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UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

Teacher attachment styles and the management of insecurely attached Foundation Phase learners

by

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A Dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts by Dissertation (in the field of Psychology) in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 31 March 2025.

Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts by Dissertation (in the field of Psychology) at the University of the Witwatersrand. It has not been submitted previously for this or for any other degree or for examination at this or any other university.



Karin Lee Klug

Abstract

Research has focused on how teacher-learner relationships can impact on learners' overall well-being and affect their academic success at school. Despite the clear importance of the teacher-learner relationships, little research has focused on the quality of relationships between teachers and learners especially in the Foundation Phase (Grades 0-3) in South Africa. Moreover, very few studies have explored how teachers' attachment styles affect the way they relate to and manage learners in the classroom. This study hoped to contribute to this gap in the literature on middle childhood, investigating the relationship between primary school teachers' attachment styles and the various ways they report managing and responding to challenging children in the Foundation Phase of primary school. It is hoped that this will inform understandings of the reportedly poor relationships between teachers and learners in South Africa. This was done from the perspective of attachment theory, using a concurrent mixed methods approach to explore teachers' attachment styles, their discipline styles, and their responses to learners with insecure attachment presentations. Although findings revealed no statistically significant differences between securely and insecurely attached teachers with regards to discipline and classroom management styles, and responses to the different presentation of insecure learners, likely due to the small sample size, trends with regards to differences in these areas were identified via the analysis of the qualitative data. Most teachers were tolerant and empathic towards anxious-ambivalent learners and managed anxious-avoidant learners with sensitivity, reflecting their understanding of this child. Teachers showed the least compassion and tolerance towards anxious-frightened or disorganised learners. Most teachers were able to manage learners who presented with similar traits as their former younger selves with sensitivity and compassion. However, it appeared that teachers who are insecure in both childhood and adulthood may be intolerant of learners who present with a similar childhood attachment, until experience as a teacher affords them the opportunity to gain experience and adjust their behaviour. Although both securely and insecurely attached teachers self-reported authoritative classroom management styles, the securely attached teachers could relate to the authoritarian statement of discipline to a greater degree than the insecurely attached teachers. However, to substantiate any claims about the relationship between teachers' attachment styles and their management of insecurely attached learners, these findings will need to be verified using larger samples. It is however evident that teachers would benefit from training in how to identify the differently insecurely

attached learners in their classes and be empowered with the tools on how to deal with difficult to manage learners. It is further recommended that student teachers be exposed to the knowledge and skills of attachment theory before they embark on their practical teaching experiences in order to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Aims of the study

This study aimed to investigate if there is a relationship between the different attachment styles of primary school teachers and the various ways they report managing and responding to challenging children in the Foundation Phase of primary school. This was done from the perspective of attachment theory, using a mixed methods approach to explore teachers' attachment styles, their discipline styles, and their responses to learners with insecure attachment representations. The quantitative aspect of the study sought to determine whether there was a relationship between teacher attachment styles and self-reported discipline styles. It further sought to determine if there were differences in responses to learners with insecure presentations amongst the various teacher attachment styles. The qualitative aspect of the study sought to determine the influence of teacher's attachment styles on their classroom management and relationships with learners. It further sought to describe the manner in which teachers respond to children with insecure attachment presentations, and whether teachers have a higher or lower tolerance of learners who present with a similar attachment style to their own. A mixed methods approach allowed for the exploration of patterns and connections between teachers' attachment and discipline styles pertaining to their relationships with insecurely attached learners.

1.2. Rationale for the study

Sadly, almost three decades after apartheid, success in the South African schooling system continues to be determined not by ability or hard work and sheer perseverance by learners but rather by the colour of their skin, the place of their birth, and the wealth of their parents (Spaull & Jansen, 2019). Curriculum changes, medium of instruction, overcrowded classrooms, discipline difficulties, and lack of resources are some of the main challenges facing South African teachers (du Plessis, 2020). Inferior quality education for those in lower socioeconomic groups in South Africa has consequences and is strongly related to fewer employment opportunities and lower earnings, perpetuating a cycle of inequality that is transmitted across generations (Branson & Lam, 2012). Recent South African studies have found that student teachers have insufficient knowledge and skills regarding student-centred learning as a pedagogical principle (du Plessis, 2020). Other factors found to influence teachers' abilities to implement student-centred learning, are overcrowded classrooms, a tendency to become overwhelmed, and struggles to manage discipline within the classroom

setting (du Plessis, 2020). Alongside low levels of discipline-related knowledge found in teachers working at lower-resourced schools in South Africa (Taylor, 2019), student-teacher relationships are plagued by high levels of verbal, physical, and sexual violence from learners and teachers alike (Chitsamatanga & Rembe, 2020).

Teacher-learner relationships are the most effective port of entry for improving the schooling system (Poplin & Weeres, 1992). The quality of student-teacher relationships has been investigated since the late 1980s and high-quality relationships between teachers and learners are described as having a high degree of closeness and low degree of conflict (O'Connor et al., 2011). On the other hand, low-quality relationships are understood to have a low degree of closeness and a high degree of conflict. Extensive research has suggested that high-quality teacher-student relationships in primary schools can protect children who are at risk for behaviour problems in the classroom (Buyse et al., 2010; O' Connor et al., 2012; Ng & Yeo, 2018; Sutherland et al., 2020; Chow et al., 2020). In contrast, low-quality teacher-student relationships can result in both externalizing and internalizing behaviour in early and middle childhood (Collins et al., 2017; Murray & Zvoch, 2011; O'Connor et al., 2012; Poulou, 2017). Moreover, teachers who measured higher in emotional intelligence were found to have better relationships with their learners and superior classroom management in general. These teachers were able to manage the behaviour problems of learners more effectively (Poulou, 2017; Valente, 2019). Research has confirmed that teacher student relationships can impact on learners' overall well-being and affect their academic success at school (Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004; Sabol & Pianta, 2012**)**.

Attachment theory has been identified as crucial to helping teachers understand the behaviour of learners in their classrooms, including why certain learners struggle more with attention and motivation, and social skills (Carpenter et al., 2017). It has also been shown to aid teachers in understanding why certain learners respond to them as teachers in particular ways (Carpenter et al., 2017). Despite enormous reforms of the teacher education curriculum in South Africa, it has been found to pay insufficient attention to the life histories and aspirations of both learners and student teachers themselves (Robinson et al., 2024). This study hopes to begin to explore the utility of attachment theory in the classroom in the South African setting.

Lastly, despite the clear importance of teacher-learner relationships, little research has focused on the quality of relationships between teachers and Foundation Phase learners in South Africa. Most research has focused on secondary school learners and their teachers (Woudstra et al., 2018). The international literature on teacher relationships with younger learners has focused on daycare and kindergarten (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Howes & Hamilton, 1992). Middle childhood has been neglected. The Foundation Phase of education in South Africa includes Grades 0-3 and children between the ages of five and nine. This study hopes to contribute to this gap in the literature on middle childhood. It also hopes to inform understanding of the reportedly poor relationships between teachers and learners in South Africa. A South African perspective to the body of international knowledge on factors influencing these formative teacher-learner relationships, particularly regarding the role of teacher attachment styles, would also allow for more diverse and inclusive knowledge globally.

1.3. Overview of the study

This study utilised a mixed methods approach, thus both quantitative and qualitative analysis of data took place. Data was collected in the form of a questionnaire which was an online survey. An invitation to participate in the survey was posted on local teacher social media platforms and sent to IEB schools via email. Non-parametric statistical analyses were used to analyse the quantitative data, as the fairly small sample size did not have a normal distribution. The Spearman Rank's correlation test was used to identify any significant correlations amongst variables and the Mann Whitney U test was used to identify any intergroup differences. Reflexive thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data.

1.4. Structure of the thesis

Chapter one is the introduction to the study and explains both the aims and the rationale for the study. Chapter two explores the theoretical orientation of the study whilst Chapter three presents an overview of existing relevant literature. Chapter four elaborates on the research design, outlines the study's research questions, and explains the methods used in the study. Chapter five relays the results of both the quantitative and qualitative data. Chapter six is a discussion of the study's findings, situating the findings within existing literature in the area. Chapter seven is the conclusion which summarizes the research findings and elaborates on both the strengths and weaknesses of the research. It also makes recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Orientation

2.1. Introduction

Noddings (1995) promulgated the idea that caring is an essential part of human existence and therefore should play a central part in schooling. However, teachers are often accused of no longer caring about their learners; there seems to be a disconnect between teachers and learners. According to Noddings (1995) without caring there can be no real academic achievement; learners must feel that they matter and are cared for, if we are going to expect them to care for others (Noddings, 1995). In the Foundation Phase in particular, emotional support provided to children who are at risk of failing contributes to learners overcoming challenges to their learning better than those who receive little emotional support from their teachers (Hamre & Pianta, 2005). Additional studies have found that learners who have positive close ties with teachers tend to perform well academically including having higher scores on achievement tests, more positive attitudes toward school, more engagement in the classroom, less failures, and fewer referrals for special education (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Education therefore is more than just the imparting of knowledge. Relationships of caring must first be formed between the teacher and learners; this then creates a secure emotional space from which learning can take place.

Attachment theory invites us to look back at our past relationships with parents and significant others in our lives to better understand our current behaviour patterns. It explains the reasons we behave and react the way we do. Shaver and Mikulincer (2002) refer to a person's attachment style as the systematic pattern of relational expectations, emotions, and behaviours that comes from the internalization of a particular history of attachment experiences. Attachment theory is used as the lens through which the results of this study are interpreted.

Research has tended to focus on the attachment styles of learners and how this may influence their ability to manage the school environment – in particular, children with insecure and disorganised attachment styles have been identified as being more at risk (Carpenter et al., 2017; Pianta, 1997; Birch & Ladd, 1997; O'Conner et al., 2011; Bergin & Bergin, 2009). However, attachment theory also applies to teachers, in that a teacher's past relationships will influence emotions, relationship expectations, and behaviours. However, very few studies

have explored how teachers' attachment styles affect the way they relate to and manage learners in the classroom (Sher Censor et al., 2019: Nulman & Alkalay, 2023; Lifshin et al., 2019; Granot, 2014). Attachment theory as a theoretical framework is outlined below; this includes descriptions of the various categories of attachment in childhood and how attachment can be conceptualised in adulthood.

2.2. Assumptions of Attachment Theory as a Theoretical Framework

Attachment is a deep and lasting affectionate bond that connects two people together across time and space (Bowlby, 1969). Berk (2009) expands on this definition and explains attachment as a unique connection that we have with special people in our lives to whom we want to be near especially in times of stress, as we view them as a source of comfort. Attachment causes us to experience pleasure when we engage with significant others (Berk, 2009). Attachment theory emphasizes the vital role of early caregiving in forming a strong emotional bond between infant and caregiver. The primary caregiver, in most instances the mother, is referred to as the attachment figure (AF) (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). According to Attachment theory, the AF provides a so-called secure base from which children can venture out to explore their larger world (Ainsworth et al., 1978). While parents and guardians tend to form the child's first AFs (Main et al., 1985; Bowlby, 1980), teachers can also become part of a child's attachment network yielding a strong influence throughout the child's life (Pianta, 1999; Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Sabal & Pianta, 2004).

2.2.1. Attachment figures

More recent research conducted across diverse cultural settings has identified that children often have multiple caregivers and thus, multiple AFs (Dagan & Sagi-Schwartz, 2021; Howes & Spieker, 2008; Verschueren, 2019). These attachment networks tend to shift throughout a person's lifespan (Umemura et al., 2018). Although many attachment bonds can be formed throughout one's life there seems to be what Bowlby referred to as monotropy, that is the one special person that is a preferred attachment figure at a particular stage in a person's life (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). Other attachment bonds that are made throughout a person's life are hypothesized to be arranged in a type of hierarchy, with the primary attachment figure at the very top (Hazan & Mikulincer, 2009).

2.2.2. Internal working models

Mental representations referred to as internal working models are created by the child based on his/her experiences with AFs. The child uses these mental schemas of what to expect from others and this then influences how he/she behaves in relationships (Bretherton & Munholland, 2016) According to Bergin and Bergin (2009), these internal working models determine a child's perception of the trustworthiness of others, their social abilities, and their degree of self-worth. Pianta (1988) developed the Student Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS) to determine how teachers view their relationships with a particular child. The items measured in the scale reflect behaviours observed between primary attachment figures and their infants. Thus, Pianta regards the same factors that constitute a secure, healthy mother-child relationship as also required for a high-quality teacher-student relationship. Bergin and Bergin (2009) posit that the same qualities that make up a secure attachment between an attachment figure like the parent and a child apply in the classroom. That is, the AF will exhibit qualities of warmth, caring, and attunement to the child's emotional needs. Further, the teacher would be there for the child in times of distress and be able to contain and calm the child (Pianta, 2008). Pianta's STRS (1988) includes items like "this child seeks help, recognition, and support from me", and "I share a warm, affectionate relationship with this student", to reflect the behaviours of a securely attached child in the classroom.

2.2.3. Categories of attachment for children

Using the Strange Situation experiment, Mary Ainsworth was able to define three categories of primary attachment groups under which most children could be classified: secure, anxious-ambivalent/resistant, and anxious-avoidant (Berk, 2009). Later, Main and Solomon (1986) identified a fourth category that captured children with more pronounced attachment trauma, namely, disorganised attachment.

Secure attachment.

Securely attached children are keen to engage in new situations as they are confident that others, like their primary caregivers, will be available to assist them in negotiating negative emotions which are regarded as an opportunity for growth. These children have the capacity to self-regulate their emotions and have a worthy sense of the self, which is deserving of love (Carlson & Sroufe, 1995; Cooke et al., 2019; Bowlby, 1988).

Bowlby, (1988) found securely attached children to be trusting of others and emotionally stable. Moreover, these children turn to their primary caregiver in times of need. The caregiver is a source of comfort for the child and is able to console the child when distressed. Securely attached children display happiness and relief when they are reunited with their primary caregivers. Securely attached children also show better emotional regulation and form positive social relationships, often displaying empathy and cooperation (Bowlby, 1988).

Anxious-resistant attachment.

Children with an anxious-resistant attachment, on the other hand, are always on high alert as they have received inconsistent care from their primary caregivers. They resort to exaggerated displays of emotions to ensure they get the assistance they need. This can be attributed to the fact that their AFs only responded when their emotions were at heightened levels in the past (Sroufe, 1996). These children display anger, can be disrespectful, and resist their AF at times. Anxious-resistant children believe that they are not worthy of love and lack self-belief in their ability to tolerate negative emotions (Bowlby, 1973; Bowlby, 1980). These children are continually seeking assistance and want proximity to their teachers in the classroom (Pianta & Nimetz, 1991). Teachers often describe them as very dependent and challenging (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). Pianta's STRS (1988) reflects items like "this child constantly needs reassurance from me" to measure this type of insecurity. Teachers, however, have been found to be very nurturing, and controlling, but tolerant of children who present with anxious-ambivalent attachment (Bergin & Bergin, 2009).

Anxious-avoidant attachment.

Anxious-avoidant children, on the other hand, tend to minimize emotions as they believe that their needs will not be met by others and therefore self-redirect their emotions into other channels. Moreover, they are afraid to get close to others (Carlson & Sroufe, 1995). These children do not approach AFs when they need help and avoid emotional closeness. Ainsworth (1979) sees their avoidant behaviour as fitting, as their AFs were intrusive, angry, and rejecting of them. Bergin and Bergin (2009) regard their avoidant behaviour as a defence mechanism used to hide their anger and other negative feelings from their AFs for fear of being completely rejected by them. Pianta's STRS (1988) reflects items like "this child seems wary of me", and "this child avoids contact with me", to measure this type of insecurity.

According to Sroufe (1996), avoidant children may present with making more contact with teachers during normal class time than securely attached children, yet they will back away when distressed and really need assistance. Teachers find it difficult to connect with anxious avoidant learners as they supress their emotions and often reject attempts by teacher to help them (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). This results in teachers becoming frustrated and emotionally distancing themselves from these learners (Pianta, 1999).

Disorganized/Disorientated attachment.

The two categories of anxious-resistant and anxious-avoidant children fall under the umbrella of insecure attachment. Main and Solomon (1986) added a third category to the insecure attachment group, namely disorganized/disorientated attached children. These children are the most insecurely attached and can present with behaviours from both the avoidant and resistant attachment groups. In addition, they often appear dazed and confused exhibiting contrary behaviours toward their AFs (Main & Solomon, 1990). They can present as overly confident and take over the role of caregiving. They are, however, simultaneously very insecure, and vulnerable. Their AFs were either frightening or extremely insensitive to their needs. In addition, their caregivers have been found to have had a history of abuse, be suffering from depression, or be unable to recover from a traumatic loss like a death or divorce (Carlson et al. 1989).

2.2.4. Teachers' attachment styles

Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) proposed a four-cell model for the four distinct prototypic forms of adult attachment and developed an adult attachment measure. The model was based on a two-sided internal working model consisting of a model of oneself and that of another as advocated by Bowlby (Bartholomew, 1990). In this model attachment styles are continuous and constitute varying degrees of attachment patterns. These prototypic attachment categories are labelled as follows: secure; preoccupied; dismissing and fearful. It is important to note that the measure does not capture the actual experience of parental relationships that determined the adult attachment representation, but rather the way the person describes and has come to terms with their childhood interactions with primary caregivers (Berk, 2009).

Secure attachment.

Securely attached adults can be compared to securely attached children. These adults have a balanced and clear view of their past and can relate both positive and negative aspects of their parental experiences (Watts et al., 2009). Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) found that these adults most often had parents who were warm and accepting. Further securely attached individuals had confidence in their own abilities which results in allowing threatening information into their internal working models to revise erroneous beliefs so that they can develop more flexible and constructive coping plans (Mikulincer & Florian, 2000).

Preoccupied Attachment.

Preoccupied adults can be correlated with resistant or anxious-ambivalent children. These adults find it hard to control their emotions as memories of past parental experiences seem to overwhelm them (Watts et al., 2009). They present with higher levels of anxiety in comparison to both securely and dismissively attached adults (Dagan et al., 2021). Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) found that the parents of this group tended to behave unpredictably, sometimes warm but other times unaccepting and aloof.

Dismissively Attached.

Dismissing adults can be correlated with avoidant childhood attachment. These individuals often idealise past experiences with parents, however, appear detached when recalling painful memories (Watts et al., 2009). They present as low in anxiety but high in avoidance. They often had minimum physical contact with parents who did not display much affection.

Fearfully Attached.

Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) describe the fearful attachment sub-category as those who had experienced traumatic attachment relationships; thus, their attachment insecurity presents with both high levels of anxiety and avoidance. These adults had parents who were harsh and critical, emotionally unavailable, and appeared to not care for their children. In many instances, the parents of frighteningly attached children were found to be neglectful or abusive. Adults who are fearfully attached prefer to be independent of others and avoid intimate relationships to prevent further disappointment and rejection (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

2.3. Relevance of Attachment Theory for The South African context

Attachment theory has been subject to critique regarding its cross-cultural applicability, however, the last two decades have seen studies that show evidence for the universality of attachment (Granqvist, 2021). There is also more sensitivity to cultural and contextual factors that are acknowledged to influence attachment behaviours and caregiving practices (Stern et al., 2022). It is also important to note that attachment has also been found to be a dynamic construct. Attachment patterns are not fixed but can evolve with changes in the quality of relationships and life circumstances, such as changes in caregiving, family dynamics, or life events (Daniel, 2006; Raby et al., 2015). It is thus, imperative to take culture and context into account when applying attachment theory. Understanding the role of both learner and teacher attachment styles in the navigation of these relationships may be beneficial.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

3.1. Introduction

This literature review explores research pertaining to the importance of the relationship between the learner and teacher in both early and middle childhood, in addition to studies that emphasize the long-term consequences of the teacher-learner relationship formed during early and middle childhood. The section on discipline will include theory on child-rearing practices, as these have relevance to teacher-learner relationships in the Foundation Phase. Studies relating to the different strategies and techniques used by teachers to discipline and manage conflict will also be discussed. Lastly, the review will address the research available on the relationships between teachers and learners in the South African context.

3.2. Attachment in early childhood: Relevance for the school setting

Research on the relationship between teachers and learners which is focused primarily on early childhood, has tended to examine relationships between daycare teachers and or kindergarten teachers and children in their care (Boyes et al., 2008). These teachers can be regarded as surrogate attachment figures, as they take care of both the physical and emotional well-being of infants in the absence of their mothers. Pianta and Nimetz (1991) and Howes and Hamilton (1992) found that securely attached infants had more frequent and healthier interactions with their daycare teachers than either resistant or avoidantly attached children, suggesting that the teacher-child relationship reflected similar attachments to that of the mother-child relationship. Children who had received insensitive mothering were identified as being at high risk for continued conflictual relationships with teachers (Jerome et al., 2008).

Pianta (1997) found that the teacher-student relationship had a direct impact on the academic success of the learners. He further viewed adult-child relationships as vitally important in assisting learners to build up emotionally healthy systems which could positively influence a child's ability to self-regulate. Birch and Ladd (1997) used the same variables found in Pianta's STRS (1988) namely: closeness, dependency, and conflict to determine the relationship between teachers and children in their study. Their findings concurred with those of Pianta, namely that academic performance was positively affected by higher degrees of closeness and lower degrees of dependency between the teacher and the kindergarten child.

Moreover, the amount of conflict between teacher and child seemed to have an impact on their overall school adjustment and attitude toward learning and school.
Further research conducted by Hamre and Pianta (2001) investigated the long-term effects of the initial relationship between kindergarten teachers and children. Findings revealed that a negative affiliation between kindergarten teachers and children, characterized by too much dependency and conflict, with little closeness, affected both academic performance and school attitude. Moreover, the effects of these initial relationships had far-reaching consequences up to the eighth grade of schooling. Research by Zee et al. (2021) concurred and found that both academic performance and learners' motivation up to the sixth grade of schooling were influenced by the early association between kindergarten teachers and children. This suggests that an internal working model of a prototype teacher is formed during the first three years of life, which has a profound influence on all future teacher-student relationships. This highlights the crucial importance of the initial affiliation between children and their kindergarten and daycare teachers.

The mental health of these teachers must be taken into consideration, especially in communities where violence is rife. Research in South Africa that focused on infant caregivers from impoverished communities found that caregivers who had experienced high levels of violence are more prone to experience psychological stress and present with elevated levels of depression and social withdrawal. Moreover, teaching has been identified as the highest amongst all contact professions to suffer from burnout (De Heus & Diekstra, 1999). Maslach et al. (2001) defines burnout as is a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job, which are manifested by exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy. Stress and burnout can impact negatively on teachers' ability to respond appropriately to the needs of the children in their care and provide them with adequate cognitive stimulation (Cuartas et al., 2018; Stein et al., 2024). Reports on the mental health of South African school teachers have found mixed results, with some teachers reporting high levels of anxiety and depression (Woudstra et al., 2018), and others reporting good mental health suggestive of the presence of protective factors and high levels of resilience (Boshoff et al., 2014).

3.3. Teacher-child relationships in middle childhood

Bergin and Bergin (2009) report that the classification of student-teacher relationships at the primary school level is not easy to define; even if there is a positive relationship that

exists between educators and their learners, it does not automatically imply that there is a secure attachment between the student and teacher. Moreover, there is a fine line between an extremely insecure attachment and non-attachment between teachers and learners (Howes & Spieker, 2008). Pianta et al. (1997) describe secure student–teacher relationships at the primary school level as having a teacher, that a student can trust, in sync with the needs of a learner, and who provides a safe haven from which the child can explore. In these relationships a learner will willingly look to a teacher for assistance and, more importantly, to be consoled when distressed. These factors are remarkably like those constituting a secure parent-child attachment. In addition, secure teacher-student relationships include teachers showing an interest in the child's academic advancement, by continually assisting and encouraging their learners. Moreover, these teachers tend to allow their learners to make choices during the teaching and learning process, and make use of inductive discipline techniques, which means explaining reasons for rules and punishment to learners (Bergin & Bergin, 2009).

Noddings (1995) regarded the primary school teacher as a special person who could develop a relationship of trust with learners and who could guide them to become sensitive and caring beings. Foundation Phase educators can be regarded as a type of surrogate 'mother' for their class children as they spend more time with learners than most working parents. These teachers usually spend most of the school day with one class and at least one entire year with the same learners (Bergin & Bergin, 2009).

Internal working models can be changed when other attachment figures disconfirm previous experiences with primary attachment figures (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). Epstein (1980) argues that impactful emotional experiences are needed to disprove and revise existing internal models. Thus, it can be contended that new attachment patterns can be formed between teachers and learners at both primary and high school levels despite previous attachment patterns with primary caregivers. However, teachers must work hard to disprove the old internal working attachment patterns and therefore must put in much effort in disconfirming old beliefs of either rejection, apathy, or aggression (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). O'Conner et al., (2011) found that high-quality relationships that were formed in primary school between the teacher and learner, could not only help stop behaviour problems in the later years of schooling but had long-term effects for the cognitive, social, and emotional adjustment of learners far beyond their schooling years. More importantly, their research revealed that

teacher-child relationships could buffer the effects of their insecure attachment patterns with parents. Similar trends were seen in the later years of primary school namely, high-quality supportive relationships between learners and teachers had positive effects on the attitudes of learners towards learning and their actual marks obtained (Krstic, 2015)

3.4. Teacher-student relationships in South African primary schools

There seems to be a breakdown in the relationship between many teachers and learners in South African public primary schools. Many teachers report feeling powerless and demoralized. They are subjected to ridicule daily from learners as they are unable to control disruptive learners who refuse to listen to them. Moreover, many other teachers complain of their personal safety being violated by learners (Nunan, 2018). On the other hand, learners' extreme forms of externalizing behaviour can be attributed to reported feelings of oppression and being undervalued by the school system. Frustrated with their needs not being met and wanting attention leads to disruptive behaviour by many learners in the classroom (Rubbi Numan & Ntombela, 2019). Further, learners with low self-esteem often behave in destructive ways in order to cover up their feelings of inadequacy (Marais & Meier, 2010). Schools are seen as a reflection of the societies within which they are situated, therefore it makes sense that violent societies can be expected to have violence in their schools (Burton, 2008). Given the legacy of violence left behind by Apartheid, and because so many learners in South Africa grow up exposed to aggression in their homes and communities, it is to be expected that they will display hostile behaviour at school (Greeff & Grobbler, 2008). Mayisela (2021) also found evidence of the intergenerational transmission of the trauma of corporal punishment in the South African context, where teachers who had experienced physical punishment during childhood were more likely to inflict physical punishment on learners. Even though corporal punishment has been banned from South African schools since 1996, it is still used in schools by teachers who lack knowledge of alternative discipline methods (Motseke, 2019). Many educators are complaining about behaviour issues and lawlessness in schools, however South African teachers have been found not to be adequately skilled in dealing with learners' behavioural problems (Mncube & Harber, 2012). Teachers feel that there has been a regression in pupils' behaviour with total disregard for educators, especially those coming from disadvantaged regions where all forms of violence are part of learners' daily reality (Mayisela, 2018). Teachers themselves are afraid of hostile learners and hence lose face in the ability to deal with violence (Van De Westhuizen & Maree, 2010). There have also been concerning reports of male teachers in primary schools being offenders

of gender-based violence against both female teachers and learners (Bhana, 2015). In contrast, many female teachers in the townships often go beyond the call of duty and provide care and support for girls who are victims of gender-based violence (Bhana, 2015). Overall, it seems there is an urgent need to help repair the relationships between teachers and learners in South African schools.

3.5. Child-rearing practices and discipline styles

3.5.1. Authoritative discipline

Wentzel (2002) equates effective teachers as having the same qualities as authoritative parents, displaying care but simultaneously having firm control over children. Berk (2009) regards authoritative child rearing as the most successful manner for parents to bring up their children. This parenting style involves high levels of involvement and acceptance but also has adaptive controlling techniques. More importantly, it simultaneously gives children enough freedom to develop optimally. This type of child-rearing places importance on communication. Both the child and parent participate in joint decision making and the child's opinion and voice are regarded (Berk, 2009).

3.5.2. Authoritarian discipline

In contrast, authoritarian child rearing can be regarded as having low parent involvement and acceptance. Parents enforce control and do not take the child's opinion into consideration. These parents are very controlling and low in granting independence and or freedom to their children. Moreover, they are often emotionally unavailable and reject their children. They often ridicule and degrade their children. To control their children they shout, criticize, and threaten (Berk, 2009). These parents often make their caring conditional to get their children to comply with their demands. Berk (2009) refers to the more subtle use of 'psychological control' used by authoritarian parents that can result in the formation of insecure attachment patterns.

3.5.3. Permissive Parenting

On the other hand, permissive child-rearing practices constitute parents who are warm and accepting but have little control over their children. These parents often spoil their children but are emotionally unavailable (Berk, 2009). The author states further that permissive parents give too much liberty with few rules and boundaries. Therefore, it is common for these children to become overly dependent and very demanding on their

caregivers (Berk, 2009). Children raised by parents with a permissive parenting style often present with antisocial behaviour and poor academic achievement (Berk, 2009). Uninvolved child-rearing practices constitute parents who are low in acceptance and are hardly involved in their child's life. These parents present as emotionally detached and are often depressed and therefore do not discipline their children (Berk, 2009). These children often present with poor emotion regulation, antisocial behaviour, and academic difficulties at school (Aunola et al., 2000).

3.6. Attachment styles and discipline

The attachment styles of parents have been found to influence their parenting discipline styles. Magai et al. (2000) found that parents who were securely attached did not withhold their love and affection as a means of disciplining their children. In contrast, parents with a preoccupied attachment style often used love withdrawal together with ridicule and shaming as discipline methods. In addition, these parents often become cold towards their children as a means of getting them to comply and are prone to displaying anger when disciplining their children. On the other hand, dismissively attached parents made direct use of punitive discipline together with love withdrawal as discipline methods. In addition, they made use of shame as another discipline technique (Magai et al., 2000). It is important to note that the discipline methods of the fearfully attached parents were harder to pinpoint since these parents had repressed emotions and did not express themselves directly. Instead, there was the indirect conveying of an attitude of disgust towards their children. Their discipline techniques were characterised by both harshness and inconsistency (Magai et al., 2000).

3.7. Discipline styles in South Africa

Research done by Roman and Lacante (2016) found that mothers were more involved than fathers in bringing up children and made frequent use of authoritative parenting styles across all ethnic groups in South Africa. Authors found that Black South African fathers were found to use an authoritarian parenting style more and an authoritative style less than White fathers. Roman and Lacante (2016) offered the following reasons for their findings: Black fathers were found to be culturally less warm to their children and political circumstances stemming from Apartheid had meant living physically apart from their children and families. Moreover, White fathers were more influenced by Western values and therefore more involved in their children's upbringing but also made more use of authoritarian practices (Roman & Lacante, 2016). A study by September et al. (2016) found that authoritative child

rearing was the most generally used in South Africa, although authoritative parenting was favoured within the higher SES groups whilst permissive parenting was more commonly seen amongst the lower SES groups (September et al.,2016). Knowledge of child development was adequate amongst all SES groups; however, knowledge of early child development was found to have little bearing on child-rearing practices. Research in the South African context has lent support to the notion that the authoritative model is an essentially universally optimal style of parenting that is applicable across all cultural and social contexts (Lamborn & Felbab, 2003).

3.8. Classroom management styles

Schaffer and Kipp (2010) state that one of the main factors making up an effective school is that in these schools the teachers can enforce rules and deal with discipline issues immediately without the help of other staff members. The discipline in effective schools is also never physical in nature, as physical discipline can lead to defiance and tension in the classroom. Moreover, these schools encourage learners to participate in decision-making, which leads to a sense of self-competency and, in turn, positive academic growth (Grolnick & Farkas, 2002). In effective schools, learners are motivated to learn and there is an expectation of academic success (Midgley, 2002). One of the biggest challenges facing all teachers is how to manage the children in their classes. This is especially true of children who are challenging, as they exhibit behaviour that disrupts teaching and are a constant source of stress for teachers. A major component of classroom management is discipline. Teachers use different discipline techniques to ensure that children are compliant, listen to them when they are teaching, and do not disturb other learners in their classes. Bayraktar and Dogan (2017) found that primary school teachers tend to use preventive, supportive, and corrective methods to control children in their classes. Teachers preferred preventive as the first choice followed by supportive techniques. Thus, showing the desire to want to prevent problems before they happen.

A study conducted by Jong et al. (2014) on preservice teachers, focused on teacher personality traits and self-efficacy, together with age and gender, in relation to discipline strategies, to see how these affect teacher-learner relationships. The use of reward and recognition by teachers was found to help build affiliations with learners, and on the other hand, the use of aggression damaged relationships and trust between teachers and learners (Jong et al., 2014). These findings concurred with those of Lewis et al. (2005) and Romi et al.

(2011) namely, that learners who were subjected to aggressive discipline perceived their teacher as less warm. However, authors found for female teachers compared to male teachers, the use of punishment was far less effective in establishing influence in classes, moreover, was even proven to diminish their influence on learners (Jong et al., 2014).

3.9. Classroom management and teacher attachment styles

A study conducted by Morris-Rothschild and Brassard (2006) in the USA found that constructive conflict management strategies, which are important in maintaining a positive classroom climate, were negatively influenced by those teachers whose attachment style measured high in avoidance and to a lesser extent by those who measured high in anxiety. In a similar but later study undertaken by Sher-Censor et al. (2019) in Israel, with special needs teachers, it was found that teachers who displayed an avoidant attachment style had less positive classroom atmospheres. These educators were found to be less sensitive to learners' needs and less likely to regard their learners' perspectives. Similar findings by the longitudinal research of Lishen et al. (2019) revealed that by the end of their first year of school, grade one learners no longer regarded their avoidantly attached teachers as responsive caregivers and this in turn impacted negatively on their overall adjustment to school.

3.10. Conflict management

One of the major components of discipline is how to manage conflictual interactions in the classroom between the teacher and learner. Morris-Rothschild and Brassard (2006) posit that because the different adult attachment styles of teachers are reflections of different internal working models this results in a variety of strategies when dealing with conflict in classes. These authors make reference to the following strategies when dealing with conflict: namely: integrating – which reflects individuals who have an equally strong concern for others as for themselves; compromising – which reflects individuals who are prepared to meet halfway without forgoing their own goals; obliging – which reflects individuals who place more importance on the goals of others and are therefore prepared to give up their own; dominating – which reflects individuals who prioritize their own goals and use their positions of power to get their own way; and lastly, avoiding – which reflects individuals who have minimal concern for themselves or the other and will go to any lengths to avoid conflict. Teachers with a higher self-efficacy, which is a belief in their own abilities to manage their children in their classes, were found to manage conflict effectively and were also more likely to be securely attached (Morris -Rothschild & Bassard, 2006). Teachers who had a higher

belief in their class management efficacy and who also presented with a secure attachment style tended to make use of both integrating and obliging styles to manage conflict in their classes. Teachers who presented with elevated levels of anxiety did not use integrating strategies when dealing with conflict (Morris- Rothschild & Bassard, 2006) .

An unexpected finding by Morris-Rothschild and Bassard, (2006) revealed that although avoidant teachers, were generally less likely to use obliging, integrating, or compromising strategies to manage their classes, they however made use of 'creative integrating strategies' when dealing with conflictual situations. This was twice as much as both avoidant and fearfully attached teachers. The research by Nulman and Alkalay (2023) similarly found that although avoidantly attached teachers had in general more conflictual relationships with their learners they were however prepared to use integrating methods during times of conflicts. This resulted in their learners perceiving them in a more positive light and impacted on learners liking school more (Nulman & Alkalay, 2023).

3.11. Conclusion

Quail and Ward (2022) advocate for the finding of better and alternative ways to discipline children in the classroom that could be applied cross-culturally instead of teachers resorting to corporal punishment. Techniques like 'time out,' 'draining off, listening, and being empathetic are recommended as better alternatives to assist children to regulate their emotions. This further could ensure the optimal development of children in all areas which affects academic achievement, social adjustment, self-esteem, and communication. Additionally, could serve as a buffer against crime and conduct disorders (Quail & Ward, 2022).

Building up the teacher-student relationship is a cost-effective yet powerful way of improving academic achievement. This would be most significant for those learners belonging to at-risk groups i.e., learners from socioeconomically disadvantaged homes and low-achieving learners (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). This has special relevance for the South African context as 60% of South African children can be regarded as poor (Statistics SA, 2020) and research has shown that children from poor backgrounds are more likely to come from unstable families, with mothers who have low levels of education and who suffer with high levels of depression. This results in elevated levels of externalizing and internalizing behavior in their children, and the likelihood that they will have negative relationships with their teachers

(Birch & Ladd 1997, Ashman et al., 2008). Moreover, violence in schools in South Africa has been proven to damage the relationship of trust between teachers and pupils (Van De Westhuizen & Maree, 2010). The long-term trajectory of these learners and the negative outcomes that are associated with poor academic achievement come with a high price for both the individual and society, namely high rates of school failure result in a greater percentage of unemployment, crime, and substance and alcohol abuse (O' Connor et al., 2012; Trenz et al., 2012; Sariaslan et al., 2014). It, therefore, seems more financially beneficial for all parties concerned to start with early intervention programs for children from high-risk groups to help improve behaviour and achievement at schools (Foster et al., 2003). Good relationships with educators would benefit learners' overall social and emotional well-being (Mncube & Harber, 2013; Pianta & Stulhman, 2004).

An understanding of how teacher attachment styles influence teachers' responses to challenging learners could help inform teacher education and training – and ultimately help improve the relationship between the teacher and learners. To date, there has been little research worldwide and none in South Africa on how a teacher's attachment style influences the way he/she disciplines and manages the different insecurely attached children in their classes. This study hopes to fill that gap.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1. Research Questions

Since this was a mixed methods study, there are research questions that were answered by the quantitative part of the design and questions that were answered by the qualitative aspect. There were then also questions answered by the combined results.

4.1.1. Quantitative Research Questions

- Is there a relationship between teacher attachment styles and self-reported discipline styles?
  - H0 – There is no relationship between teacher attachment styles and self-reported discipline styles.
  - H1 – There is a relationship between teacher attachment styles and self-reported discipline styles.
- Are there differences in responses to learners with insecure attachment presentations amongst the various teacher attachment styles?
  - H0 – There are no differences amongst the various teacher attachment styles to learners with insecure attachment presentations.
  - H1 - There are significant differences amongst the various teacher attachment styles to learners with insecure attachment presentations.

4.1.2 Qualitative Research Questions

- What is the influence of teacher attachment experiences on their classroom management and relationships with learners?
- How do teachers with varying attachment styles respond to, and manage children with insecure attachment presentations?
- Are teachers tolerant of learners who present with a similar attachment style as their own?

4.2. Research Design

This study made use of a concurrent mixed-methods design as I included both quantitative and qualitative data relevant to the topic (De Vos et al., 2018). The quantitative section of my research was non-experimental with a cross-sectional design using a nominal level of measurement to create categories (De Vos et al., 2018). The qualitative section of my

study made use of questions in a self-constructed questionnaire to elicit open-ended responses. Using a mixed method approach I was able to investigate differences in the self-reported discipline styles of my participants in the ways they managed and related to insecurely attached children, based on their own attachment styles.

4.2.1. Quantitative aspect of the study

Ivanko et al. (2007) state that the main objective of quantitative research is to describe the trends or explain relationships between variables. Further, the researcher asks questions or formulates hypotheses about variables that can be observed and measured. The sample size is large enough so that results can be used to generalise to the larger population. The quantitative part of my research was non-experimental as I made use of an online survey. Maree and Pietersen (2007) posit that surveys are the most widely used non-experimental quantitative design used in descriptive studies that measure variables of selected units at a specific time without any manipulation.

I therefore chose a survey as the most suitable measure for my study as I initially aimed at gathering between fifty to one hundred responses to my questionnaire. Monette et al. (2008) describe surveys as instruments for obtaining information from large sections of the population and having questions that must be answered. Attachment styles of teachers were measured using the Relationship Structures Questionnaire- ECR-RS (Fraley et al., 2000). Self-reported discipline styles were measured using a self-created scale that asks teachers to choose from options that best describe their discipline style. In addition, self-reported responses to standardized vignettes of the various learner presentations were used to identify any significant differences and trends in discipline styles and responses by teachers to the various insecure attachment learner presentations.

4.2.2. Qualitative aspect of the study

De Vos et al. (2018) describe qualitative research as being a subjective view of reality and more concerned with understanding and describing from an individual perspective. Therefore, use is made of non-statistical methods to obtain data which is usually intentionally chosen for the purpose of investigation. The qualitative section of my research investigated the lived experiences of teachers through open-ended questions. The self-composed questions extracted information from teachers about the way they related and managed insecurely attached children in their classes. Kumar (2018) states further that qualitative research can be

defined as unstructured because it allows for flexibility in the research process. This is therefore more fitting for the exploration of the nature of a problem or issue. The main purpose of a qualitative study is to provide descriptive information without quantifying it (Kumar, 2018).

4.3. Strengths and limitations of a mixed methods approach

There seems to be a general agreement between authors that in the real-life human sciences, a mixed-method research approach is beneficial (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Creswell (2009) explains the reason for this as mixed methods research can be regarded as a general advancement in research methodology as it draws on the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Increased usage of the mixed methods approach by researchers in both the social and health sciences is seen to be owing to the intricacy and complex nature of the research topics undertaken (Cresswell, 2009). Both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies by themselves cannot fulfil this task.

The timing of my research was concurrent; that is the quantitative and qualitative data was collected simultaneously via an online survey. Creswell (2009) refers to the 'concurrent embedded strategy' which entails the collection of data at the same time, but where one section, in my case the qualitative sections, were embedded in my quantitative sections. Moreover, the qualitative data elaborated on answers obtained from the quantitative section and thus supported and embellished the quantitative data (Creswell, 2009).

O'Cathain et al. (2010) posit that this integration component of the mixed methods methodology adds more credibility to the results obtained and conclusions that are made from the research. Creswell (2009) postulates that mixed methods research brings added insight to the research topic, something that could not be achieved by either quantitative or qualitative research alone. This leads to a greater and in-depth understanding of the research topic on hand (Creswell, 2009).

Despite its many advantages, I was aware of the disadvantages of a mixed methods approach. The mixing of information required a unique type of transformation to take place between the quantitative and qualitative methods so that in the end they supported or complemented each other. This was not an effortless process, and a great deal of time was spent on ensuring its

success. (Creswell, 2009). Further, I made sure to have a sound knowledge of both qualitative and quantitative research methods as both were included in the study. I also made sure to allocate sufficient time to adequately prepare both parts of methodologies in the research and for the converting of information from the two methods which enabled me to integrate information.

Overall, I feel that the benefits obtained from using a mixed-method approach outweighed the cons. McKim's (2017) research on the value that graduate learners place on the different research methodologies supports this premise, as a mixed method approach was found to be the most highly regarded form of research, due to its rigorous procedures and newer history. Further, graduates viewed a mixed methods approach as being able to supply a deeper meaning to the research topic due to in-depth explanations, and this made it easier to understand the phenomenon under review (McKim, 2017).

4.4. Sample

My sample consisted of Foundation Phase teachers in South Africa who met the following minimum criteria:

- Teachers were proficient in English.
- Teachers had at least three years' experience teaching in the Foundation Phase.
- Teachers had a formal qualification in teaching and were registered with the South African Council for Educators (SACE).

The participant group for this study was largely homogenous. All the participants in this study were female, which aligns with the fact that teaching is a highly feminised profession (Schmude, & Jackisch, 2019; Davids & Waghid, 2020).

The majority of the participants were also mature, that is most participants were forty years or older (See Tables 1 and 2). In addition, more than fifty percent of the participants had fourteen or more years of teaching experience and all participants, besides for three teachers, taught in private schools (See Tables 4 and 6).

4.5. Data collection

Phase one

I gained permission from the admins of two Facebook groups, namely, 'Teaching Posts in South Africa (Teachers Forum)' and 'South African Teachers' to place the invitation

to my survey on their site. In addition, I gained permission from the admin of the WhatsApp group known as 'Educators Collaboration Network' previously known as the 'Teachers Group' to post my invitation to participate in my survey on their group. The invitation included the link, and the criteria needed to participate in my survey. I also made use of snowballing on WhatsApp and sent the invitation to other Foundation Phase teachers, asking them to forward it on to either their colleagues where they worked or friends who were Foundation Phase teachers. I aimed at obtaining between fifty to one hundred surveys, however, after many months of reposting on social media sites with a low response rate, I decided to approach schools directly.

Phase two

I decided to approach all IEB primary schools in South Africa as I obtained the list of the schools that fell under their auspices on their website. It must be noted that IEB schools have schools with varying socio-economic backgrounds. Moreover, it was a pragmatic choice to reach out to IEB schools as it avoided having to go through a lengthy process to gain permission from the Department of Education to conduct research in public schools. However, the available email addresses on the websites of schools were to either their admin or secretaries. I was therefore very often operating in the dark, that is relying on administrative staff of schools to forward my email with my link to my survey to the principal or the relevant department head to gain permission for my invitation to be circulated to their Foundation Phase staff. The majority of schools did not respond to my email. However, there were several schools that did acknowledge receipt of my email, even if it were to inform me that they were or were not going to participate in my survey. There was also one school that required extra information from me and requested a copy of my proposal together with additional information about myself and the research. Two schools indicated that they were willing to circulate my invitation to their staff. In the end, only thirty-three responses to the survey were recorded, of which six were incomplete**.** Reasons for the difficulty in attaining responses could be a combination of the long questionnaire and time required to complete it, teacher fatigue/burnout (Bernstein & Batchelor, 2022; Ndebele et al., 2022), or a lack of teacher awareness regarding attachment theory.

4.6. The survey design

The survey consisted of three sections for participants to complete (see Appendix 2).

Section one included general demographic questions relating to age, gender, years of experience and teaching qualifications, a combination of forced choice (Likert scale) and open-ended questions regarding teaching roles, discipline styles and perceptions on the importance of relationships in the classroom.

Section two of the survey consisted of questions relating to participants' responses to three standardised vignettes depicting classic learner insecure attachment presentations. These questions also consisted of a combination of forced choice (Likert scale) questions and open-ended questions. Participants were required to answer the same set of closed and open-ended questions on all the three vignettes/case studies.

The third section of the survey comprised of the Relationship Structures Questionnaire- ECR-RS (Fraley et al., 2000). This questionnaire was used to measure the attachment patterns of the participants in different close relationships from both childhood and adulthood.

All surveys were answered by participants online, so there was no need to transcribe the data (Flick, 2006). I however, organised and saved all the surveys in clearly labelled password protected files on my computer so that I could find the information easily. Further, I ensured that I have a backup of all data received by saving a copy in password-protected cloud storage in case anything happened to my computer (Esterberg, 2002).

4.7. Measures

4.7.1. The Relationships Structures Questionnaire

The Relationship Structures Questionnaire (ECR-RS) is a self-report questionnaire designed to assess attachment patterns in different close relationships. Questions are answered through a Likert scale of seven points, ranging from 1= strongly disagree, to 7= strongly agree. Each relationship is assessed by a scale that theoretically comprises two factors: anxious and avoidant attachment. The same 9 items on the questionnaire are used to assess attachment styles with various attachment figures, for example, mother (or a mother-like figure), father (or a father-like figure), current (or a former romantic partner), and best friend (or close friends). The ECR-RS is a shorted 9-item version of the 36-item Experiences in Close Relationships Questionnaire–Revised (ECR-R) (Fraley et al., 2000).

Based on a sample of over 21,000 individuals studied online, ECR-RS scores were proven to be reliable and have a structure like those produced by similar measures (Fraley et al., 2000). One of the major advantages of the ECR-RS is that there is no ambiguity for participants as to which relationship they are rating, unlike some other attachment measures (Fraley et al., 2011). A second advantage is that items are not specific to one kind of relational domain, so this makes it possible for the scores across the various relationship domains to be compared. A third advantage to the ECR-RS is that it is relatively short enabling different attachment styles to be assessed across relationship domains without placing an unnecessary burden on participants. Lastly, The ECR-RS is a measure that can be used to study not only security versus insecurity in different relational domains but also the amount of homogeneity versus differentiation that exists in people's working models (Fraley et al., 2011).

It has been found that relationship-specific measures of attachment, like the ECR-RS generally predict intra- and interpersonal outcomes better than broader attachment measures (Fraley et al., 2011). While the ECR-RS has not been validated for use with a South African population, it has been adapted to Brazilian Portuguese by Senhorini and Rocha (2012). The validity and reliability of the Brazilian version of ECR-RS was demonstrated in a further study by da Rocha et al. (2017) substantiating both the validity and reliability of the measure for the Portuguese-speaking population of Brazil. Fraley et al. (2011) point out that anxiety scales have the potential to suffer from response acquiescence like other attachment self-measures.

4.7.2. Calculation of Attachment Styles

To calculate the attachment style of teachers I made use of the Relationship Structures Questionnaire ECR-RS (Fraley et al., 2000). All participants were required to complete the questionnaire as part of my survey. However, it became evident when I was analysing my data that the scales did not adequately differentiate between the adulthood and childhood attachment scores of participants. The ECR-RS gave one final score of attachment for participants as it combined the score from childhood and adulthood attachment. The Relationship Structures Questionnaire classified all but one participant as secure (See Table 9).

Due to the fact that one of the main interests of this study was to investigate how attachment experiences, i.e. attachment from childhood and or adulthood influence the manner teachers relate and manage insecurely attached learners, it was therefore decided to separate the two

scores of attachments. That is, to obtain one score of attachment for childhood and another score for adulthood attachment (See Tables 10 and 11). After calculating scores separately, a new picture emerged, namely six participants measured insecure in childhood, and two measured insecure in adulthood. There was one participant who measured insecure in both childhood and adulthood.

Lastly participants were categorised as either secure or insecure based on the separate scores calculated from both childhood and adulthood. Namely, if a participant measured insecure from either childhood or adulthood, she was classified as insecure. In this manner two distinct groups of participants were created, namely teachers who were securely attached and teachers who were insecurely attached. Many comparisons and discussions in this study make reference to these two groups of attachment (See Table 12).

4.7.3. Discipline Styles

In order to classify teacher's discipline style and the amount of emotional support given to learners by teachers in the classroom, short descriptions of various discipline styles for teachers, informed by existing theory on discipline styles (Berk, 2009; Sanvictores & Mendez, 2023), were included and teachers chose the style that they felt best described/matched their own style. These descriptive paragraphs ranged from Authoritarian, Authoritative, Permissive to Uninvolved.

Included below are the numbered paragraphs that were available for participants to choose from and how I interpreted their answers.

Figure 1: Teacher Discipline Scale with descriptions

Authoritarian		**Authoritative**		**Permissive**		**Uninvolved**	
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**

1 = I can be described as a very strict teacher. I lay down rules and enforce them. I have rigid boundaries between myself and learners, which are hardly ever crossed. I don't get involved in their personal lives and they know nothing about my private life. I do not think it is my role to provide learners with emotional support.

2 = I can be best described as a disciplinarian, as I believe rules are important for creating structure in the classroom. I keep healthy boundaries with learners, and I will only get involved in their personal lives when it is necessary. Although I do not think it is my job to provide emotional support for learners there are times, however when I will have to do so.

3 = I can be best described as firm, but fair, as I believe that some rules are necessary. I will go out of my way to get the buy-in from my pupils to make them understand the importance of rules. However, the emotional needs of my pupils are for me equally important as rules. I think that it is essential to create relationships with my pupils and to get to know them well.

4 = I can be described as a loving and kind teacher**.** I have a genuine affection for my learners. I am in tune with their emotional needs but can put down my foot when the need arises. There are rarely discipline issues in my class, as my learners love and want to please me. I believe that learners thrive and learn best when they feel cared for, and have their emotional needs met.

5 = I can best be described as a cool and fun teacher as I give my learners many liberties. I do not believe in making and enforcing rules, as I was a rebel at school. I get very involved in the personal lives of both my learners and their parents and do not have any concerns about mixing my personal and professional life. I often give gifts to learners to convey my affection for them. I also receive many gifts as I am loved by my learners and their families. The emotional well-of my pupils takes precedence above all else.

6 = I can be described as a chilled and laid-back teacher. I do not see the need to have rules or to enforce them in any way. I give my learners liberties as I do not feel that structure is necessary for them. Children's emotional needs are somewhat important to me as I want only happy, carefree learners in my class as this will give me the least amount of trouble.

7 = I am very good at the administrative side of teaching. I, however, have so much going on in my personal life that I do not have the capacity or energy to make rules and enforce them. I find it unacceptable that my learners cannot behave properly. I think it is very unfair that I am expected to provide emotional support to learners as well as discipline them, besides teaching

them. Only when I am forced to, will I get involved in their personal lives and discipline learners.

8 = I have no problem letting my pupils do as they please as I am only teaching for financial reasons. Teaching is my job, not my passion. It is therefore much easier for me to turn a blind eye than get involved in the personal affairs of my learners. I do not provide the children in my class with any form of emotional support, as I firmly believe that is the role of others like psychologists /social workers and their parents. I am further of the opinion that learners should be taught at home to behave properly. Enforcing rules is too energy-consuming for me.

On the extreme left of the continuum is the Authoritarian discipline style whilst on the extreme right is the Uninvolved discipline style. The Authoritative and Permissive discipline styles are situated in the middle of the continuum. This continuum accommodates the fact that teachers are not totally one style or another but could lean somewhere in between the different discipline styles. It is important to bear in mind that discipline styles would also fluctuate depending on the type of learners, that is insecurely attached learners would require a different discipline style than securely attached learners. Authoritative discipline in broad terms consists of moderate levels of control by teachers over learners balanced with nurturing and acceptance. Discipline is used as an adaptive controlling technique; hence the child will have a voice, and their opinions will be taken into consideration (Berk, 2009). Sanvictores and Mendez (2023) state further that Authoritative disciplining provides the healthiest outcomes for children but acknowledge that much effort and perseverance are needed to make it work.

4.7.4. Responses to learner insecure attachment presentations

To gather data on the teachers' responses to various types of learner insecure attachment presentations, I developed three vignettes, that depicted the three insecure attachments namely: Child A = insecure- resistant/ambivalent, Child B = insecure-avoidant and Child C = insecure-disorganised (Berk, 2009; Main & Solomon, 1986). These vignettes were constructed using literature sources on how the differently attached children could present in terms of behaviour and emotional responses in the classroom (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Birch

& Ladd, 1997; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Pianta & Nimetz, 1991; Rubbi Nunan & Ntombela, 2019).

The following vignettes were used:

Child A

This learner is very emotionally needy and attention seeking. He/she often needs constant reassurance and encouragement when working. Further, this learner often complains that he/she cannot comprehend tasks. However, after individual assistance and or encouragement is rendered, it becomes apparent that the learner can complete tasks. He/she will go to any lengths to get your attention, including shouting out and misbehaving. This learner often pushes your buttons and can be described as 'annoying.' He/she often gets extremely nervous when tested and fears being monitored. Test results are not always congruent with class work. He/she often complains of feeling sick and or having injuries. Lastly, he /she often cries, whines, and complains that situations are unjust and unfair.

Child B

This learner can be described as introverted and a loner. This learner rejects any help from you with work. Moreover, he/she will not ask for assistance even when it is needed. He/she is noticeably quiet and mostly keeps to himself/herself. It is difficult to gauge how this learner feels as he/she is reluctant to share personal information or participate in discussions. He/she struggles with social interactions in the class with both peers and adults alike. It is easy to forget that he/she is in the class. He/she can be too independent, that is wanting to do everything on his/her own, yet you sense an underlying vulnerability and or insecurity. This learner can, however, be passive-aggressive and defiant at times, especially towards adults. He/she can be seen to become totally engaged with tasks that he/she finds easy.

Child C

This learner is very reactive and prone to outward displays of emotions when becoming upset. He/she has temper tantrums, throws objects, and or runs out of the classroom. He/she has little impulse control and is constantly shouting out answers. He/she finds it hard to wait for his/her turn. He/she is physically or verbally abusive to others. This learner blows hot and cold, as at times he/she is overly demonstrative – wants hugs and comfort from you but at other times seems to despise you. This learner often struggles academically either due to

backlogs from previous grades or learning difficulties. He/she has been labelled as the naughty child of the class/school. He/she finds it difficult to get along with peers especially members of the opposite sex. In addition, this learner can display behaviour similar to either Child A and or Child B.

4.8. Procedure

I conducted an initial pilot study to identify issues with my data collection protocols (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The pilot phase of the study involved asking several colleagues to complete my questionnaire. I then requested feedback regarding their experience of completing the questionnaire, regarding length, accessibility of language, clarity of questions, and suitability of vignettes – and made necessary adjustments. I expected participants to take between 15-30 minutes to complete the questionnaire depending on how much detail was given when answering the open-ended questions. I made use of the Redcap program to create my online questionnaire.

Thereafter, I used purposive sampling on social media sites that attracted teachers. I gained permission from the admin of the open Facebook Groups, namely, South African Teachers and Teaching Posts in South Africa (Teachers Forum) to post the invitation to participate in my survey which included a link. Furthermore, I posted the invitation and the link to my survey on the closed WhatsApp group called Educators Collaboration Network formerly known as The Teachers Group after gaining permission from the admin. Due to the low response received, I also used snowballing and made use of WhatsApp as my platform to reach Foundation Phase educators. Snowballing has been found to be an acceptable method of collecting data for qualitative research especially when participants are not easy to access (Naderifar et al., 2017).

After many months of reposting my invitation on social media platforms, I ascertained from the low response rate that there was a need to access participants via an alternative way. I, therefore decided to contact IEB schools as there are over 100 primary schools registered with the IEB in Southern Africa, with 54 located in the Gauteng region. Moreover, these schools represent a cross-section of socioeconomic brackets, (https://www.ieb.co.za). The Independent Examinations Board (IEB) is a South African assessment agency that conducts assessments for schooling and adult education. When I contacted this organisation, I was directed to a page on their website that contained a list of all IEB schools displaying their

contact numbers and or website addresses (see https://www.ieb.co.za/pages/iebprimaryschools). I thereafter had to find the individual email addresses of the listed schools via their websites. However, the majority of schools displayed the email addresses of only either admin or secretarial staff not principals. I therefore sent emails to the school administrator, explaining my research and requesting that they forward my email to the relevant person or principal at their school. I included the invitation and link to my survey so that it could be forwarded to their teachers, if permission was granted. I did not have any direct contact with teachers or teacher groups at any of the schools, as all communication was done via the school administrator or heads of departments.

4.9. Data Analysis

4.9.1. Quantitative Data Analysis

Descriptive statistical techniques were used to examine the frequency distributions of the attachment styles of teachers and other demographic information (Kreuger & Neuman, 2006). Due to the small sample size, the data was not normally distributed, therefore non-parametric statistical analyses were run (Sedgewick, 2015). Spearman's Rank Correlation test was used to determine if any correlations existed between variables on the survey. Use was made of the Mann-Whitney U Test to determine any statistical differences that existed between the two discernible groups, namely securely and insecurely attached participants with regards to discipline style, classroom management and responses to the three vignettes.

4.9.2 Qualitative data analysis

I made use of Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) as the main means of analysing the qualitative data, which was comprised of the participants' answers to the open-ended questions in the survey. RTA provided me with a method to identify themes and emerging patterns within the qualitative data. Final themes were interpreted and written up using the paradigm of Attachment theory (Clarke & Braun, 2017). I chose to use the RTA approach advocated by Braun and Clarke (2006; 2019) which can be described as a six-phase linear process. Nowell et al. (2017) regard RTA as a reflective process that takes a lot of time and involves the constant movement forward and backward between phases. The six phases were as follows:

1. Becoming well acquainted with the data
2. Creating preliminary codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing the themes

5. Defining and naming themes
6. Writing the report

This provided me with a systematic procedure for creating codes and themes from my data. Codes are described by Clarke and Braun (2017) as the smallest units of analysis that capture salient features of the data that pertain to the research question. The codes identified from the data were grouped into themes that pertained to the different ways teachers' respond to, discipline, and manage insecurely attached learners. My analysis was deductive as it was driven by my research questions. I used codes as the building blocks to assist me in building up my themes and in this manner, I was able to answer my research questions. Moreover, I engaged in reflexive TA as I was cognisant of the fact that my research was subjective, and I was aware of the continual influence I had on my research, from the phrasing of questions for my survey to the interpretation of my results (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

4.9.3 Mixed Method Analysis

I made use of the results obtained from the analysis of the open-ended questions found in both sections one and two of my survey to explain and elaborate on the findings obtained from my quantitative findings. Moreover, the themes found in the qualitative analysis provided insight to the trends found in the quantitative analysis. Thus, by mixing data, additional value was added to my research. This interlinking of both the qualitative and quantitative data assisted in producing richer answers to my research questions (Glogowska, 2015; Zhang & Creswell, 2013). Although the sample was too small to detect significant differences between groups, trends in the qualitative data provided some interesting findings.

4.10. Ensuring rigour of the study

Glogowska (2015) posits that that the integration of the qualitative findings with the quantitative can happen at any point during the research process but that consideration of both is vital to the rigor of mixed methods research. Researchers who make use of mixed methods should give clear and detailed accounts of all the major key methodological parts of their research process to provide transparency for the reader (Halcomb & Hickman, 2015). Lavelle et al. (2013) advise researchers to be rigorous in their approach and to keep an audit trail of the steps taken during research to ensure the rigour of the research process with be maintained. Researchers using mixed methods must be vigilant to the fact that even though the method itself is assumed to increase the validity of research, the same strict criteria that

are needed in both qualitative and quantitative research must still be adhered to when using a mixed approach (Creswell et al. 2011). Researchers must justify the reasons for their methods chosen and provide readers with a clear audit trail of all the steps taken in during the research process (Halcomb & Hickman, 2015). Credibility was ensured through clear explanation of the methods used. Also, interpretations of the data were evidenced through the use of direct quotes from participant responses. In this way, the influence of my own biases and opinions were minimised and the responses of the participants could be known directly (Cope, 2014). Further, the emotions and feelings of participants that were represented through the quotes added to the authenticity of the study. Finally, the inclusion of these quotes further enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of my research as readers could then decide whether they would reach the same conclusions of my study from them (Cope, 2014).

There is no such a thing as an objective researcher and therefore it is impossible for the researcher to remain a neutral onlooker from his/her research (Palaganas et al., 2017). Every researcher must also be aware of their own biases. In my case this rendered particularly true as I am still an active teacher, embroiled in the practical daily challenges of teaching learners, some of whom are insecurely attached. Therefore, I had to be careful not to engage in the type of reflexivity which claims to know and fully understand their participants as well as their motivations. This type of reflexivity is known as recognition of the other (Pillow, 2003). Moreover, my awareness that my insecure attachment from childhood meant that I had a deep affiliation and identification with the research topic. I had to further question whether this added or detracted to the findings of the research. This type of reflexivity is advocated by Power (2003) and is referred to as ‘uncomfortable reflexivity’. While there are no simple answers to the complex questions regarding the influence of the researcher, transparency in this regard can enhance the rigor of the study. To ensure transparency I kept a reflexive journal when analysing my qualitative data and recorded any responses. Any feelings that were evoked were then discussed with my supervisor. As much of my data was made up of questions that were self-composed, I tried to be cognisant of how I posed my questions, including my word choice and the order of my questions as these choices shaped and influenced my research. According to Pillow (2003), a researcher can never really know oneself entirely and makes reference to this type of reflexivity as recognition of the self. It was therefore helpful that my experienced supervisor was continually checking and questioning the rationale of my questions and word choice.

Moreover, it is also important to acknowledge that the findings of this study were coloured by the theoretical framework used, namely, Attachment Theory. There can be no such thing as atheoretical thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2019). We shape and are shaped by our research, there is an ongoing dialogue between the researcher and research topic (Panangans et al., 2017). However, this is not seen as a negative but rather as an essential part of the analytical experience of reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2021).

4.11. Ethical considerations

No data was collected until a clearance certificate was obtained from the University of the Witwatersrand Ethics Committee (Non-medical). Researchers have two main priorities to consider when it comes to ethical responsibilities when embarking on research. The first is to the participants themselves. The second is to the field of science itself, in that the reporting of findings must be both accurate and honest (Gravetter & Forzano, 2003). This applies especially to the social sciences as the focus of investigation usually consists of participants who are human beings and or the communities in which they reside. De Vos et al. (2018) stress that ethical considerations are not straightforward in social research in comparison to the natural sciences, as data should never be obtained at the expense of human beings. The term 'ethics' encompasses the following: adhering to a code of principles; the rules of behaviour; choices that influence human behaviour; the researcher's responsibility and the standards of conduct of a profession (Babbie, 2015; Monette et al., 2008; Walliman, 2006). De Vos et al. (2018) view ethical guidelines as standards upon which every researcher should use to judge his/her own behaviour. Bless et al. (2006) advocate that ethical principles must become so integrated into the makeup of the researcher that the humane and sensitive treatment of participants will never be an issue.

4.11.1. Avoidance of harm

De Vos et al. (2018) advocate that participants' well-being, which is both their physical and emotional well-being, is always more important than any research topic and its results. I therefore always put my participants' well-being before my own research. I was cognisant that participants might experience emotional distress when they are asked to reflect on how they related in relationships from both childhood and in adulthood when they completed the Relationship Structures questionnaire. Despite the fact the questionnaire was short and does not require participants to dwell on details of these relationships, it still might have brought back painful memories for some participants who have experienced relationship

difficulties with significant others and had traumatic experiences. I also aware of the fact that emotional distress could of be experienced by some teachers when they recalled how they managed and disciplined challenging learners. Babbie (2015) recommends that a debriefing session after research can assist with any problems that were caused due to the research process. Due to my survey being conducted online, debriefing was not possible. However, I provided details regarding access to counselling services at the end of my survey that participants could access if any emotional distress was experienced by participating in my study. I included a list of free groups and societies in South Africa that provide either telephonic, free, or affordable counselling.

4.11.2. Voluntary participation and informed consent

At the beginning of the survey the participant information sheet included a statement that informed potential participants that their anonymity would be protected and that completing and submitting the survey was taken to mean consent to participate. I ensured that participants were aware that their participation in my study was voluntary, and that they have the right to withdraw at any stage before clicking the submit button at the end of the survey. I explained the overall purpose and aims of my research and made clear the role participants would be playing in my survey. Since my survey was done online, it did not afford participants the opportunity to ask me questions directly. Therefore, I included my email address and that of my supervisor so that participants could contact us with any concerns and questions about my research. The survey informed participants that their anonymous data would be kept for future possible research purposes and stored for a period of 10 years in the researcher and her supervisor's password-protected cloud-based storage. With their permission, anonymised data might be used by other researchers for future research purposes.

4.11.3. Privacy and anonymity

De Vos et al. (2018) describe anonymity as implying that no one including the researcher should be able to identity participants once the research has been completed. I made use of an online anonymous survey technique that guaranteed participant anonymity. Moreover, only my supervisor and I had access to the completed surveys on our computers which were safeguarded with a password.

Chapter 5: Results

5.1. Introduction

Due to the fact that only thirty-three surveys were answered and of these, only twenty-seven participants completed the Relationship Structures Questionnaire (ECR-RS), the data did not have a normal distribution. Therefore, non-parametric statistical analyses were used. Spearman's Rank Correlation test was used to see if there were any significant correlations between attachment security scores, discipline and classroom management styles and demographic variables and responses to the various insecurely attached children in the vignettes. Due to the fact that there were two discernible groups i.e. secure and non-secure attachment, the Mann-Whitney U test was used to ascertain if there were any significant differences in responses to the various insecure child vignettes between these groups. Both tests are suitable for nonparametric data (Aldrich, 2018; Sedgewick, 2015; Sheskin, 2003). The qualitative data from all 33 responses was analysed using reflexive thematic analysis. Since this was a concurrent mixed methods study, the quantitative and qualitative data sets were analysed concurrently and will be presented as such.

5.2. Demographics

The following outlines the demographic profile of the sample, in order to provide a sense of who the participants in this study were.

Table 1

Gender of Participants

	Frequency	Percentage
Female	28	84,8%
Male	0	0,0%

Missing = 5 (15,2%)

All participants who took the survey were female which lends support to the worldwide trend of teaching, especially at the primary level being a feminised profession (Schmude, & Jackisch, 2019; Davids & Waghid, 2020).

Table 2

Age of Participants

	Frequency	Percentage
20-29 years	2	6,1%
30-39 years	6	18,2%
40-49 years	5	15,2%
50-59 years	10	30,3%
60 years and more		

Missing = 5 (15.2%)

Approximately one third of participants (30.3%) were between the ages of 50-59 years old. Six teachers were between the ages of 30-39 years old, and five others were between the ages of 40-49 years old. There were only two participants between the ages of 20-29 years old. A minimum requirement of the survey was three years teaching experience in the Foundation Phase.

Table 3

Relationship Status of Participants

	Frequency	Percentage
Single	6	18,2%
In a relationship	2	6,1%
Married	17	51,5%
Other	3	9,1%

Missing = 5 (15,2%)

Most of the respondents were married (51.5%). Of the others, 18.2% of the respondents were single and 6.1 % reported being in a relationship. There were three participants (9%) who choose ‘other’ as their relationship status

Table 4

Teaching Experience of Participants

	Frequency	Percentage
3-6 years	4	12,1%
7-10 years	4	12,1%
11-13 years	4	12,1%
14 or more years	16	48,5%
Missing = 5 (15,2%)		

Almost half of the participants (48.5%) had been teaching for fourteen or more years. The rest of the respondents were evenly distributed that is 12.1% had been teaching for 3-6 years; 12,1% for 7-10 years, and 12,1% had 11-13 years of teaching experience.

Table 5

Educational Level of Participants

	Frequency	Percentage
Degree with Postgraduate Diploma	12	36,4%
Further Diploma	2	6,1%
Honors	2	6,1%
Other	3	9,1%
Missing = 5 (15,2%)		

A third of the teachers (36.4%) had a degree with a postgraduate teaching diploma. Two teachers had a further diploma, and an additional two participants had an honours degree. Three teachers chose ‘other’ for their qualification preference but did not specify as to what these were.

Table 6

Location of Workplace

	Frequency	Percentage
Government school in urban areas	2	6,1%
Government school in rural areas	1	3,0%
Private school in suburban areas	25	75,8%
Missing =3 (9.1%)		

Most teachers, 75.8%, taught in private schools situated in suburban areas. Two participants (6.1%) taught in government schools located in urban areas whilst one teacher taught in a government school in a rural area.

5.3. Educational context

The following section provides information on the teaching contexts in which this group of participants work.

Table 7

Socio-Economic Status of Learners

	Frequency	Percentage
Extremely low	1	3,0%
Low middle	1	3,0%
Mixed range	6	18,2%
High- middle	16	48,5%
Very High	4	12,1%
Missing = 5 (15,2%)		

Almost half of the learners (48,5%) were from high to middle class homes. Six teachers indicated that their learners came from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. Four teachers indicated that their learners were from privileged homes. While one teacher taught learners who were all from poor communities and came to school hungry, one other participant reported some of her learners coming to school hungry.

Table 8

Number of Learners

	Frequency	Percentage
6-10 learners	4	12,1%
11-20 learners	14	42,4%
21-29 learners	6	18,2%
30-39 learners	2	6,1%
40 or more	2	6,1%

Missing = 5 (15,2%)

42.4% of teachers had classes consisting of 11-20 learners. Six teachers had classes consisting of 21 to 29 learners and four others had smaller classes consisting of 6 to 10 learners. This is likely due to the fact that most of the sample worked in private school settings. Two participants had bigger classes made up of between 30 to 39 learners, whilst an additional two teachers had classes that had forty or more learners.

5.4. Attachment styles

This section provides a description of the attachment styles of this group of teachers and how the groups ‘secure’ and ‘insecure’ were determined.

Table 9

Relationship Structures Questionnaire (ECR-RS)

	Frequency	Percentage
Secure	26	78,8%
Preoccupied	1	3,0%
Dismissive	0	0%
Fearful Avoidant	0	0 %

Missing=6 (18,2%)

Twenty-six teachers (78.8%) fell into the secure quadrant of the ECR-RS scale when calculating the avoidance and anxiety scores from both childhood and adulthood relationships. Participant number 27 was the only participant that fell in the preoccupied quadrant (see Appendix 4 to view the ECR-RS scale).

Table 10

Childhood Attachment Scores

	Frequency	Percentage
Secure	21	63,7%
Preoccupied	0	0.0%
Dismissive	6	18,2%
Fearful avoidant	0	0.0%

Missing=6 (18,2%)

Twenty-one participants (63.7%) fell into the secure quadrant of the ECRS -RS scale when anxiety and avoidance scores were calculated based on their childhood relationships with mother and father figures. Six teachers fell into the dismissive quadrant.

Table 11

Adult Attachment Scores

	Frequency	Percentage
Secure	24	72,7%
Preoccupied	2	6,1%
Dismissive	0	0,0%
Fearful Avoidant	0	0,0%

Missing=7 (21,2%)

Twenty-four teachers, namely (72.7%) fell in the secure quadrant of the ECRS -RS scale when avoidance and anxiety scores were calculated based on friend and partner relationships in adulthood. Two teachers fell in the preoccupied quadrant.

Table 12

Final Attachment Scores

	Frequency	Percentage
Securely Attached	20	60,6%
Insecurely Attached	7	21,2%
Missing 6= (18,2%)		

Participants were designated into two final categories, namely Securely Attached or Insecurely Attached groups based on their Childhood and/or Adulthood Attachment Scores (see Table 10 and 11). If their scores fell into an insecure range historically or currently, so either their Childhood or Adulthood score fell into an insecure category, they were designated as insecure overall. Notably, the distribution of 60% secure attachment is consistent with both local and international attachment distribution rates (Voges et al., 2019). Twenty teachers (60,6%) measured secure in attachment and seven participants measured insecure in attachment. Six participants did not complete the Relationship Structures Questionnaire.

5.5. Job satisfaction

The following section provides detail on the levels of job satisfaction that this group of teachers' experience. Both quantitative and qualitative data is reported.

Table 13

The Level of Job Satisfaction of Participants

	Frequency	Percentage
Extremely unsatisfied	3	9,1%
Unsatisfied	1	3,0%
Neutral	2	6,1%
Satisfied	12	36,4%
Extremely satisfied	10	30,3%
Missing = 5 (15,2%)		

Two thirds of the teachers were either satisfied with their jobs (36.4%) or extremely satisfied (30.3%). One participant indicated that she was unsatisfied, and three others indicated that

they were extremely unsatisfied in their jobs. Two participants choose ‘neutral’ as their answer. Five participants did not answer this question.

When asked what they liked most about their jobs, most teachers in both the securely and insecurely attached groups highlighted their learners and their own personal satisfaction in seeing their learners grow and transform. In the securely attached group there were four participants who stated that their sense of connectedness and belonging to their workplace and their relationships with other staff members were their favourite aspects about teaching. When the participating teachers were asked to list the aspects that they disliked the most about their jobs, two distinctive categories of teachers emerged. Namely, teachers who concentrated mainly on their dissatisfaction with personal interactions, with either learners, parents, or other colleagues, and those who focused on non-personal issues like environmental and or social issues.

Amongst those who experienced dissatisfaction with personal interactions, Participant 31, who was insecurely attached, stated, “All the added extra pressure from the school and parents and not allowing children to be children and allowing them to grow as they should”. Participant 18, who was securely attached stated, “Disruptive and undisciplined children who interrupt valuable teaching time”.

The second category of teachers focused on non-personal issues like environmental and or social issues. Examples of these were: school policies; curriculum and red tape constraints with government policies and school rules. Excessive job demands made by schools and admin, especially with regard to marking, were also included as some of the worst aspects of teaching. Participant 14 stated, “The admin and being bound by a strict curriculum which does not always work”. Participant 5 stated, “The environment of the entire school is somewhat toxic…”, whilst Participant 6 highlighted “The lack of infrastructure and assistance from government”.

There were only three participants who taught in government schools. Participant 8, who taught in a government school situated in a township, mentioned that there was an expectation of her to raise funds for her school. She stated that the part of her job that she disliked the most was: “Fundraising - not it specifically but other colleagues who fail to motivate learners to support fundraising, then as a group that is pushing for target you must

work harder to get the money in". In the excerpt above, this participant voiced her dissatisfaction towards her colleagues who did not pull their weight when it came to this endeavour. Interesting to note in this regard was that it was not the fact that fundraising was expected from her, but rather that her colleagues were not collaborators. She measured insecure in attachment.

5.6. Personal and emotional connection to learners

This section covers how this group of teachers felt about making personal connections with their learners. Again, both quantitative and qualitative results are presented.

Table 14

The Importance of Finding out About Learner's Background History

	Frequency	Percentage
Extremely important	23	69,7%
Important	5	15,2%

Missing = 5(15,2%)

All teachers found it important to obtain background information about their learners. In fact, most teachers, (69.7%) found it extremely important, whilst the remainder (15.2%) indicated that it was important.

Table 15

The Sharing of Personal Information by Teachers with their Learners

	Frequency	*Percentage*
Appropriate	10	30,3%
Neutral	12	36,4%
Inappropriate	5	15,2%
Extremely inappropriate	1	3,0%

Missing 5= (15,2%)

This question lends insights into the nature of the personal connections that teachers may forge with learners in the Foundation Phase. A third of teachers (36.4%) did not have an opinion on whether it was appropriate or inappropriate to share personal information with their learners and therefore chose 'neutral' as their answer. Ten teachers (30.3%) thought it was appropriate whilst five other participants (15.2%) found it inappropriate to share information about themselves. Only one teacher found it extremely inappropriate.

Interestingly, all the teachers who found it inappropriate or extremely inappropriate to share personal information about themselves with learners were from the securely attached group. The insecurely attached teachers either found it appropriate to share personal information about themselves or did not hold a firm view on the subject, i.e. answered neutral.

Table 16

Providing Emotional Support to Learners as Part of Teaching

	Frequency	Percentage
Useful	5	15,2%
Vital part of my job	23	69,7%

Missing 5= (15,2%)

The majority of teachers (69.7%) regarded the providing of emotional support to their learners as a vital part of their jobs, whilst five teachers (15.5%) regarded it as useful.

Table 17

The Teacher's Effectiveness at Providing Emotional Support to Learners

	Frequency	Percentage
Average	3	9,1%
Effective	17	51,5%
Extremely effective	8	24,2%

Missing 5= (15,2%)

Just over half of the participants, (51.5%) rated themselves as being effective at providing emotional support to their learners, and a further eight teachers (24.2%) rated themselves as

being extremely effective. There were only three participants that rated themselves as average, all of whom were from the securely attached group.

Table 18

The Choices and Opinions of Learners

	Frequency	Percentage
Totally agree	5	15,2%
Partially agree	18	54,5%
Partially disagree	5	15,2%

Missing =5 (15,2%)

Participants were asked as to whether they agreed with the statement that learners' opinions and or preferences must be taken into consideration when teaching. The majority of teachers, (54.5%) partially agreed whilst five teachers agreed with the statement and five others partially disagreed. Of the five teachers that chose partially disagree, one was from the insecurely attached group and four were from the securely attached group.

5.7. Teaching style

5.7.1. Qualities needed to be an effective Foundation Phase teacher

Participants were asked what qualities they considered to be important for an effective Foundation Phase educator. Patience was the one quality most mentioned by the securely attached teachers. In comparison, adaptability was most mentioned by the insecurely attached teachers. Participant 27, who measured both insecure in both childhood and in adulthood attachment, and participant 8, who measured insecure in childhood, were the only teachers from the sample to list three non-emotive qualities as being ideal for a primary school teacher. Knowledge of children, confidentiality and adaptability were some of the qualities they included on their lists in comparison to most other teachers who prioritised emotive qualities, like a love of children and empathy as the qualities required to make a sound Foundation Phase teacher.

5.7.2. Understandings of misbehaviour

Participants were asked what they thought were some of the main reasons that learners misbehave. 80% of teachers from both groups regarded external factors like social

and environmental conditions, such as dysfunctional homes, a lack of parenting and discipline as some of the main reasons that learners misbehave. Participant 24 stated, “difficult home backgrounds of the learners, class sizes too big, unqualified and unprepared teachers, learners learning in their second languages”. Participant 11 stated, “Problems at home, no boundaries at home, not used to routine”.

Seven teachers (27%) felt that misbehaviour was a call for help - an attempt to get the love and attention that learners lacked from home. Participant 19 stated, “Learners all want love and attention. They misbehave to get that love and attention even if it is negative attention”. 46% of teachers also felt that learning problems and/or academic challenges could also manifest in the form of behavioural issues in the class. Participant 22 stated, “Learners with learning difficulties or specific learning needs are often the ones that tend to misbehave”. Participants no 8, 10 and 24 were only teachers from the group that regarded the educator as a factor that contributed towards learners’ misbehaviour.

5.8. Discipline and classroom management classroom management

Table 19

“I am Strict and Firm - it is Either My Way or The Highway in My Class.”

	Frequency	Percentage
100% describes me	1	3,0%
Mostly describes	3	9,1%
Somewhat describes me	9	27,3%
Partially describes me	8	24,2%
Does not describe me at all	7	21,2%

Missing 5= (15,2%)

Participants were asked to indicate the degree to which they could relate to an authoritarian style of discipline. Seven teachers (21.2%) could not relate at all to the statement, whilst only one teacher could relate to the statement in its entirety. A further nine teachers (27.3%) stated that it somewhat described them, and eight others (24.2%) stated it partially described them. The majority of teachers in the insecurely attached group indicated that it only partially or did not describe them at all. However, 50% of the teachers in the securely attached group chose either option three, four or five on the survey indicating that the above statement either

somewhat described or mostly described them. In fact, participant six stated that this was exactly like her. Thus, it appears that the securely attached teachers could relate to the authoritarian statement of discipline to a greater degree than the insecurely attached teachers.

Table 20

The Classroom Management Style of Teachers

	Frequency	Percentage
Management Style One	0	0 %
Management Style Two	0	0 %
Management Style Three	*11*	*33,3%*
Management Style Four	*17*	*51,5%*
Management Style Five	0	0 %
Management Style Six	0	0 %

Missing 5= (15,2%)

Eleven teachers (33.3%) chose Management Style Three. They regarded themselves as firm but fair and believed that some rules were necessary, but they went out of their way to get buy-in from their pupils to make them understand the importance of rules. However, for these teachers, the emotional needs of their pupils were equally important as rules. They thought that it was essential to create relationships with their pupils and to get to know them well. Seventeen teachers, (51.5%) chose Management Style Four. They described themselves as loving and kind with a genuine affection for their learners. They were in tune with their learners' emotional needs but could hold boundaries (put down their foot) when the need arose. They rarely experienced discipline issues in their classes as their learners love them and want to please them. They believe that learners thrive and learn best when they feel cared for, and have their emotional needs met.

Therefore, all participants identified with an authoritative classroom management style as per the discipline scales (see Appendix 2 to view the scales).

A deeper analysis of the percentages within each group revealed that for the insecurely attached teachers there was a near equal split of both Management Style Three and Four. In comparison there were fourteen participants in the securely attached group that chose Management Style Four and, seven participants that chose Management Style Three. Namely,

double the number of teachers in the securely attached group picked Management Style Three as the best way to describe their classroom discipline and emotional connection with their learners.

Management Styles One, Two, Five, Six, Seven and Eight were not chosen by any of the participants. While Management Styles One and Two depict strict disciplinarians who keep rigid boundaries and do not think their role is to provide learners with emotional support, unless necessary. Management Styles Five and Six describe laid-back teachers who do not see the need to have rules or to enforce them in any way. Children's emotional needs were regarded as somewhat important to ensure happy learners as this means the least amount of trouble for the teacher. Management Style seven described the teacher as being very good at the administrative side of teaching, but who has so much on going on in her personal life that she does not have capacity or energy to make rules and enforce them. Management Style Eight describes a teacher who has no problem letting her pupils do as they please as she was only teaching for financial reasons. Enforcing rules was too energy-consuming for her, so she preferred to overlook behaviour issues. For a more complete description of these categories, which were adapted from (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Birch & Ladd, 1997; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Pianta & Nimetz, 1991; Rubbi Nunan & Ntombela, 2019) (see Appendix 2).

5.9. Vignettes

5.9.1. Child A – The anxious-ambivalent learner

This section describes this group of participants' responses to the Vignette titled 'Child A', which depicts the characteristics of a child with an anxious-ambivalent attachment.

Description of Child A presented to the participants:

This learner is very emotionally needy and attention seeking. He/she often needs constant reassurance and encouragement when working. Further, this learner often complains that he/she cannot comprehend tasks. However, after individual assistance and or encouragement is rendered, it becomes apparent that the learner can complete tasks. He/she will go to any lengths to get your attention, including shouting out and misbehaving. This learner often pushes your buttons and can be described as 'annoying.' He/she often gets extremely nervous when tested and fears being monitored. Test results are not always congruent with class work. He/she often complains of feeling sick and or having injuries. Lastly, he /she often cries, whines, and complains that situations are unjust and unfair.

Table 21

How Annoying Do You Find Child A?

	Frequency	Percentage
Not annoying at all	2	6,1%
Slightly-on the rare occasion	8	24,2%
At times	13	39,4%
Often	3	9,1%
Extremely annoying	1	3,0%

Missing 6 =18,2%

39.4% of participants reported that they found learners like Child A annoying at times. An additional eight participants, 24.2%, reported that they found children similar to Child A slightly annoying, that is, only on the rare occasion. Three teachers reported that they often found similar learners annoying. There were two participants that experienced Child A as not annoying at all. One teacher experienced Child A as extremely annoying.

The majority of teachers (86%) from the insecurely attached group either experienced Child A as annoying at times or often annoying. Participant 19 stated, “Although I have had children who display negative attention seeking behaviours and I do find it exhausting to keep trying to uplift them and build them up each day even though they continue to be demanding of your attention and stubborn and defiant”. Participant 24 stated, “I experience them as very challenging as they often disrupt the group”. In comparison, the majority of teachers (45%) from the securely attached group, experienced child A as annoying at times and a further (30%) reported Child A as slightly annoying on the rare occasion. However, it was from the securely attached group that the extremes were recorded. Participant number 5 recorded this child as extremely annoying, she stated, “Not proud of this but learners like this unfortunately tend to rub me the wrong way and I tend to create a dislike towards them which affects my approach towards them. This is something I would need to improve on as an educator”. In contrast, Participants 6 and 14 experienced this child at not annoying at all.

Table 22

How Easy Do You Think It Would be to Empathize with Child A?

	Frequency	Percentage
Very easily	3	9,1%
Easily	10	30,3%
Average	13	39,4%
Difficult	1	3,0%
Extreme Difficulty	0	0.0%

Missing 6=18,2%

39.4% of teachers, that is, thirteen teachers chose ‘average’ when asked how easy they found it to empathize with a learner similar to Child A. Ten other teachers found it easy to emphasise with Child A, whilst three others found it very easy to empathize. Participant 20 from the securely attached group, was the only participant who found it difficult to empathize with anxious ambivalent learners.

Table 23

Can You Identify with Child A?

	Frequency	Percentage
Some Similarities	5	15,2%
Mostly dissimilar	10	30,3%
Totally dissimilar	12	36,4%

Missing 6=18,2%

Participants were asked if they could identify as a young learner themselves in the Foundation Phase with a learner similar to Child A. A third of the teachers (36.4%) could not find any similarities, whilst ten others chose ‘mostly dissimilar’. There were five teachers who reported having some similarities. Most notably, 35% of the securely attached teachers reported that they were unsure and a further 35% reported that they were mostly dissimilar to

Child A, and, in fact, many reported that they were opposite, that is, they were very independent and well behaved as learners during their Foundation Phase years of schooling.

Table 24

How Easy Do You Find It to Manage Child A?

	Frequency	Percentage
Very Easily	1	3,0%
Relatively Easy- an occasion bad day	9	27,3%
In between- good and bad days	15	45,5%
Difficulty	2	6,1%
Extremely difficult	0	0,0%
Missing 6=18,2%		

Almost half of the teachers (45.5%) reported that they had both good and bad days when it came to managing children like Child A in their classes. Nine teachers (27.3%) found this type of learner relatively easy to manage with the occasional bad day.

Two participants, one from the securely attached group and another teacher from the insecurely attached group, reported that they found learners like Child A difficult to manage. Participant 6 from the securely attached group was the only participant that found this type of learner easy to manage. It is interesting to note that teachers from both the securely and insecurely groups of attachment who rated this child as often annoying also found this child difficult to manage.

How to manage Child A - The anxious-ambivalent learner

Advice from both groups of teachers centred around the common theme of the educator not acting on their emotional reactions of anger or frustration when dealing with Child A. They advocated keeping calm and containing their own emotional responses. Many suggested not shouting at the child or picking the learner out in front of classmates. When asked ‘What should you *not* do with learners like Child A’, participant 28 stated: “Shout, punish, and lose control of self - you have to model calm and self-control to start to get it back”. Participant 31 recommended finding a balance between supporting the learner academically but encouraging independence simultaneously, stating: “you want them to

believe in themself and not break them down. This only comes by knowing the child - having a connection.”.

Interestingly, teachers who found Child A annoying and difficult to manage gave advice on how to manage the learner that had a common thread, in the sense that it included obtaining the assistance from others to help manage this child. Participant 30, who was insecurely attached stated: “My principal has on occasion taken her out of the classroom for a break and a chat so that I can have a break”. Whilst participant 24, who also measured insecure stated: “I would suggest some emotional/ psychological support for the learner and perhaps the family”, Participant 20, who was from securely attached group, stated: “Peer support - find another capable child to assist them and give them guidance”.

This contrasted with those teachers who rated this child as either slightly annoying or only annoying at times, and who reported having been able to manage this type of learner with relative ease. They acknowledged how emotionally draining and time consuming this type of learner was, however, their advice on how to best manage Child A centred around their own personal efforts. In most cases there was some form of increased individual interaction like praising the child’s success or achievement, one-on-one assistance with work and talking to the child. Participant 8, who was insecurely attached stated: “Individual or one to one encounter. Routine - which calms a learner down because they know that the teacher will be with them soon”. Their advice also involved increased emotional support in the form of closer physical proximity: seating the child next to them; or standing next to the child whilst they worked. Participant 16, who was securely attached stated: “Hand signals to indicate what they should do next e.g., wait till I'm finished with another child [by] touching the child to indicate keeping quiet and waiting his turn”. Emotional support was also given in various forms like taking the time to get a better understanding the child’s home circumstances, attention, patience and love were also suggestions given by these teachers. Participant 12, who was from the securely attached group stated, “Understanding his personality and knowing that these emotional outbursts are common for him. We use breathing techniques and words of affirmation.”.

Two teachers from the securely attached group and two from the insecurely attached group mentioned the importance of balancing the extra attention and emotional support needed by Child A together with laying down firm boundaries and rules. Participant 21 from the

insecurely attached group stated: “At the same time being very firm and giving clear boundaries”. Participant 28 reported: “Children like this need patience, routine and structure, and calmness”.

Notably, only the insecurely attached teachers’ advice on what *not* to do with anxious ambivalent children included not giving into the child’s demands and taking a firm stand, which signalled a more rigid response . Participant 8 stated, “Not to give in to their whining, to let them learn that there is structure….”, whilst Participant 19 said, “Not to give in to their needs to attention ALL the time….”.

5.9.2. Child B: The anxious-avoidant learner

This section describes this group of participants’ responses to the Vignette titled ‘Child B’, which depicts the characteristics of a child with an anxious-avoidant attachment.

Description of Child B presented to participants:

This learner can be described as being introverted and a loner. This learner rejects any help from you with work. Moreover he/she will not ask for assistance even when it is needed. He/she is noticeably quiet and mostly keeps to himself/herself. It is difficult to gauge how this learner feels as he/she is reluctant to share personal information or participate in discussions. He/she struggles with social interactions in the class with both peers and adults alike. It is easy to forget that he/she is in the class. He/she can be too independent, that is, wanting to do everything on his/her own, yet you sense an underlying vulnerability and or insecurity. This learner can, however, be passive-aggressive and defiant at times, especially towards adults. He/she can be seen to become totally engaged with tasks that he/she finds easy.

Table 25

How Annoying Do You Find Child B?

	Frequency	Percentage
Not annoying at all	8	24,2%
Slightly annoying- on the rare occasion	14	42,4%
Annoying at times	4	12,1%

Missing 7=21,2%

Just under half of teachers, that is 42,4%, described their experience of learners like Child B as ‘slightly annoying on the rare occasion’. Whilst eight teachers (24,2%) found this kind of learner to be ‘not annoying at all’, there were four participants who experienced this child as ‘annoying at times.

Teachers in both the securely and insecurely attached groups in general found the anxious-avoidant learner less annoying than Child A (anxious-ambivalent learner). Teachers like participant 30 from the insecurely attached group and participant 11 from the securely attached group rated Child A as ‘often annoying’, and yet rated Child B as ‘not annoying at all’. This may be due to the fact that these learners are quiet and do not need the same amount of time and energy to calm down and manage in the class.

Table 26

How Easy Do You Think It Would be to Empathize with Child B?

	Frequency	Percentage
Very easily	5	15,2%
Easily	10	30,3%
Average	10	30,3%
With difficulty	1	3,0%

Missing 7=21,2%

Ten teachers (30.3%) found it easy to empathize with learners like Child B, whilst ten others (30.3%) chose ‘average’ to describe how easy it would be for them to emphasize with these learners. Five participants reported that they found it very easy to empathize with them. Only participant 11 from the securely attached group found it difficult to empathize with anxious avoidant learners.

Table 27

Can You Identify with Child B?

	Frequency	Percentage
Some similarities	10	30,3%
Not sure	3	9,1%
Mostly dissimilar	6	18,2%
Totally dissimilar	7	21,2%

Missing 7=21,2%

A third of teachers (30.3%) reported having some similarities with the anxious avoidant learner when thinking of themselves when they were Foundation Phase learners. Seven others, (21.2%) found no similarities, whilst another six participants reported that they were mostly dissimilar to learners like Child B.

Teachers in both groups could, in general, identify more with Child B than Child A. For both groups, the teachers' identification with this learner was for the most part based on being introverted and shy themselves as young learners in the Foundation Phase. In addition, many found commonality in the manner that they had been independent learners who had not required much help from their teachers. Participant 28 stated, "[I was] very independent and self-sufficient. Quiet, kept to myself, not passive aggressive, would join conversations, but not really good with people until later in life", and participant 33 stated, "I was totally independent". Some of the main differences reported by teachers was either socially or behaviour related. Participant 24 from insecurely attached group stated, "I got along with my peers and participated enthusiastically in class most of the time". Participant 17 from the securely attached group reported: "I was different, in that I sought help when necessary and had a core group of friends that I trusted and could depend on for anything".

Table 28

How Easy Do You Find It to Manage Child B?

	Frequency	Percentage
Very Easily	3	9,1%
Relatively easy- an occasional bad day	11	33,3%
In between good and bad days	12	36,4%
Missing 7=21,2%		

Eleven teachers (33.3%) reported that they found it relatively easy to manage learners like Child B. Twelve others (36.4%) relayed how they had both good and bad days managing these learners. Three participants found it very easy to manage learners similar to Child B.

How to manage Child B - The anxious-avoidant learner

Teachers in the insecurely attached group gave more detailed input on how to manage Child B in comparison to the securely attached teachers, whose answers were succinct and practical. However, both groups took a similar approach to Child B in the way that they suggested never to force these learners to do things that they didn't want to do or into situations that would embarrass them. They suggested rather to offer them support through increased contact with themselves or with class peers. They felt that it was a matter of taking the time to build up the trust of the Child B. Most teachers mentioned things they did to make the child feel seen or heard. They offered general, positive advice which was similar to that given for Child A: love, patience, positive reinforcement, and time alone with the teacher. However, many teachers also recommended using peers as another successful way of assisting this learner. Participant 8 who was insecurely attached suggested: "Peer-teaching and learning. Keeping the learner constructively engaged with extra tasks". Participant 19, who was also insecurely attached suggested: "Seat this learner next to a kind, friendly, gentle peer," as part of her answer.

Many teachers advocated for the sensitive handling of Child B in an unobtrusive and gentle nurturing manner. Participant 19 mentioned that in her experience, sharing something personal from her life made it easier for children like Child B to open up to her. Most responses emphasized the importance of finding ways to build rapport with these children.

Participant 27 who was insecurely attached stated: “Engaging with this child first thing in the morning helps to set the tone for the day. Providing activities that are graded in difficulty and engaging with the child throughout the activity by walking past and noticing what they are doing. A gentle touch to remind them that you are there”. Participant 33, who was securely attached stated: “One on one time, a letter box in which a child can write to me”.

When asked to give advice on what not to do with learners like Child B, Participant 18 stated: “Cannot provide feedback as I have never dealt with such a student”. She had been teaching for at least three years, which brings into question whether this was really the case, or rather that, like many anxious-avoidant learners, they tend to cause no external trouble, so can go unnoticed and slip under the radar. In comparison participants 11, 16 and 31 all mentioned not ignoring learners like Child B when asked the same question.

5.9.3. Child C: The fearful-anxious /disorganized learner

This section describes this group of participants’ responses to the Vignette titled ‘Child C’, which depicts the characteristics of a child with a fearful-anxious/disorganized attachment.

Description of Child C presented to the participants

This learner is very reactive and prone to outward displays of emotion when becoming upset. He/she has temper tantrums, throws objects, and or runs out of the classroom. He/she has little impulse control always and is always shouting out answers. He/she finds it hard to wait for his/her turn. He/she is physically or verbally abusive to others. This learner blows hot and cold, as at times he/she is overly demonstrative – wants hugs and comfort from you but at other times seems to despise you. This learner often struggles academically either due to backlogs from previous grades or learning difficulties. He/she has been labelled as the naughty child of the class/school. He/she finds it difficult to get along with peers especially members of the opposite sex. In addition, this learner can display behaviour similar to either Child A and or Child B.

Table 29

How Annoying Do You Find Child C?

	Frequency	Percentage
Slightly annoying- on the rare occasion	4	12,1%
Annoying at times	10	30,3%
Often annoying	7	21,2%
Extremely annoying	4	12,1%
Missing 8=24,2%		

A third of the teachers (30.3%) reported that they found learners like Child C annoying ‘at times’. Seven others (21.2%) stated that they find this type of learner to be ‘often annoying’. There were four teachers who reported that they found the fearful-anxious learners to be ‘extremely annoying’. Four others experienced Child C as ‘slightly annoying on the rare occasion’.

Table 30

How Easy Do You Think It Would be to Empathize with Child C?

	Frequency	Percentage
Easily	5	15,2%
Average	11	33,3%
With difficulty	7	21,2%
Extremely difficult	2	6,1%
Missing 8=24,2%		

A third of teachers (33.3%) chose average as the best way to describe their ability to empathize with learners like Child C. Seven teachers reported that it was difficult to empathize with this type of learner, whilst two others stated that it was extremely difficult. Five participants reported that they found it easy to empathize with fearful anxious/disorganized learners.

Table 31

Can You Identify with Child C?

	Frequency	Percentage
Not sure	1	3,0%
Mostly dissimilar	3	9,1%
Totally dissimilar	21	63,6%

Missing 8=24,2%

Participants were asked if they could identify with Child C when they were learners in the Foundation Phase. Most teachers (63.6%) could not find any similarities, whilst three others reported that they were 'mostly dissimilar' to Child C. One participant, namely participant 11, chose 'not sure' but indicated in her comments that she was not like Child C. In comparison with Child A and B, teachers in both the securely and insecurely attached groups found little similarity between Child C and themselves when they were in Foundation Phase.

Table 32

How Easy Do You Find It to Manage Child C ?

	Frequency	Percentage
Very Easily	0	0
Relatively easy- an occasional bad day	2	6.1%
In between good and bad days	12	36.4%
With Difficulty	7	21.2%
Extreme Difficulty	4	12.1%

Missing 8=21,2%

A third of teachers (36.4%) reported that they had both good and bad days with learners like Child C. Seven teachers relayed that it was difficult to manage this type of learner, whilst four others described the management of Child C as 'extremely difficult'.

Teachers in both groups described how challenging and energy draining they found it to have children like Child C in their class. They used words like "annoying", "difficult", "undisciplined", and "very disruptive" to describe learners similar to Child C. Participant 28

compared it to “going into battle every day” whilst participant 29 used the metaphor of “a bull in a China shop” to describe having a pupil like Child C in the classroom.

How to manage Child C: The fearful avoidant/disorganised learner

The advice from all teachers on how best to manage Child C could be grouped into three categories. Category one entailed management of the teacher’s own emotions - that is the ability to remain calm and contain their emotions. These teachers emphasized the importance of containing their own negative feelings like frustration or anxiety when these were evoked by Child C. They advised portraying calmness and being kind and patient even if triggered. This was similar to the advice given for Child A. Participant 27, who was insecurely attached stated: “…Remaining calm and having strategies to assist you with remaining calm…”. Participant 28, who was securely attached stated: “being patient and calm, leave if I’m triggered and return calm, be loving and kind and gentle no matter what”. in response to the question as to what not to do with learners like Child C, participant 21, who was insecurely attached stated: “To get angry or upset and raise your voice or to give in to their demands”.

Category two consisted of different strategies to help calm the child, which sometimes entailed either physically removing the child to a different space and or talking with the learner. Participant 14, who was insecurely attached stated: “I have taken the child out of the classroom and discussed what is troubling him and try working out a solution with him that will help him feel okay”. Participant 29, who was securely attached stated: “Take the child out of the situation and first try to calm him/her. Once calm and open to listening we chat about what went wrong just now”.

Category three, which was emphasized by most teachers, was the need to put down firm boundaries and be consistent with rules for Child C. Discipline was emphasized as an essential element in managing Child C, more than any other learner. The insecurely attached teachers emphasized using strict discipline techniques to a greater extent than the securely attached teachers. Participant no 19 who was insecurely attached stated, “The learner must understand that you will not tolerate behaviour which harms anyone else in your classroom. Set very clear boundaries from the beginning. Be consistent. Praise good behaviour every

chance you get. Reward more than punish if possible." Participant 24 who was insecurely attached stated, "Very firm boundaries with consistent consequences. ……."

Further, the assistance of fellow colleagues, psychologists and school management was recommended by many teachers to aid them in managing Child C. Participant 17, who was securely attached stated: "Having support from colleagues with ways to deal with such a learner". Participant 24, who was insecurely attached stated: "Meeting with the parents and coming up with joint solutions. Getting help and advice from colleagues. Suggest an assessment re lack of impulse control and emotional dysregulation".

Child C is clearly incredibly challenging to manage in the classroom, and it was evident from the comments that some teachers have not yet mastered the management of this learner. For example, participant 30 stated: "Support from others. I have tried to get the parents involved and suggested therapy. I have tried to identify triggers so that I can remove them or avoid them where possible". Participant 11 stated: "At times I gave in to the child allowing him to do what he wants". The frustration and difficulties experienced by some teachers was summed up by Participant 18: "I feel mostly frustrated with the situation with children like this as there is no answer to the right way to assist them. What works for a day or two, often stops working. Home situations is often what causes this behaviour and often does not change. When no change happens at home, there is very little that can be done at school to help the situation. One is just putting plasters on at school which works for a time and then doesn't anymore. I got psychologist advice and advice from more experienced teachers and management."

5.10. Mann-Whitney U Results

Table 33

The differences between the securely and insecurely attached teacher groups in regard to the following variables: level of job satisfaction; the sharing of personal information; the classroom management style of teachers and the importance of rendering of emotional support.

Variable	Score	Significance
level of job satisfaction	z = 0.767 p = .442	Not significant
The sharing of personal information by teachers with learners	z=. 145 p=. 885.	Not significant
The classroom management style of teachers	z= -1.069 p= .285.	Not significant
The importance of rendering emotional support to learners	z= .284 p= .776	Not significant
The teacher's competency in supporting learners emotionally	z= -.746 p= .455	Not significant
Teachers' relatedness to an authoritarian discipline style	group z= .937 p= .349.	Not significant

A Mann-Whitney U test was performed to detect differences between the securely attached teacher group and the insecurely attached teacher group with regards to the following variables: level of job satisfaction of teachers; the sharing of personal information by teachers with learners; the classroom management style of teachers; the importance of providing emotional support to learners; teachers' competency in supporting learners emotionally and teachers' relatedness to an authoritarian discipline style . No significant between group differences were found.

Table 34

The differences between the securely and insecurely attached teacher groups in relation to the following variables relating to Child A, B and C: extent of annoyance; management of the learner; identification with the learner and empathy with the learner.

	Child A	**Child B**	**Child C**
Extent of annoyance	z= .690 p= .490 Not significant	z= .667 p= .505 Not significant	z= -.127 p= .899 Not significant
Management of the learner	p= .714 z= .475 Not significant	p= -.133 z= .894 Not significant	p= -.098 z=.922 Not significant
Level of identification	p= -.164 z= .870 Not significant	p= -1.453 z=.146 Not significant	p= 1.330 z=.184 Not significant
Ability to empathize	z= -.164 p= .870 Not significant	p=.193 z=.847 Not significant	p=.257 z=.797 Not significant

For each child vignette the following variables were tested: the extent of annoyance felt towards this kind of learner, how well teachers managed this kind of learner, the extent of identification by teachers with this type of the learner, and the ability to empathize with a similar learner as portrayed in the vignette. No significant between group differences were found for any of the variables for any of the three learners portrayed in the vignettes.

5.11. Spearman's Rank Correlations

The following findings are presented in order to explore the relationships between teachers' perceptions about sharing personal information with learners, their classroom management styles, various items on the ECR-RS attachment security scale, and their responses to the insecurely attached children depicted in the vignettes.

5.11.1. Age, partner relationship variables and partner avoidance score

Table 35

Age, Ability to Communicate with a Partner; Feeling Uneasy Opening Up to a Partner; Worrying that a Partner Doesn't Care and Partner Avoidance.

Variables	I talk things over with my partner	I don't feel comfortable opening to my partner	I often worry that my partner doesn't really care for me	Partner Avoidance
Age	,426*	,474*	,477*	,436*
	0,038	0,019	0,019	0,033
	24	24	24	24

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 35 above summarises the findings of the relationships between age and partner relationship variables, namely the ability to talk to a partner; the discomfort in opening up to a partner; worrying that a partner does not care and partner avoidance score (subscales of the Relationship Structures Questionnaire). The results illustrated that age was moderately positively correlated with often worrying that a partner does not really care (r=0.477 p=0.019). In a similar fashion, age was significantly, positively and moderately correlated with partner avoidance scores (r= 0.436 p=0.033) and with not feeling comfortable opening up to a partner, (r=.474 p=0.019). However, age was also significantly, positively, and moderately correlated with the ability to talk things over with a partner (r=0.426 p= 0.038).

5.11.2. The appropriateness of sharing personal information with learners; the providing of emotional support; the management, identification and ability to empathize with Child A; the experience of Child C; and partner anxiety and avoidance scores

Table 36

Relationships between the Appropriateness of Sharing Information and the Ability to Manage, Empathize and Identify with Child A; The experience of Child C and Partner Anxiety and Avoidance Scores.

Variables	The providing of emotional support	How easy is to it for you to manage Child A?	How easy is to it for you to empathize with Child A?	How alike are you to child A?	How annoying do you find Child C?	Partner avoidance	Partner anxiety
The extent of appropriateness of sharing personal information with learners.	-,476*	,572**	,536**	,587**	,483*	,489*	,440*
	0,010	0,002	0,005	0,002	0,017	0,015	0,031
	27	26	26	26	24	24	24

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 36 above summarises the findings of correlations between how appropriate teachers think it is to share personal information with learners with their reported ability to render emotional support to learners; their ability to manage, empathize and identify with Child A; how annoying they experience Child C to be, and partner anxiety and avoidance scores. The results illustrated that the extent of appropriateness of sharing personal information with learners was significantly, negatively, and moderately correlated with providing of emotional support to learners (r= -0.476; p=0.010). Thus, despite the fact that some teachers did not think that it was appropriate to share personal information with learners, they were still regarded themselves as competent in providing emotional support for learners. Teachers that regraded it appropriate to share personal information with learners was significantly, positively, and moderately correlated total partner anxiety, (r = 0.440; p=0.031) and partner

avoidance scores, (r= 0.489; p=0.015). Thus, teachers with scores suggesting insecure attachment to partners were also more likely to endorse the appropriateness of sharing personal information with learners.

The appropriateness of sharing personal information by teachers with learners was significantly, positively and moderately correlated with the extent of annoyance towards Child C (r=0.483; p=0.017), but significantly, positively and strongly correlated with the ease of managing Child A (r = 0.572; p= 0,002); the identification with Child A (r = 0.587; p=0,002) and the ability to empathize with Child A (r = 0.536; p= 0,005). Thus, in teachers who found it appropriate to share personal information with learners, the vignette depicting the most insecure attachment behaviour (Child C) elicited higher levels of annoyance, while the vignette depicting anxious-ambivalent attachment elicited higher levels of identification and empathy and was reported to be easier to manage.

5.11.3. Relationships between the ability of teachers to identify with the anxious-avoidant learner (Child B) and the total of mother anxiety and avoidance scores (subscales of the Relationship Structures Questionnaire).

Table 37

Relationships between Teacher Identification to Child B with the Mom Anxiety and Avoidance Scores

Variables	**Mother avoidance**	**Mother anxiety**
Identification with Child B	-,604**	-,495*
	0,001	0,012
	25	25

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) * Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 37 above summarises the findings of correlations between the extent of identification by teachers with Child B with the total of mother anxiety and avoidance scores (subscales of the Relationship Structure Questionnaire). The results illustrated the extent of identification with Child B was correlated significantly, negatively, moderately with the total of mom anxiety score (p=-,495; r=0,012). The results further reflected that teacher identification with Child B was correlated significantly, negatively, strongly with the total of mother avoidance score (p=-,604; r=0,001). Thus, those teachers whose scores suggested a secure relationship

with their mothers in childhood were more likely to be able to identify with the vignette of Child B that depicted an anxious-avoidant child.

5.11.4. Relationships between the ability of teachers to identify with the anxious-avoidant learner (Child B) and the total of father anxiety and avoidance scores (subscales of the Relationship Structures Questionnaire)

Table 38

Relationships between the Ability to Identify with Child B with the Dad Anxiety and Avoidance

Variables	**Father Avoidance**	**Father Anxiety**
Identification with Child B	-,572**	-,417*
	0,003	0,038
	25	25

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01

Table 38 above summarises the findings of correlations between the identification by teachers with Child B with the total of their father anxiety and avoidance scores (subscales of the Relationship Structure Questionnaire). The results illustrated that the ability of teachers to identify with Child B was correlated significantly, negatively, moderately the total of dad anxiety score (p=-,417; r=0,038). The results further reflected the identification of teachers with Child B was correlated significantly, negatively, strongly with the total of the father avoidance score (p=-,572; r=0,003). Thus, those teachers whose scores suggested a secure relationship with their father in childhood were more likely to be able to identify with the vignette of Child B that depicted an anxious-avoidant child.

5.12. Conclusion

This chapter presented the results obtained from both the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data as the study used a mixed method approach. The quantitative data was presented in the form of percentage tables of the demographic data and questions from sections one and two of the survey pertaining to discipline and relationships between teachers and learners and in particularly with insecurely attached learners. It further reflected the

results of the Spearman Rank's correlations which was used to identify any significant correlations between variables on the survey with anxiety and avoidance scores from the Relationship Structures Questionnaire. The Mann -Whitney U was used to record any significant differences between the insecurely and securely attached teachers in relation to variables on the survey. The qualitative data was presented in the form of quotes and or paraphrasing of the answers to questions that supplemented the findings from the quantitative data. The next chapter of this study, namely the discussion section will elaborate on the findings of the results section and situate it within current literature. This will also comment on this study findings in relation to similar or contrasting findings from previous research.

Chapter 6: Discussion

6.1. Introduction

This section will answer the research questions posed by the study and offer an interpretation of the research's findings in the context of existing academic literature, while holding in mind the uniqueness of the sample obtained and its potential influences on the results. To recap, this study aimed at determining whether there was a relationship between teacher attachment styles and self-reported discipline styles. It also sought to determine the influence of teacher's attachment experiences on their classroom management and relationships with learners. The study sought to determine if there were differences in responses to learners with insecure presentations amongst the various teacher attachment styles, and to describe the manner in which teachers respond to children with insecure attachment presentations. Lastly the study sought to determine whether teachers were tolerant of learners who presented with a similar attachment style as their own. Since this was a mixed methods study, there were research questions answered by the quantitative part of the design and questions answered by the qualitative aspect. There were questions answered by the combined results.

6.2. Sample uniqueness

As mentioned in the Methodology Chapter, I did not anticipate how difficult it would be to get teachers to participate in my study. After many months of persevering and continuous posting of both emails and invites, I only received thirty-three responses to the survey, of which six were incomplete. This small sample was also highly homogenous, consisting largely of teachers who were female and mature, that is most participants were forty years or older (See Tables 1 and 2). In addition, more than fifty percent of my participants had fourteen or more years of teaching experience and all participants besides three teachers, taught in private schools (See Tables 4 and 6). This skewness could possibly be attributed to the fact that as most participants taught in private schools with an average amount of learners in their classes (See Table 8). They were therefore not so overwhelmed, as they were not exposed to many of the hardships common to most Foundation Phase teachers in public schools; they therefore may have had more time and capacity to participate in my survey. Another possible reason could be that more mature teachers have more time available on their hands, having moved beyond the period where they are balancing of careers with the

demands of young families. Most teachers from the sample indicated that they were satisfied with their jobs (See Table 13).

An unexpected finding in relation to the sample obtained in this study, was the significant correlation between age and partner avoidance as measured on the Relationship Structures Questionnaire (ECR-RS) (See Table 34). Older participants reported higher levels of avoidance in relationships with their partners; not feeling comfortable discussing their emotions with their partners and worrying that their partners did not really care about them, despite reporting continued communication about practical, everyday topics. These results may be explained by various intra and interpersonal factors. However, given that teaching is a stressful and emotionally taxing profession (Agyapong et al., 2022; Ptáček et al., 2019) , the high risk of burnout and emotional exhaustion that accompanies teaching may play a role (De Heus & Diekstra, 1999; Kinman et al, 2011; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). Burnout and feeling drained of emotional resources has been associated with avoidance towards partners (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018).These characteristics of the sample are held in mind as the findings below are discussed.

6.3. Relationships between teacher attachment styles, discipline styles, classroom management and relationships with learners.

The following section answers research questions one and two using the results of both the quantitative and qualitative survey results as presented above, namely, whether there was a relationship between teacher attachment styles and self-reported discipline styles, and the influence of teacher's attachment experiences on their classroom management and relationships with learners.

6.3.1. The classroom management styles of teachers

When presented with a continuum of classroom management descriptions, ranging from authoritarian, through authoritative, through to permissive, all participants measured with an authoritative discipline style as they chose either classroom management style three or four (See Table 20). Description style four in particularly paints a somewhat idyllic classroom situation. Namely, the 'kind and loving' teacher who prioritises the emotional needs of her learners and therefore experiences hardly any discipline issues in her classroom. The fact that the vast majority of the teachers in this study reported working in private school settings, with smaller classes, is the likely explanation for this finding. This was further

supported by analysis of the written responses by teachers to both the question on job satisfaction and, what they liked most about teaching. This is, however, in stark contrast to the reality of the majority of teachers in South Africa where violence, discipline problems and intimidation of teachers are common daily occurrences (Rubi Nunan & Ntombela, 2022; Rubi Nunan & Ntombela, 2019; Mayisela, 2021).

The Mann-Whitney U test showed no significant differences between the securely and insecurely attached teacher groups in relation to their classroom management styles (See Table 20). This was highly likely due to the small sample size of twenty-six participants and also due to the fact that most of them were older with many years of teaching experience. As the wise adage states: 'experience is the best teacher,' so it is possible that experience could have contributed to making the so called 'best' teacher of all participants in the sample. Years of teaching experience had probably imparted these teachers with the knowledge on how best to manage all types of learners, especially those who were insecurely attached and therefore more challenging to manage (Stronge et al., 2011; Pianta et al., 2008).

Support of this was seen when teachers were asked to give their advice on how best to manage the different insecurely attached learners on the survey. The advice given by the insecurely attached teachers was more detailed and in-depth in comparison to the succinct and brief suggestions of the securely attached teachers. This was perhaps because the insecurely attached teachers had learnt from their so called 'mistakes' over the years. This likely enabled them to give detailed input on the survey on the 'dos and don'ts' when it came to the management of the insecurely attached learners in their classes. Previous research has found that teachers with insecure attachment styles tend to have less positive classroom atmospheres and are less responsive to the needs of their learners (Sher-Censor et al., 2019; Morris-Rothschild & Brassard, 2006) , hence it is possible that in the early years of teaching they may have struggled more than their securely attached colleagues when it came to managing insecurely attached learners, but have subsequently adapted better classroom management styles over time.

The notion that the insecurely attached teachers might have had more difficulties managing their insecurely attached learners when they had first started their teaching careers was further supported by Participant 27's response regarding how to manage anxious-ambivalent learners. Notably, she was the only participant from the sample to measure insecure in both

adulthood and childhood on the ECR-RS. Her advice was, “Do not push them away as they become more needy.” Her implication that doing this made the situation worse, suggested that she had previously ‘pushed’ this type of learner away, but experience had taught her not to do this.

6.3.2. An Authoritarian Statement of Discipline: ‘My way or the highway’

Given that all participants had measured with an authoritative discipline style, one could expect most teachers would not be able to relate to the strict authoritarian statement of ‘my way or the highway.’ However, partipants answers indicated otherwise (See Table 19). Although there were no significant differences in discipline styles between the securely and insecure attached groups, analysis of the qualitative data revealed that the securely attached teachers seemed to be able to relate to the authoritarian statement to a larger extent then the insecurely attached teachers. Primary school teachers have often been found to use authoritative discipline to create a structured and predictable environment for their learners (Bayraktar & Dogan, 2017), which could possibly also explain the reason most teachers only partially supported the notion that learners should have choices and their opinions be considered (See Table 18).

Despite the fact that most insecurely attached teachers indicated that they could not relate to an authoritarian statement of discipline, their advice on how best to manage insecurely attached learners indicated otherwise. Namely, they made use of firm discipline techniques and made it clear to their learners that they were in charge. Therefore the ‘my way or the highway’ approach seemed to play a role in the management of the insecurely attached learners. A possible explanation for the use of firm discipline with the difficult to manage learners might be found in Bowlby’s (1982) explanation of the activation of the teachers’ behavioural system. According to this understanding, aggressive behaviour from insecurely attached teachers towards learners that misbehaved can be understood as a way of reducing their own separation anxiety. That is to say, the disruptive learners were in a sense thwarting the possible bonding of the teacher with the rest of the learners in the class. This has particular relevance for teachers who prioritised relationships with learners for their own job satisfaction (Bowlby, 1982).

Another further possible reason that most teachers from the insecurely attached group could not relate to the authoritarian statement of discipline, might be related to the response bias

issue of socially desirable responding (Wetzel et al., 2016). They may have been concerned about creating an image of the so-called ‘non-strict, good teacher.’ They may therefore have gravitated to what they thought was the most ‘correct answer” and not necessarily the most truthful answer. Securely attached people have been found to have higher self-esteem than insecurely attached people, and are therefore less dependent on external validation, and less concerned with the views of other people (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

Lastly, it is noted that classroom management style four did not depict a ‘pure’ authoritative discipline style but rather had subtle elements of authoritarian discipline techniques intertwined in it. Namely the description stated that these teachers ‘rarely experienced discipline issues in their classes as their learners loved them and wanted to please them.’ This is in a sense a subtle form of ‘psychological’ control’ similar to that used with authoritarian parenting, which is using the withdrawal of love to control behaviour (Berk, 2009).

6.3.3. Relationships with learners

The thematic analysis of responses by participants made it evident that there was a ‘unique’ type of participant that was attracted to this survey. Namely, teachers who had been shy, but compliant and diligent learners during their primary school years. Their answers indicated that most participants had experienced success during their primary school years. This could possibly have drawn participants back to work at schools, with the additional goal of wanting all learners to experience similar success. It is possible that some of the teachers in this sample might have viewed the difficult to manage learners as being in need of rescuing and they wished to save them. Although these motivations are well intended, this saviour attitude has been shown to have negative consequences for many disadvantaged learners (Educational Administration Quarterly, 2012; Emdin, 2016).

Notably, the analysis of the written responses from the insecurely attached teachers revealed that they gained job satisfaction and personal fulfilment primarily through their learners. This could be possibly explained by the unconscious need of the insecure teachers to have their relationship needs fulfilled via learners (Riley, 2009; Bowlby, 1982). In contrast, the responses from the secure teachers suggested that they gained job fulfilment through both their connectedness with colleagues at their workplace, as well as via the advancement of their learners. This difference could possibly be explained by the fact that securely attached adults have more satisfying fulfilling adult relationships in the workplace in comparison to insecurely attached people (Harms, 2011; Nae & Choi, 2022).

The importance of emotional support

All participants chose classroom management styles which included the prioritising of learners' emotional needs. This stance was confirmed by the general consensus of these teachers when they were asked how important they thought it was to get to know the background of their learners and the importance of rendering emotional support to children in the Foundation Phase (See Tables 14 and 6). Their opinions in this regard are supported by the literature on the topic, that states that caring and the rendering of emotional support plays an important part of education in the Foundation Phase (Noddings, 1995; Noddings, 2012). In fact, when asked what qualities make for an effective Foundation Phase teacher, most teachers (secure and insecure alike) listed qualities like compassion, understanding and empathy as needed for fostering an emotional connection with learners. This also lends support to literature advocating that the same qualities that are needed to form a secure attachment between a teacher and child are similar to those needed with primary caregivers and their children (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Birch & Ladd, 1997; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Barry & King, 1993).

Sharing of personal information

One could question if it is necessary for educators to share personal information with young learners in order to create meaningful bonds with them. While the sharing of some personal information about the teacher's life could increase intimacy in the classroom by rendering the teacher more relatable as a person and thus help with the building of relationship between teachers and learners (Downs, et al 1988; Sorensen, 1989). However, it could be argued that it is perhaps more appropriate to do so with older learners, and that teachers should limit their sharing of information with young learners, so as not to make their problems that of their learners.

Unfortunately, it is noted that the question on the survey that asked participants whether they considered it appropriate to share information with learners was vague and would have been enhanced by specifying the nature of the personal information to be shared (See Table 15). This vagueness could be the reason many participants did not have an opinion as to whether it was appropriate or inappropriate to share personal information with their learners. However, despite the lack of clarity, it was notable that none of the insecurely attached teachers found it

inappropriate to share personal data with their learners. It was possible that teachers from the insecurely attached group shared personal information about themselves in order to create personal connections with their learners – in order to meet both the learners and their own needs for connection. Interestingly, the more positively teachers felt toward sharing information with learners correlated with the extent to which they were having difficulties in their relationships with partners, as reflected in both their partner anxiety and avoidance scores (See Table 35). Insecurely attached people have been found to experience more difficulties in relationships than securely attached people (Bowlby, 1982; Ainsworth, 1978; Hazan & Shaver 1987). Riley (2009) postulated that some teachers form satisfying personal relationships with their learners as a means of healing their own insecure childhood attachments. In comparison, more teachers from the securely attached group found it inappropriate to share personal information with learners, as they had their relationship needs fulfilled via other adults (See Table 15). The more negatively teachers felt toward sharing personal information with learners correlated with the degree to which teachers considered themselves competent in rendering emotional support to learners. This suggests that the giving of emotional support to learners does not necessarily entail the sharing of personal information with learners.

6.4. Responses to learners with insecure attachment presentations

This section discusses research questions three, four and five, again using the results from both the quantitative and qualitative survey results. In particular, the study then sought to determine if there were differences in responses to learners with insecure presentations amongst the various teacher attachment styles, to describe the manner in which teachers respond to children with insecure attachment presentations, and whether teachers were tolerant of learners who presented with a similar attachment style as their own.

6.4.1. Identification with and tolerance of insecurely attached learners

Overall, there were no statistically significant differences between the securely and insecurely attached teacher groups' responses to the three types of insecure learner presentations. This is likely due to the small sample size; the majority of participants were securely attached and only seven participants were insecurely attached. However, the analysis of the qualitative data did identify some trends with regards to the kinds of insecurely attached learners that the teachers identified with (See Tables 23, 27 and 31) and their responses to them. Teachers from both attachment groups could, in general, identify more

with Child B, the anxious-avoidant learner than both Child A, the anxious-ambivalent learner and Child C, the frightened-anxious learner. In fact, most teachers indicated that Child C was the most dissimilar to themselves during their primary school years. The teachers measuring as securely attached found commonality with Child B in the manner that they had been independent, diligent learners who had not required much help from their teachers. Important to bear in mind there was no secure vignette offered. Therefore, from the three insecurely vignettes offered, participants from the sample could identify the most with certain characteristics pertaining to anxious- avoidant learners. Moreover, the Spearman Rank's Correlation Test reflected that those participants who reflected low anxiety and high avoidance scores with parents on the ECR-RS, were more likely to identify with Child B, the anxious-avoidant learner (See Tables 36 and 37). Research by Nulman and Alkalay, (2023) revealed that avoidant teachers had conflictual relationships with challenging learners, especially those with anxiety and whose externalizing behaviour they perceived as demanding and threating. Moreover, teachers were regarded as a better fit with learners who presented with a similar attachment style to their own (Nulman & Alkalay, 2023).

These teachers, and the teachers with higher levels of personal need, who thought it appropriate to share information with learners were, however, also able to empathize, identify and manage anxious- ambivalent learners, supporting current literature on the topic that teachers are in general tolerant of learners who present with anxious-ambivalent attachment (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). However, most teachers experienced frighten-anxious learners, the most insecure attachment, as annoying (See Table 35).

6.4.2. The management of insecurely attached learners

The ability of participants to identify with anxious-avoidant learners translated into managing this child in an unobtrusive and gentle nurturing manner. This can be regarded as a reflection of an understanding of the anxious avoidant learner by teachers. These findings contrast with most research on anxious avoidant learners, namely the inability of teachers to emotionally connect and form trusting relationships with these learners due to their appearance of indifference and rejection of the help offered by educators (O'Connor & McCartney, 2007**;** Pianta,1999; Bergin & Bergin, 2009).

In comparison, an analysis of the answers from the participants showed that the least compassion and tolerance towards frighten-anxious learners with whom they could find little

commonality. This was reflected in the manner learners were managed with the strictest forms of discipline and the least compassion. Similar findings by the research done by Nulman and Alkalay, (2023) found that all teachers regardless of their attachment style, had have poor relationships with externalizing learners. That is, learners that are reactive, as with the anxious ambivalent learner and especially the frightened anxious learner. In general research has shown that externalizing behaviour equates to less close and more conflictual relationships between teachers and learners (lei et al., 2016).

Participant 27 was the one exception noted, as she was the only teacher from the sample who measured insecure in both childhood and adulthood. She was able to identify with anxious-ambivalent learners as she indicated that she had experienced high levels of anxiety when she was at primary school and therefore measured insecure during childhood. She however, also reflected high avoidance scores during adulthood with both partners and friends. She stood out from other participants in the manner that she managed anxious-ambivalent learners. She had instinctively 'pushed' them away. This could possibly be explained by the fact that she had remained insecurely attached throughout her adult life and was therefore, early in her teaching career, perhaps less able to tolerate her former young, vulnerable self who was represented through similarly attached learners. She had subsequently seemed to have learned that this was ineffective and had adapted her management of these learners over time. Britzman (2003) contends that teachers' emotional experiences from childhood, affects the way in which teachers react to their learners, particularly in stressful situations. Participant 19 from the insecurely attached group can be compared to Participant 27, as she had also suffered with anxiety during her primary school years. She, however, advocated for giving anxious- ambivalent learners extra love and attention whilst simultaneously setting down firm boundaries. She therefore appeared to have a better understanding and tolerance of the needs of her anxious-ambivalent learners. Jennings and Greenberg (2009) stressed how essential it is for teachers to become aware of their own emotions and further advocate for them to address their own emotional histories so that they can effectively negotiate their responses to anxious learners.

6.5. Conclusion and Implications

Although finding no statistically significant differences between securely and insecurely attached teachers with regards to discipline, classroom management styles, and responses to the different presentation of insecure learners, likely due to the small sample

size, this study did identify some trends with regards to differences in these areas via the analysis of the qualitative data. However, to substantiate any claims about the relationship between teachers' attachment styles and their management of insecurely attached learners, these findings will need to be verified using larger samples.

The findings did suggest that teachers would benefit from training in how to identify the differently insecurely attached learners in their classes and be empowered with the tools on how to deal with difficult to manage learners. It is further recommended that student teachers be exposed to the knowledge and skills of attachment theory before they embark on their practical teaching experiences in order to bridge the gap between theories of teaching and actually teaching. Moreover, it is recommended that all teachers be aware of their own attachment style. This self-awareness of their own styles of relating and attachment needs could assist them in a journey of growth and this insightfulness could result in wiser and thus better educators.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1. Summary of findings

The study aimed at investigating if there was a relationship between the different attachment styles of primary school teachers and the various ways they report relating to and managing insecurely attached children in the Foundation Phase of primary school. Due to the homogeneity of my sample and the small number of participants, no significant differences were found between teacher attachment styles and the manner in which they manage and respond to insecurely attached learners. However, the thematic analysis of the lived experiences of teachers alluded to the following:

- The insecurely attached teachers advocated for the sharing of personal information with learners as a means of connecting with them, to a greater extent than the securely attached teachers.
- There was, however, no connection found between the sharing of information with learners and the giving of emotional support to learners by teachers.
- Insecurely attached teachers appeared to prioritise relationships with learners which in turn influenced the extent of their job satisfaction. Whilst in comparison securely attached teachers gained job satisfaction through connections with both colleagues and learners.
- Participants from the sample could identify the most with anxious-avoidant learners and the least with the anxious-frightened learners.
- Most teachers were tolerant and empathic towards anxious-ambivalent learners.
- Teachers showed the least compassion and tolerance towards anxious-frightened learners.
- In comparison they managed anxious-avoidant learners with sensitivity, reflecting their understanding of this child.
- Although both securely and insecurely attached teachers self-reported authoritative classroom management styles, the securely attached teachers could relate to the authoritarian statement of discipline to a greater degree than the insecurely attached teachers.
- However, securely attached teachers appeared to use discipline to a lesser degree in the management of insecurely attached learners, than the insecurely attached teachers.
- Most teachers were able to manage learners who presented with similar traits as their former younger selves with sensitivity and compassion.

- However, it appeared that teachers who are insecure in both childhood and adulthood may be intolerant of learners who present with a similar childhood attachment, until experience as a teacher affords them the opportunity to gain experience and adjust their behaviours.

7.2. Limitations of the research

In hindsight, the survey was too long, and I feel many more teachers would have completed the online questionnaire if it had been shorter, and thus not so time-consuming. This was made evident by the fact that there was six incomplete questionaries and a generally low response rate to the survey. Additionally due to the fact that the survey was only offered in English could have prevented many teachers who were not proficient In English from participating in the study. Further the question regarding the race of participants was omitted in error on the online survey. In hindsight some of the questions on the survey were too vague and needed greater clarification. Additionally, it became apparent with the contradictions of answers from teachers, especially from the insecurely attached group, that they might have been privy to the bias of socially desirable responding, that is participants' answers were not necessarily the most truthful but rather influenced by the need by participants to portray of image of a "good teacher''.

The sample was not representative of the general population of Foundation Phase teachers in South Africa as it consisted of experienced teachers who were sheltered from many of the harsh realities of the South African public schooling system. Overcrowding, violence, discipline, and lack of resources are the lived experience of many teachers in our public school system (Chitsamatanga & Rembe, 2020; du Plessis, 2020). The homogeneity of the sample together with the small number of surveys completed, likely influenced the results of the quantitative questions.

Additionally, the Relationship Structures Questionnaire (ECR-RS) which was used to determine the attachment style of the participants seemed not to accurately pick up the anxiety of participants. There was total of nine questions asked for each relationship domain, on the questionnaire, six of these were used to determine avoidance behaviour and only three to determine anxiety related behaviour. Therefore, the questionnaire, seemed not to reflect the anxiety of participants with the same degree of accuracy as it did with avoidance. This was seen with both participants 19 and 27 who had stated that they had been anxious during childhood yet measured as dismissively attached on the ECR-RS scales. It has been

acknowledged that ECR-RS anxiety scales can be influenced by response acquiescence (Fraley et al., 2011).

7.3. Strengths of the research

Due to the comprehensive nature of the survey and the fact that most of the quantitative questions were mostly always followed up with qualitative questions, a rich data base was obtained consisting of the detailed lived experiences of teachers. The fewer numbers of surveys made it possible for an in-depth comparison of how teachers respond to and manage children with insecure attachment presentations. It assisted in highlighting whether teachers were tolerant of learners who presented with a similar attachment style as their own. Moreover, fewer surveys made it possible to scrutinise the responses of individual participants who stood out in relation to the topic. Additionally, fewer responses made it possible for an additional level of analysis to take place when comparing the securely and insecurely attached teacher groups in relation to most questions on the survey. In particular, this allowed for the identification of trends in relation to ways that teacher attachment histories could possibly have impacted on their classroom management and relationships with learners.

I created vignettes of the different insecurely attached children which can be used to help teachers better understand how these learners present in the classroom. I also made scales to measure both the discipline style and emotional support that constituted the classroom management style of teachers. Teachers can use this to gain a better understanding of their own classroom management style.

7.4. Recommendations for further research

The qualitative data in this study suggested a trend that would be worth researching further, namely a lack of understanding, tolerance and empathy reported by some teachers towards learners that present with disorganised/ frightened- anxious attachment. These learners are the most high-risk and the most likely to have had complex trauma backgrounds (Lyons-Ruth et al., 2020; Gibbs & Powell, 2023) and thus require the most emotional support. Further research into effective training programmes and interventions for both student teachers and teachers to assist and support these challenging learners would be beneficial.

The low levels of response to the survey may be mitigated in future studies by offering some kind of incentive to participants and/or schools. One such incentive could be to offer on-site training at schools on Attachment Theory to teachers and then ask them to fill in the surveys as part of the training. Despite the fact that this would require more time and administrative planning on part of the researcher, it could enrich classroom interactions between teachers and insecurely attached learners. In addition, many more participants need to be recruited for the sample to become more representative of the majority of teachers in South Africa. This should include teachers of all ages and both male and female teachers if possible. It should also include educators from public schools to as well as private schools.

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Appendix 1: Participant information and information consent form

Teacher attachment styles and the management of insecurely attached Foundation Phase learners

Dear potential participant

My name is Karin Klug, and I am a Foundation Phase teacher. I am currently doing my master's degree in research psychology through Wits University under the supervision of Professor Katherine Bain. My study consists of a research project, in which I am investigating Attachment theory in the classroom. My research project aims to investigate the dynamics between foundation phase teachers and their learners. The ultimate objective of my research is to gain a better understanding of what each person contributes to this unique relationship and thus to ultimately improve connections between teachers and learners, with a special focus on the difficult-to-manage/ insecurely attached children in the Foundation Phase of primary school.

In order to participate in my survey teachers must meet the following criteria:

- Teachers will have to be proficient in English.
- Teachers will have to have at least 3 years' experience teaching in the Foundation Phase.
- Teachers will have to have a formal qualification in teaching and must be registered with the South African Council for Educators (SACE).

Participation involves completing an anonymous survey and answering questions about your experiences with learners, your classroom management style, and personal relationship styles. This survey will take around 15-30 minutes and will depend on how detailed your answers are going to be. Participation is voluntary and there are no benefits or risks to participating. The questionnaire is anonymous, so I will not know your identity. For this reason, I cannot provide any feedback to any individuals, but if you find anything in the questionnaire upsetting, there is a list of counselling resources provided below that you can access. There will be no personal costs to you if they participate in this project. You will not receive any direct benefits from participation but there are no disadvantages or penalties if they do not choose to participate or if you withdraw from the study. The information given to me will be held securely and not disclosed to anyone else. The information will be stored in the cloud on a password-protected computer. Only anonymous data will be kept for possible future research by the researcher and her

supervisor for a period of 10 years and thereafter will be destroyed. With their permission, the data collected from this research project may be used by other researchers in an anonymized format. The results of the study will be published in a master's thesis and/or a publication journal.

If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), by telephone at +27(0) 11 717 1408 or email at hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za

Yours sincerely

Karin Klug 2388483@students.wits.ac.za

Katheine Bain 011-7174558 Katherine.Bain@wits.ac.za

Appendix 2: Online Survey

Please note that this is an anonymous Online survey and that completing and submitting the survey is taken to mean consent to participate.

Section 1

Please answer the following questions by typing an X in the appropriate block of your choice or by answering in the space provided.

1.1 Age

20-30 years old	30-39 years old	40-49 years old	50-59 years old	60 years and older

1.2 Gender

Male	Female	Non-binary	Other (please specify):

1.3 Race (This was omitted in error)

Asian	Black	Coloured	Indian	White
Other (please specify):				

1.4 Marital status

Single	In a relationship	Engaged	Married	Divorced	Widow/er
Other (please specify):					

1.5 How long have you been teaching in the Foundation Phase ?

3 – 6 years	7- 10 years	11-13 years	14 or more years

1.6 What is your highest level of education?

Teaching Diploma	Degree with post-graduate certificate in Education	Further diploma	Honours
Masters	Doctorate	Other (please specify)	

1.7 Which best describes the school where you are currently employed?

Government school in township	Government school in urban area (previously Model C)	Government school in rural area	Private school - Suburban
Special Needs – Private	Special Needs - government	Private School – Township/Inner City	Other (please specify):

1.8 How many learners are presently in your class?

Less than 5	6-10	11-20	21-29	30-39	40 or more

1.9 What socio-economic bracket fits the majority of learners in your class?

Extremely low – there is a lot of poverty – most learners come to	**Low-middle** – A few learners come to school hungry	**Mixed** – There is a wide range	**High-middle** – Most learners come from middle-class homes.	**Very high** – Most learners come from privileged homes.

school hungry.				

1.10 List three of the qualities that you think are needed to be an effective Foundation Phase teacher

(Rank them in order of importance)

1
2
3

1.11 How satisfied are you currently with your job?

Extremely unsatisfied	unsatisfied	neutral	satisfied	Extremely satisfied

1.12 What do you like most about your job? Please elaborate.

1.13 What do you like least about your job? Please elaborate.

1.14 Do you think it is important to get to know learners background history?

Extremely important	Important	Somewhat important	Unimportant	Not at all important

1.15 How appropriate do you consider it to share personal information about yourself with the children in your class?

Extremely appropriate	Appropriate	Neutral	Inappropriate	Extremely inappropriate

1.16 Do you consider providing emotional support to learners as part of your job?

It is not in my job description. I am here to teach	I do it only when I have to	I am not sure	I find it useful to do this	I consider it as a vital part of my job as a teacher

1.17 How effective do to you think you are at providing emotional support to learners?

Extremely ineffective	ineffective	Average	Effective	Extremely effective

1.18 I am firm and strict when it comes to discipline its either my way or the highway in my class.

Describes me 100% accurately	Mostly describes me	Somewhat describes me	Partially describes me	Does not describe me

1.19 To what extent do you agree with the statement below?

Learners need to be given choices, and their opinions incorporated into the teaching process.

Totally agree	Partially agree	Neutral	Partially disagree	Totally disagree

1.20 What in your opinion are possible reasons that some learners misbehave and are difficult to manage.

1.21 Place an X on the number that most closely describes your discipline and relationship style in the classroom.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

1= I can be described as a very strict teacher. I lay down rules and enforce them. I have rigid boundaries between myself and learners, which are hardly ever crossed. I don't get involved in their personal lives and they know nothing about my private life. I do not think it is my role to provide learners with emotional support.

2 = I can be best described a disciplinarian, as I believe rules are important for creating structure in the classroom. I keep healthy boundaries with learners, and I will only get

involved in their personal lives when it is necessary. Although I do not think it is my job to provide emotional support for learners there are times when I will do so.

3= I can be best described as firm, but fair, as I believe that some rules are necessary. I will go out of my way to get the buy-in from my pupils to make them understand the importance of rules. However, the emotional needs of my pupils are for me equally important as rules. I think that it is essential to create relationships with my pupils and to get to know them well.

4= I can be described as a loving and kind teacher**.** I have a genuine affection for my learners. I am in tune with their emotional needs but can put down my foot when the need arises. There are rarely discipline issues in my class, as my learners love and want to please me. I believe that learners thrive and learn best when they feel cared for, and have their emotional needs met.

5= I can best be described as a cool and fun teacher as I give my learners many liberties. I do not believe in making and enforcing rules, as I was a rebel at school. I get very involved in the personal lives of both my learners and their parents and do not have any concerns about mixing my personal and professional life. I often give gifts to learners to convey my affection for them. I also receive many gifts as I am loved by my learners and their families. The emotional well-of my pupils takes precedence above all else.

6= I can be described as been a chilled and laid-back teacher. I do not see the need to have rules or to enforce them in any way. I give my learners liberties as I do not feel structure is necessary for them. Children's emotional needs are somewhat important to me as I want only happy, carefree learners in my class as this will give me the least amount of trouble.

7= I am very good at the administrative side of teaching. I, however, have so much on going on in my personal life that I do not have capacity or energy to make rules and enforce them. I find it unacceptable that my learners cannot behave properly. I think it is very unfair that I am expected to provide emotional support to learners as well as discipline them, besides teaching them. Only when I am forced to, will I get involved in their personal lives and discipline learners.

8= I have no problem letting my pupils do as they please as I am only teaching for financial reasons. Teaching is my job, not my passion. It is therefore much easier for me to turn a blind eye than get involved in the personal affairs of my learners. I do not provide the children in my class with any form of emotional support, as I firmly believe that is the role of others like psychologists /social workers and their parents. I am further of the opinion that learners should be taught at home how to behave properly. Enforcing rules is too energy-consuming for me, so I choose to overlook behaviour issues.

Section 2

This section of the questionnaire contains three descriptions of common learner presentations. Please read each description and answer the questions that follow.

Child A

This learner is very emotionally needy and attention seeking. He/she often needs constant reassurance and encouragement when working. Further, this learner often complains that he /she cannot comprehend tasks. However, after individual assistance and or encouragement is rendered, it becomes apparent that the learner can complete tasks. He/she will go to any lengths to get your attention, including shouting out and misbehaving. This learner often pushes your buttons and can be described as 'annoying.' He/she often gets extremely nervous when tested and fears being monitored. Test results are not always congruent with class work. He/she often complains of feeling sick and or having injuries. Lastly, he /she often cries, whines, and complains that situations are unjust and unfair.

2.1.1 How do you experience learners like this in your class?

2.1.2 How annoying do you find learners like this?

Not annoying at all	Slightly annoying on rare occasions	Annoying at times	Often annoying	Extremely annoying

2.1.3 How easy do you find it to manage learners like this in your classroom?

Very easy	Easy, with the occasional bad day	In between – some good days and some bad days. However, the process is time-	Difficult - I find this child very hard to manage and have more bad than good days, which results in often	Extremely difficult – I often cannot manage this child on my own and often request assistance from other members of

		consuming and can be emotionally draining.	feeling overwhelmed and/or stressed.	staff. I feel exasperated.

2.1.4 Please describe 1-2 things that have helped you manage this type of learner.

2.1.5 What has experience taught you <u>not to do</u> with this type of learner?

2.1.6 How do you think it would be for you to empathize with a learner like this?

Very easily	Easily	Average	With difficulty	With extreme difficulty

2.1.7 How alike is this learner to you when you were in the Foundation Phase?

Can identify with this type of child?

Extremely similar to me	Some similarities	Not sure	Mostly dissimilar to me	Totally dissimilar to me

2.1.8 In what ways were you similar or dissimilar to this child?

Child B

This leaner can be described as been introverted and a loner. This learner rejects any help from you with work. Moreover he/she will not ask for assistance even when it is needed. He/she is noticeably quiet and mostly keeps to himself/herself. It is difficult to gauge how this learner feels as he/she never wants to share personal information or participate in discussions. He/she struggles with social interactions in the class with both peers and adults alike. It is easy to forget that he/she is in the class. He/she can be too independent, that is wanting to do everything on his/her own, yet you sense an underlying vulnerability and or insecurity. This learner can, however, be passive-aggressive and defiant at times, especially towards adults. He/she can be seen to become totally engaged with tasks that he/she finds easy.

2.2.1 How do you experience learners like this in your class?

2.2.2 How annoying do you find learners like this?

Not annoying at all	Slightly annoying on rare occasions	Annoying at times	Often annoying	Extremely annoying

2.2.3 How easy do you find it to manage learners like this in your classroom?

Very easy	Easy, with the occasional bad day	In between – some good days and some bad days. However, the process is time-consuming	Difficult - I find this child very hard to manage and have more bad than good days, which	Extremely difficult – I often cannot manage this child on my own and often request assistance from other members

		and can be emotionally draining.	results in often feeling overwhelmed and/or stressed.	of staff. I feel exasperated.

2.2.4 Please describe 1-2 things that has helped you manage this type of learner.

2.2.5 What has experience taught you <u>not to do</u> with this type of learner?

2.2.6 How easy do you think it would be for you to empathize with a learner like this?

Very easily	Easily	Average	With difficulty	With extreme difficulty

2.2.7 How alike is this learner to you when you were in the Foundation Phase? Can identify with this type of child?

Extremely similar to me	Some similarities	Not sure	Mostly dissimilar to me	Totally dissimilar to me

2.2.8 In what ways were you similar or dissimilar to this child?

Child C

This learner is very reactive and prone to outward displays of emotions when becoming upset. He/she has temper tantrums, throws objects, and or runs out of the classroom. He/she has little impulse control always and is always shouting out answers. He/she finds it hard to wait for his/her turn. He/she is physically or verbally abusive to others. This learner blows hot and cold, as at times he/she is overly demonstrative – wants hugs and comfort from you but at other times seems to despise you. This learner often struggles academically either due to backlogs from previous grades or learning difficulties. He/she has been labelled as the naughty child of the class/school. He/she finds it difficult to get along with peers especially members of the opposite sex. In additional this learner can display behaviour similar to either Child A and or Child B.

2.3.1 How do you experience learners like this in your class?

2.3.2 How annoying do you find learners like this?

Not annoying at all	Slightly annoying on rare occasions	Annoying at times	Often annoying	Extremely annoying

2.3.3 How easy do you find it to manage learners like this in your classroom?

Very easy	Easy, with the occasional bad day	In between – some good days and some bad days. However, the process is	Difficult - I find this child very hard to manage and have more bad than good	Extremely difficult – I often cannot manage this child on my own and often request assistance from other

		time-consuming and can be emotionally draining.	days, which results in often feeling overwhelmed and/or stressed.	members of staff. I feel exasperated.

2.3.4 Please describe 1-2 things that has helped you manage this type of learner.

2.3.5 What has experience taught you <u>not to do</u> with this type of learner?

2.3.6 How easy do you think it would be for you to empathize with a learner like this?

Very easily	Easily	Average	With difficulty	With extreme difficulty

2.3.7 How alike is this learner to you when you were in the Foundation Phase? Can identify with this type of child?

Extremely similar to me	Some similarities	Not sure	Mostly dissimilar to me	Totally dissimilar to me

2.3.8 In what ways were you similar or dissimilar to this child?

Section 3

The Relationship Structures Questionnaire

The statements below are about how you feel in emotionally intimate relationships. You can use them to assess how you tend to feel in close relationships generally, or to focus on a particular relationship or type of relationship.

Using the **1 to 7** scale below, after each statement write a number to indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statement when applied to the relationship you are evaluating**.**

PLEASE DO NOT LEAVE OUT ANY RELATIONSHIP.

1= strongly disagree	2= disagree	3= slightly disagree	4= neutral	5= slightly agree	6= agree	7= strongly agree

Mother = mother or a mother-like figure from your childhood.

Father = father or a father-like figure from your childhood.

Partner =current or a former romantic partner from adulthood.

Friend= best friend or close friends more generally from adulthood

		Mother	**Father**	**Partner**	**Friend**
1	It helps to turn to this person in times of need				
2	I usually discuss my problems and concerns with this person				
3	I talk things over with this person				
4	I find it easy to depend on this person				

5	I don't feel comfortable opening to this person.				
6	I prefer not to show this person how I feel deep down.				
7	I often worry that this person doesn't really care for me				
8	I'm afraid that this person may abandon me.				
9	I worry that this person won't care about me as much as I care about him or her.				

Counselling Services

- **South African Depression & Anxiety Group - SADAG**
  (0800) 12 13 14
  SADAG is Africa's largest mental health support and advocacy group.

- **Adcock Ingram Depression and Anxiety Helpline**
  (0800) 70 80 90

- **Lifeline South Africa**
  (0861) 322 322
  24-hour crisis intervention service. "Emotional First Aid station".

- **Befrienders Bloemfontein**
  (0027) 51 444 5000

- **The Emthojeni Community Psychology Clinic at Wits.**
  011-7174513 pabella.lepota@wits.ac.za
  Emthojenicentre.SHCD@wits.ac.za Umthombo.SHCD@wits.ac.za

Appendix 3: The Clearance Certificate

R14/49 Klug

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: H23/11/10**
PROJECT TITLE	Teacher attachment styles and the management of insecurely attached Foundation Phase learners
INVESTIGATOR(S)	Mrs K Klug
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	Human and Community Development/
DATE CONSIDERED	17 November 2023
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved Risk Level: Low
EXPIRY DATE	13 February 2027

DATE 14 February 2024 **CHAIRPERSON** _____
(Professor J Watermeyer)

cc: Supervisor : Professor K Bain

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

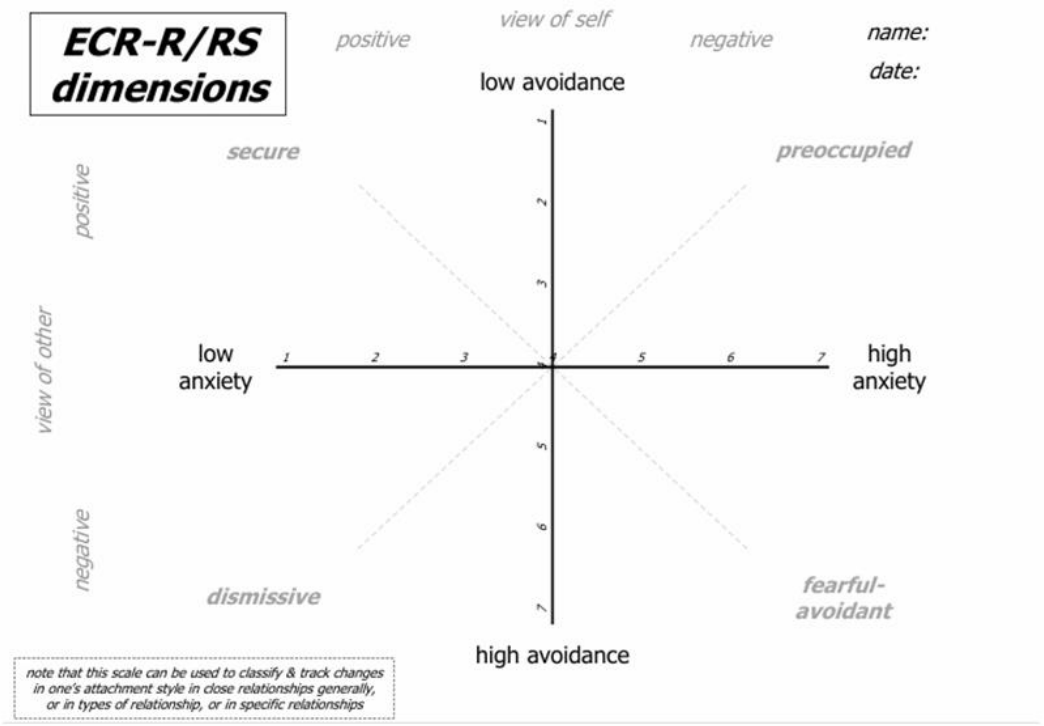
To be completed in duplicate and **A SIGNED COPY** returned to the Secretary electronically. Unreported changes to the application may invalidate the clearance given by the HREC (Non-Medical)

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to submit an amendment of the protocol to the Committee. **I/we agree to completion of a regular progress report. For Minimal and Low Risk studies, this is due annually on 31 December. For Medium and High Risk studies, this is due twice annually on 30 June and 31 December.**

_____ _____/_____/_____
Signature **Date**

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

Appendix 4: The Relationships Structures Questionnaire



Appendix 5: Letter to principals for permission to email foundation phase staff/post on school groups

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Karin Lee Klug. I am a Foundation Phase teacher who is currently doing my Masters in research psychology through Wits University. My research aims at helping to better understand the dynamics of classroom interaction, by looking at what both the teacher and individual learners contribute to the teaching-learning process.

The overall goal of my research is to add to research that may improve the teaching and learning experience for both teacher and learner alike. Participation in this study will involve teachers filling in an online questionnaire regarding their classroom management style, their style in relationships, and their responses to a few vignettes of hard-to-manage/ insecurely attached learners. I am looking for Foundation phase teachers who are registered with SACE, and with at least 3 years of teaching experience in the Foundation Phase. Participants must be proficient in English and have a formal teaching degree. Participants may stop at any time before they click the submit button at the end of the survey. The questionnaire should take between 15-30 minutes depending on how detailed the answers will be. The questionnaire is anonymous, so I will not know identities I, therefore, cannot provide any feedback to individual teachers, but if they find anything in the questionnaire upsetting, there is a list of counselling resources provided below that they can access. There will be no personal costs to teachers if they participate in this project. They will not receive any direct benefits from participation but there are no disadvantages or penalties if they do not choose to participate or if you withdraw from the study. The information given to me will not be disclosed to anyone else and will be stored in the cloud on a password-protected computer. Only anonymous information will be kept for possible future research by the researcher and her supervisor for a period of 10 years and thereafter will be destroyed. With their permission, the data collected from this research project may be used by other researchers in an anonymized format.

If you have any questions regarding the survey, you can contact me at 2388483@students.wits.ac.za. Alternatively, my supervisor can be contacted at Katherine.Bain@wits.ac.za. I would further request that you please forward my survey to fellow Foundation Phase educators.

If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(011) 717 1408, email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za

Yours sincerely

Karin Klug

Appendix 6: Letter to Social Media Admin

Good day

My name is Karin Lee Klug, and I am a master's student in Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. My study consists of a research project, in which I am investigating Attachment theory in the classroom under the supervision of Professor Katherine Bain. This research project aims to investigate if there is a relationship between the different attachment representations of primary school teachers and the various ways they report relating to and managing insecurely attached children in the Foundation Phase of primary school. I would like to ask your permission to post my invitation to participants on your social media site.

I am looking for Foundation phase teachers who are registered with SACE, and with at least 3 years of teaching experience in the Foundation Phase. Participants must be proficient in English and have a formal teaching degree. Participation is voluntary and will take around 15-30 minutes and this will depend on how detailed the answers are going to be. There will be no personal costs to teachers if they participate in this project. They will not receive any direct benefits from participation but there are no disadvantages or penalties if they do not choose to participate or if you withdraw from the study. The information given to me will not be disclosed to anyone else and will be stored in the cloud on a password-protected computer. Only anonymous data will be kept for possible future research by the researcher and her supervisor for a period of 10 years and thereafter will be destroyed. With their permission, the data collected from this research project may be used by other researchers in an anonymized format. The results of the study will be reported in an MA thesis and a possible journal article. If requested a summary of the findings will be provided.

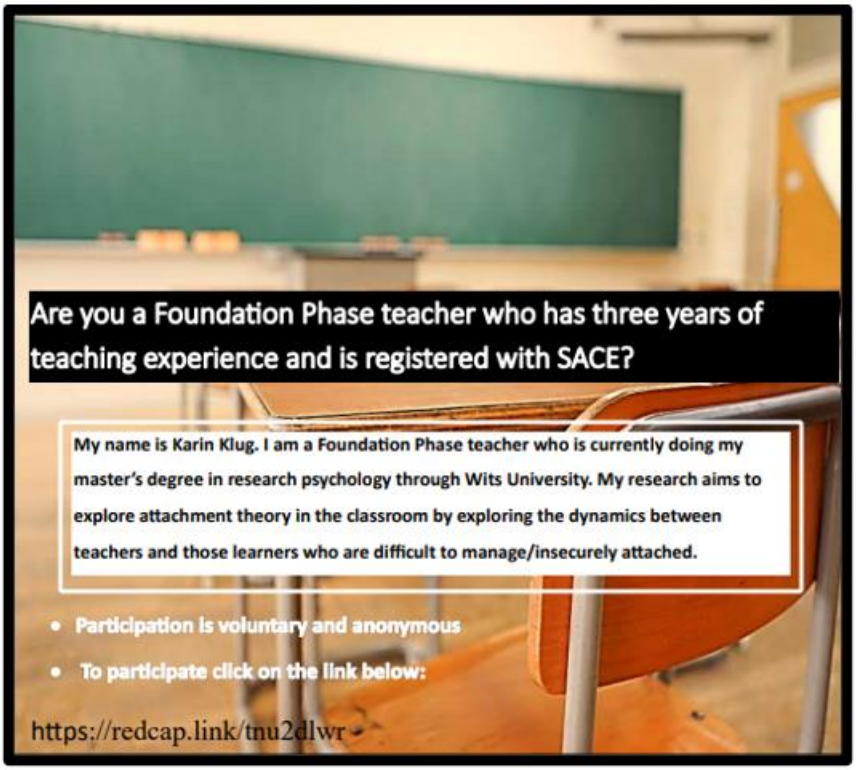
The study has sought provisional clearance by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of the Witwatersrand. Full clearance will be given upon submission of proof of submission from the administrators of social media sites.

Yours sincerely

Karin Lee Klug - 2388483@students.wits.ac.za karinlee.klug@gmail.com

Supervisor: Professor Katherine Bain- Katherine.Bain@wits.ac.za

Appendix 7: Invitation to participate in the survey



https://redcap.link/tnu2dlwr