

- Prefer not to say

What is your age?

- 18-24

- 25-34

- 35-44

- 45-54

- Above 54

What is your current employment status?

- Full-time employment

- Part-time employment

What is the highest qualification you currently hold?

- Teaching certificate

- Bachelor's degree

- Master's degree

- Doctorate

What is your teaching experience in years?

- 0-2

- 3-5

- 6-10

- 11-15

- 16-20

- 21 or more

What is your marital status?

- Single, never married

- In a relationship, not married

- Married

- With kids

- Without kids

Experience in Close Relationships - Revised Questionnaire (ECR-R)

Thank you for participating in this survey the statements of which explore how you feel in emotionally intimate relationships. I would like you to focus on how you *generally* experience your relationships rather than describing what is presently happening in a relationship. Please specify to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement below by choosing the most suitable option for you.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I prefer not to show a partner how I feel deep down	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. I'm afraid that I will lose my partner's love	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I feel comfortable sharing my private thoughts and feelings with my partner	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I often worry that my partner will not want to stay with me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on romantic partners	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I am very comfortable being close to romantic partners	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. I worry that romantic partners won't care about me as much as I care about them	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

9. I don't feel comfortable opening up to romantic partners	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. I often wish that my partner's feelings for me were as strong as my feelings for him or her	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. I prefer not to be too close to romantic partners	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. I worry a lot about my relationships	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. I get uncomfortable when a romantic partner wants to be very close	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. When my partner is out of sight, I worry that he or she might become interested in someone else	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. I find it relatively easy to get close to my partner	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. When I show my feelings for romantic partners, I'm afraid they will not feel the same about me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. It's not difficult for me to get close to my partner	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. I rarely worry about my partner leaving me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. I usually discuss my problems and concerns with my partner	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. My romantic partner makes me doubt myself	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. It helps to turn to my romantic partner in	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

times of need							
22. I do not often worry about beingabandoned	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. I tell my partner just about everything	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. I find that my partner(s) don't want to get as close as I would like	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. I talk things over with my partner	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26. Sometimes romantic partners change their feelings about me for no apparent reason	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27. I am nervous when partners get too close to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29. I feel comfortable depending on romantic partners	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30. I'm afraid that once a romantic partner gets to know me, he or she won't like who I really am	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31. I find it easy to depend on romantic partners	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32. It makes me mad that I don't get the affection and support I need from my partner	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33. It's easy for me to be affectionate with my partner	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
34. I worry that I won't measure up to other	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

people							
35. My partner really understands me and my needs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
36. My partner only seems to notice me when I'm angry	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

STUDENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIP SCALE – SHORT FORM (1)

Take the first girl from your student roster. Then, reflect on the degree to which each of the following statements currently applies to your relationship with this child. Using the scale below, circle the appropriate number for each item.

Definitely does not apply 1	Not really 2	Neutral, not sure 3	Applies somewhat 4	Definitely applies 5

1. I share an affectionate, warm relationship with this child.	1	2	3	4	5
2. This child and I always seem to be struggling with each other.	1	2	3	4	5
3. If upset, this child will seek comfort from me.	1	2	3	4	5
4. This child is uncomfortable with physical affection or touch from me.	1	2	3	4	5
5. This child values his/her relationship with me.	1	2	3	4	5
6. When I praise this child, he/she beams with pride.	1	2	3	4	5
7. This child spontaneously shares information about himself/herself.	1	2	3	4	5
8. This child easily becomes angry with me.	1	2	3	4	5
9. It is easy to be in tune with what this child is feeling.	1	2	3	4	5
10. This child remains angry or is resistant after being disciplined.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Dealing with this child drains my energy.	1	2	3	4	5
12. When this child is in a bad mood, I know we're in for a long and difficult day.	1	2	3	4	5
13. This child's feelings toward me can be unpredictable or can change suddenly.	1	2	3	4	5
14. This child is sneaky or manipulative with me.	1	2	3	4	5
15. This child openly shares his/her feelings and experiences with me.	1	2	3	4	5

STUDENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIP SCALE – SHORT FORM (2)

Now, take the first boy from your student roster. Then, reflect on the degree to which each of the following statements currently applies to your relationship with this child. Using the scale below, circle the appropriate number for each item.

Definitely does not apply 1	Not really 2	Neutral, not sure 3	Applies somewhat 4	Definitely applies 5

1. I share an affectionate, warm relationship with this child.	1	2	3	4	5
2. This child and I always seem to be struggling with each other.	1	2	3	4	5
3. If upset, this child will seek comfort from me.	1	2	3	4	5
4. This child is uncomfortable with physical affection or touch from me.	1	2	3	4	5
5. This child values his/her relationship with me.	1	2	3	4	5
6. When I praise this child, he/she beams with pride.	1	2	3	4	5
7. This child spontaneously shares information about himself/herself.	1	2	3	4	5
8. This child easily becomes angry with me.	1	2	3	4	5
9. It is easy to be in tune with what this child is feeling.	1	2	3	4	5
10. This child remains angry or is resistant after being disciplined.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Dealing with this child drains my energy.	1	2	3	4	5
12. When this child is in a bad mood, I know we're in for a long and difficult day.	1	2	3	4	5
13. This child's feelings toward me can be unpredictable or can change suddenly.	1	2	3	4	5
14. This child is sneaky or manipulative with me.	1	2	3	4	5
15. This child openly shares his/her feelings and experiences with me.	1	2	3	4	5

STUDENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIP SCALE - MODIFIED

Please reflect on the degree to which each of the following statements currently applies to your relationship with the children in your classroom. All relationships are individual, but in responding, please think about your relationships with the children in your classroom in general.Using the scale below, circle the appropriate number for each item.

Definitely does not apply 1	Not really 2	Neutral, not sure 3	Applies somewhat 4	Definitely applies 5

1. I share an affectionate, warm relationship with the children.	1	2	3	4	5
2. The children and I always seem to be struggling with each other.	1	2	3	4	5
3. If upset, the children will seek comfort from me.	1	2	3	4	5
4. The children are uncomfortable with physical affection or touch from me.	1	2	3	4	5
5. The children value their relationship with me.	1	2	3	4	5
6. When I praise the children, they beam with pride.	1	2	3	4	5
7. The children share information about themselves.	1	2	3	4	5
8. The children easily become angry with me.	1	2	3	4	5
9. It is easy to be in tune with what the children are feeling.	1	2	3	4	5
10. The children remain angry or are resistant after being disciplined.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Dealing with the children drains my energy.	1	2	3	4	5
12. When the children are in a bad mood, I know we're in for a long and difficult day.	1	2	3	4	5
13. The children's feelings toward me can be unpredictable or can change suddenly.	1	2	3	4	5

14. The children are sneaky or manipulative with me.	1	2	3	4	5
15. The children openly share their feelings and experiences with me.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix B

Informed Consent

Purpose of the research: To understand how the way teachers relate to their partner in close relationships may be associated with the way they interact with their students. Also, to explore any possible gender differences in the teacher-student interactions.

What you will do in this research: If you decide to participate, you will complete a survey. Some of the questions will be about how you generally feel in an intimate relationship. Others will be about attitudes and thoughts on your relationship either with an individual student or the class as a whole.

Time required: The survey will take approximately 12 minutes to complete.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits, but you may find it interesting to consider your responses to questions about your intimate relationships or interactions with the children in your classroom.

Confidentiality: Your responses will remain confidential and will be accessible only to the principal investigator. Records and data will be kept in a secure password-protected cloud storage. Data collected from this survey will be destroyed at the end of three years. When research results are reported, responses will be aggregated (added together) and described in summary.

Participation and withdrawal: Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may quit at any time without penalty. However, you may not skip questions since their completion is necessary for the purposes of the study.

To Contact the Researcher: If you have questions or concerns about this research at any time, please contact: Magdalini Georgatou, _____. You may also contact the faculty member supervising this work: Stavroula Diareme, _____

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of The American College of Greece.

By clicking next, you are indicating that you have read and understood the information provided above, that you are over 18 and have a good command of English, that you willingly agree to participate, that you understand that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty, and that you are not waiving any legal claims.

Appendix C

Debriefing Form

Thank you for taking the time to participate in the current study.

The primary goal of this study is to understand the relationship between the affectional ties that a teacher develops with the significant people in their life and the quality of their relationship to their students. Gender differences in the classroom and the way they are reflected in this relationship are explored too. Previous research has demonstrated that humans are inclined to relate emotionally and physically to other people. The quality of the bond that a child will develop with their mother or another caretaker, though malleable, tends to remain stable throughout their life and affects the person's relationships in adulthood as well. It has been indicated that the quality of this bond can influence how an educator may relate to their students and the levels of emotional support they may provide to them, which will in turn have an impact on students' academic and emotional development. In addition to these, genders socialize in very distinct ways and it has been supported that teachers play a key role in the propagation of culturally dictated norms. The main hypothesis of this study is that the quality of the bond that an individual exhibits in intimate relationships can shape their relationship to students. Also, it is hypothesized that the relationship of a teacher to female students will differ from their relationship to male students as it has been shown that teachers' interactions with boys tend to be more conflictual.

It is hoped that the results of this study will allow scholars and educators alike to better comprehend the intricate relationship between emotional bonds formed with significant others and classroom environment. Also, we hope to aid the development of interventions for the improvement of children's school life and teachers' professional development.

For any question or concern about this research and the completion of the questionnaire please contact the principal investigator of the study Magdalini Georgatou via e-mail: The contact information of the research supervisor Dr S. Diareme is

The results of the study are expected to be available in July 2022. If you wish to receive a report about them, please contact the principal investigator via the e-mail address mentioned above.

Thank you again for your valuable contribution in this study,

Magdalini Georgatou.

Appendix D

Approval Letter from the School Principal

Hello Ms Kaza,

I'm Madalena and I'm currently doing my internship at the ISA primary school as part of my fieldwork obligations for my masters completion at Deree - The American College of Greece.

At the same time, I'm writing my thesis titled "Teacher Attachment Style, Students' Gender and Perceived Quality of Teacher - Student Relationship". Part of my research requires elementary school teachers' participation in an online survey. For this reason, I'm kindly asking for your permission to recruit the ISA primary school teachers. Any personal data will remain confidential, will be securely stored and no personal identifiers will be requested. For teachers to remain anonymous, I will also send you a link with the survey that you can forward to them.

Dear Madalena,

I'll be happy to support you with your thesis. As the second term is coming to an end and our teachers will be busy with their reports for the next 2-3 weeks I would like you to tell me:
-How many teachers would you want to complete your survey?
-How long is your survey (how much time would a teacher need to complete it approximately?)
-When is it due?

Thank you.

Nancy Kaza
Primary School Principal

International School of Athens