

# Attachment Based Intervention in Enhancing Secure Attachment in Adolescent Mothers and Their Children Aged 0- 12 Months



## An Intervention of Vihiga District Hospital, Kenya

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### Introduction

- Adolescence is the transition stage from childhood to adulthood between the ages of 10-19 years (Bearinger, L., Sieving, R.E., Ferguson, J., & Sharma, V. 2007). In Kenya, nearly 18% of girls between the ages of 15-19 years are mothers (KDHS, 2014).
- Motherhood in adolescence is a significant risk factor for the development of both the mother and the baby as it conflicts with her taking on of parental role and the new born's physical and emotional needs which affect attachment (Riva, Lerai, Gazotti, & Albizzati, 2014 & Oliver, 2007).
- Attachment is the emotional bond between an infant and a specific caregiver usually the mother (Bowlby, 1969) who creates a secure base and safe haven for exploration (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970; Bowlby, 1969, 2008; Cassidy, 2008).
- Despite attachment being regarded a universal concept, context in childrearing should be considered. This program will consider the cultural aspect in Kenya where care giving is a collective responsibility that focuses only on child's survival and physical needs rather than emotional needs as well. The idea is to help the mothers understand the importance of both needs in creating a secure relationship (Mesman et al., 2017).

### Goal

Increase the mothers' sensitivity and appropriate responsiveness to the child's physical and emotional needs hence creating a relationship which can foster secure attachment.



Figure Above: An adolescent mother holding her baby but not looking at her

### Method

#### Participants:

20 mother-infant dyads of four groups each with 5 members will participate in the program recruited from the Maternal Child Welfare Clinic.



Figure Above: A nurse teaching an adolescent mother how to position and hold the baby for breastfeeding

#### Procedure:

- Introduction, Discussion of study objectives, Approval seeking and Budget Presentation.
- Development of implementation plan, training manual and Training of nurses.
- Recruitment of Participants.
- Pre and Post- assessment - To be done using three measures.

#### Measures :

##### The Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale:

Used to assess the mothers on pregnancy perception and post delivery feelings as the conflicting needs on the young mother can lead to post natal depression.

##### The Child-Adult Relationship Experimental Index- Care Index:

Three scales which measure the behaviour of the adult; Sensitivity, Controlling and Unresponsiveness and four scales for the child's behaviour; Cooperative, Compliant, Compulsive and Difficulty.

##### The Parenting Sense of Competence scale:

Measures parental competence on two dimensions: Satisfaction and Efficacy which examines the young adolescent mothers' emotions and feelings about the care giving process.

### Intervention Protocol

#### Session 1

##### Introduction

- Introduction, rapport building
- Project objectives, procedures and expectations
- Sharing experiences on motherhood

#### Session 2

##### Speaking For The Child

- Positive interaction-video watching
- Speaking for the child
- Importance of nurturance

#### Session 3

##### Theory Building: Attachment

- Developmental Milestones
- Attachment concept; Maternal sensitivity and Responsiveness

#### Session 4

##### Video on Dyad Interaction

- Videotaping during feeding, diapering & structured play
- Explaining the concept; Circle of security

#### Session 5

##### Video watching & Discussion

- Observation on sensitivity and Responsiveness
- Importance of touch and holding

#### Session 6

##### Transition & Review

- Recognition of weaknesses and defence mechanisms
- Attachment: Insecure attachments

#### Session 7

##### Final Session & Way Forward

- Building adolescent mother's self confidence in caregiving process
- Evaluation and Feedback of the program outcomes

### Conclusion

**Strength:** Child rearing is a universal and contextual concept. The concept of attachment however is new in Kenya and its successful implementation will improve caregiver-child interaction across board (in both the family and healthcare systems) presumably, the outcomes will be adapted for policy formulation.

**Limitation:** This is a group based pilot program with a small sample which is not a representation of the whole population. Future studies will need to include larger samples, individual therapy with more sessions especially for this group in home settings.

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