

The Effects of Attachment and Trauma on Parenting and Children's Mental Health

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ABSTRACT

This theoretical review explores the impact of unresolved trauma and attachment disruptions in parents on their mental health and parenting behaviors, with a focus on how these factors influence children's emotional development. Drawing on attachment theory and trauma research, the study examines mechanisms such as emotional dysregulation, impaired reflective functioning, and neurobiological alterations in stress response systems, all of which contribute to maladaptive parenting and insecure attachment patterns in children. The analysis moves beyond simplistic dichotomies of "safe" versus "unsafe" attachment by recognizing the complexity and variability in relational dynamics and caregiving outcomes.

To assess potential pathways for intervention, the study critically evaluates four therapeutic models: Attachment-Based Therapy, Bowen Family Systems Therapy, Mindfulness-Based Interventions, and Emotion-Focused Therapy. Each approach is analyzed for its theoretical alignment with trauma-informed care and its capacity to enhance parental emotional regulation, foster secure relational bonds, and interrupt the intergenerational transmission of attachment-related distress. The literature review emphasizes studies that highlight long-term outcomes and clinical effectiveness within diverse family systems.

The findings underscore the value of integrative, trauma-sensitive interventions that address both individual emotional processes and broader systemic influences. However, gaps remain in longitudinal evidence and culturally responsive applications, indicating a pressing need for further empirical research. This study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how therapeutic strategies can be applied to strengthen parenting practices, mitigate the impact of parental trauma, and promote psychological well-being across generations.

Keywords: trauma, attachment, parenting, mental health, insecure, Bowen Family Systems, Mindfulness, Emotion-Focused Therapy

INTRODUCTION

Early caregiving experiences play a critical role in shaping mental health outcomes of the children (Wade et al., 2022). However, the impact of unresolved trauma and insecure attachment on parenting remains insufficiently understood. This study aims to investigate how parents' attachment histories and traumatic experiences affect their mental health and, by extension, the psychological development of their children. Instead of examining the general approach to preserving the mental health of children, this research will focus on the platforms that can be identified to ensure these platforms address emotional regulation, behavioural modelling, and reflection, functioning as mediators of intergenerational continuity in attachment patterns. It focuses on the fact that secure attachments may lead to resiliency, and in case of unresolved trauma, one can often develop maladaptive parenting styles and become over-reactive. Understanding these pathways will provide a solid foundation for identifying families at risk and implementing targeted interventions to promote the stability of relationships and emotional well-being across generations.

To investigate these dynamics, the research combines insights from attachment theory, trauma studies, and developmental psychopathology. The works of Bowlby on internal working models and Ainsworth's empirical

identification of attachment types serve as the theoretical premise for explaining emotional and relational functioning through the creation of attachments in early life. Trauma is considered not only psychologically but also in the neurobiological process, especially the effects on such parts as the amygdala and the hippocampus, which are vital aspects of emotional control and threat management (Giotakos, 2020). When these systems are disrupted, caregiving capacity is often compromised. The paper evaluates four therapeutic interventions—Attachment-Based Therapy, Bowen Family Systems Therapy, Mindfulness-Based Interventions, and Emotion-Focused Therapy—each of which addresses different dimensions of the trauma-attachment interface. These approaches are critically examined for their ability to enhance emotional regulation, interrupt maladaptive cycles, and foster secure, attuned relationships, thereby contributing to more effective parenting and improved mental health outcomes for both parents and children. It is critical to understand the problem that will be explored and the research objectives that will be the article's focus.

Problem Statement

Despite the growing body of research on trauma and attachment theory, there remains a significant gap in understanding how unresolved childhood trauma and adult attachment styles influence parental mental health and, in turn, affect children's emotional well-being. Existing studies tend to focus on either trauma or attachment in isolation, rather than examining their intersection and the implications for intergenerational mental health. The research focuses on intervening in this gap to identify that unresolved trauma and insecure attachment of such parents lead to maladaptive patterns of parenting and the emergence of mental problems in children. It also assesses therapeutic treatments that aim to disrupt this cycle and foster resilience in family systems.

Objectives

1. To explore how unresolved trauma and insecure attachment styles in parents impact their mental health and parenting behaviors.
2. To assess the intergenerational effects of parental trauma and attachment on children's emotional and psychological development.
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of therapeutic interventions—specifically Attachment-Based Therapy, Bowen Family Systems Therapy, Mindfulness, and Emotion-Focused Therapy—in improving parental well-being and breaking the cycle of trauma transmission.

Based on the research problem and the objectives, it is important to understand attachment theory as the basis for the article, different types of attachment and how they affect the mental health of children.

Attachment Theory

Attachment theory, first developed by John Bowlby (1969, 1982), posits that early emotional bonds formed between infants and primary caregivers serve as the foundation for psychological development and social functioning across the lifespan (Robledo et al., 2022). Bowlby argued that human infants possess an innate behavioral system that motivates proximity-seeking behaviors toward attachment figures, especially under conditions of stress or threat (Garrett, 2023). These early interactions shape internal working models—cognitive-affective schemas that influence expectations about self, others, and relationships—which, in turn, guide emotional regulation, interpersonal functioning, and future attachment experiences (Goliath & Simanke, 2024).

Ainsworth's seminal "Strange Situation" studies further elaborated on Bowlby's theory by empirically identifying distinct attachment patterns: secure, avoidant, and ambivalent/resistant (Ellington, 2024). Later research added a fourth category, disorganized attachment, typically associated with unresolved trauma or caregiver behaviors that are frightening or inconsistent (Pollard et al., 2023). These attachment styles are not only observable in childhood but also persist into adulthood, shaping relationship dynamics and psychological resilience (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

In adulthood, attachment is commonly classified into four broad categories: secure, preoccupied (anxious), dismissing (avoidant), and fearful-avoidant. Adults who are securely attached tend to report being trusting and

having the ability to regulate emotions. In contrast, adults with insecure attachment patterns display challenges with emotional expression, emotional conflict resolution, and intimacy. According to Mikulincer and Shaver, (2007), the hyperactivated attachment system, which is characterized by frequent dependency and the fear of abandonment, is also typical of the preoccupied adults. Conversely, those who tend to dismiss others usually set aside their emotional needs and focus on being self-reliant. Fearful-avoidants represent the combination of approach and avoidance and may be associated with unresolved trauma or uneven caretaking (van der Horst et al., 2024).

Children receiving stable, sensitive, and responsive caregiving have a higher chance of developing attachment security, which promotes emotional stability, adaptive coping, and good relationships in social life. Conversely, children with insecure attachment styles as a result of neglect or unstable caregivers are likely to be emotionally dysregulated as well as to experience interpersonal problems and are at a high risk of developing mental illnesses (Ginalska & Cichopek, 2024). Such early attachment types tend to persist into adulthood, thus influencing how they handle stress, build relationships, and parent their children.

Understanding the development and function of attachment is, therefore, essential in identifying intergenerational patterns of trauma and maladaptive caregiving. Interventions aimed at improving attachment security in adults—particularly those with a history of trauma—can interrupt cycles of dysfunction and promote mental health and relational well-being within families (Siegel, 2010), also supported by Pandey and Gupta (2025) in exploration of how attachment style affects esteem among people.

Understanding the foundational principles of attachment theory is crucial for understanding how early relational experiences influence later parenting behaviors and mental health outcomes. Building on this theoretical framework, the following literature review critically examines empirical studies that explore the intersection of trauma, attachment, and their combined impact on parental functioning and child development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Trauma and Attachment: A Theoretical Intersection

The intersection of trauma and attachment theory is foundational for understanding long-term emotional and relational dysfunctions, particularly within the parenting context. Trauma, whether acute or chronic, interferes with a child's ability to form secure attachments, especially when the caregiver is the source of distress or fails to provide consistent emotional regulation. According to Goliath and Simanke, (2024), Bowlby described the attachment system as biologically programmed to seek safety and care. When that system is disrupted by neglect, abuse, or chronic stress, children may internalize maladaptive expectations about themselves and others. These expectations form what Bowlby termed “internal working models,” shaping a person's relational experiences and self-concept across their lifespan.

An expansion on Ainsworth's (1978) attachment classifications identifies the disorganized attachment style—a response pattern marked by contradictory behaviors such as simultaneous seeking and avoidance of comfort (Ellington, 2024). Disorganized attachment is highly correlated with early exposure to trauma and unresolved parental caregiving, making it especially relevant in intergenerational cycles of dysfunction. Paulus et al. (2021) noted that children with disorganized attachment often develop impaired affect regulation, dissociation, and later vulnerability to psychopathology.

Neurobiological research supports these behavioral observations. Van der Kolk (2014) demonstrated that trauma alters the architecture of brain regions responsible for emotional regulation and memory—especially the amygdala, hippocampus, and prefrontal cortex—compromising a child's ability to process threat or connect emotionally. Such neurological imbalances, in their turn, reinforce insecure or disorganized attachment propensity. Mikulincer and Shaver (2007) claimed that insecure attachment styles expose an individual to a higher risk of a traumatic event and limit an individual's recovery. Such a circuit and circular susceptibility is particularly dangerous in the field of parenting, where a trauma that has not been processed can become the unconscious foundation of care behavior, leading to a cyclical recreation of the very conditions that destabilized the caregiver's development.

Adult Attachment Styles and Parental Mental Health

Early attachment experiences are crucial to parental functioning, as determined by the adult manifestation of these early experiences. In adult attachment theory, four major styles are assumed: fearful-avoidant, avoidant (dismissing), anxious (preoccupied), and secure (Khan, 2024). All styles indicate varying comfort levels with intimacy, dependency, and emotion regulation. Sagone et al. (2023) assert that securely attached adults tend to have higher emotional intelligence and greater satisfaction in their relationships, which enables them to parent more sensitively and consistently. Conversely, anxious parents tend to be hyper vigilant, fear rejection, and are likely to be overinvolved emotionally in their children, hence poor caregiving. Avoidant persons block the relational communication and close the door to intimacy, and thus, they might have difficulties with satisfying the emotional needs of their children, resulting from emotional neglect or detachment.

The fearful avoidant attachment style is anxiety and avoidance mixed: a dynamic of strong relational demand and avoidance of closeness (Liotti, 2004). Such dynamics have a direct influence on parenting efficacy. Ye et al. (2024) recorded a significant difference in the reports of anxiety, depression, and emotional dysregulation, which weaken the quality of caregiving by the parents with insecure attachment styles, compared to the secure ones. The authors indicated that such parents typically lack the ability to use reflective functioning, the capacity to perceive their child's emotional state without imposing personal interpretations, which becomes a factor in distorted interpretations and ineffective relationships with their child (Stuhrmann et al., 2022).

Additionally, insecurely attached parents often misinterpret typical developmental behaviors as threats, leading to exaggerated responses. These parents tend to revert to controlling, inconsistent, and unreceptive parenting styles, missing opportunities to foster a child's understanding of safety and attachment security (Siegel, 2010).

Parenting and the Intergenerational Transmission of Trauma

The continuity of trauma across generations is well-documented. Unresolved trauma in parents often manifests as symptoms of PTSD, depression, emotional numbing, or heightened irritability, all of which impair their ability to provide nurturing and attuned caregiving (Yehuda et al., 2001). These symptoms can be especially pronounced when trauma histories remain unaddressed or unacknowledged. According to Baldwin et al. (2016), parental trauma was considerably associated with increasing levels of internalizing and externalizing disorders in children, including aggression, anxiety, and avoidance. Such findings support the idea that trauma, if untreated, is not confined to individual pathology but becomes embedded in relational patterns and transmitted through caregiving.

However, this transmission is not inevitable. Protective factors can buffer the effects of parental trauma. Walsh (2011) emphasized the importance of a resilience-facilitating environment, including support from the extended family, therapeutic interventions, and effective parenting practices. There is also an intermediary role of cultural context. Collectivism minimizes the effects of distributed personal trauma, as the community raises the child, and the effect of distributed personal trauma is minimal. However, individualistic societies may enhance the effects of it, as they breed social isolation. These differences, however, are moderately understudied, especially among non-Western or marginalized communities, leaving considerable weak points in the literature.

Aggravating dynamics between generations are gender differences in trauma expression and acknowledgment. Men are more prone to expressing the trauma externally (through substance use or aggression). In contrast, women tend to suppress and experience the trauma internally (prolonged anxiety or depression), and this difference affects parenting differently (Hogg Lund et al., 2021). Research is suffering, unfortunately, because the vast majority of empirical research lacks adequacy in differentiating findings by gender, resulting in a homogenized perspective of the intergenerational vein of trauma.

Parental Stress, Coping, and Mental Health

Prolonged stress has been identified as a pathway to psychological distress in the parents, especially those with insecure attachment patterns. Already with some unresolved trauma, when parents are subjected to everyday stress, they become even less able to regulate emotions, particularly where high-needs kids meet inadequate

social support. According to Heynen et al. (2021), parental stress is negatively correlated with the ability to exhibit empathic responsiveness, and vice versa. The improvement of the ability to exhibit empathic responsiveness led to a decrease in parental authoritarian or disengaged parenting style.

Attachment style is not only influenced by coping mechanisms, but also by those that predict parenting efficacy. Securely attached individuals are more likely to utilize adaptive strategies in coping, such as seeking support, cognitive reframing, or effective problem-solving, whereas insecurely attached individuals tend to employ maladaptive strategies, including avoidance, suppression of emotions, or dissociation (Duca et al., 2023). These predispositions may be especially negative during high-stress situations, in which the failure to tune in to children emotionally may further weaken the caregiving relationship.

Furthermore, parents influence their response to their child's emotional expression through attachment-based coping styles. Secure parents are better equipped to identify distress cues and respond effectively to them. Conversely, avoidant or anxious parents can reject, provide an excessive response, or misinterpret these signals, which sustains the feelings of insecurity in the child, as well as strengthens behavioral or emotional disturbances (Siegel & Hartzell, 2003). Despite the evident relevance of coping in mediating attachment-trauma outcomes, there is still limited empirical work dissecting the specific mechanisms through which attachment styles influence coping behaviors within parenting contexts.

Impact on Children's Emotional Development

Children's socio-emotional development is closely intertwined with their parents' attachment styles and psychological well-being. Garrett (2023) shows how Bowlby emphasized that secure attachments foster a child's confidence in exploring the environment, regulating emotions, and developing healthy relationships. Children with securely attached parents tend to exhibit higher levels of empathy, resilience, and social competence. Gautam et al. (2024) argue that children raised in environments marked by inconsistency, emotional unavailability, or parental trauma are at increased risk for internalizing (e.g., anxiety, depression) and externalizing (e.g., defiance, aggression) problems.

A host of moderating variables, including child temperament, parental gender, and the timing and duration of the traumatic exposure, influence these outcomes. For instance, early childhood is a critical period for the formation of attachment schemas; disruptions during this phase are more likely to produce lasting developmental impairments than those occurring later (Herrero-Roldán & Martín-Rodríguez, 2025). However, empirical investigations that track these developmental trajectories over time are relatively scarce. Most studies rely on cross-sectional data, limiting causal inferences about long-term impacts.

Moreover, research on cross-cultural variations in attachment formation and trauma response remains underdeveloped. Most attachment studies are rooted in Western contexts, often assuming nuclear family structures and underestimating the role of community or extended kinship networks in caregiving. Expanding this research to include culturally diverse populations would offer more nuanced insight into how parenting and trauma intersect globally.

Gap in the Existing Literature

There is a significant body of research that associates the theories of attachment, trauma, and parenting, but the available literature has several weaknesses in terms of entwining, expanse, and depth. To begin with, most of the works separating trauma or attachment are done without considering the interaction of the two that occurs during the lifespan and their effects on parenting at the same time (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Such divisive thinking can restrict insight into how problems of early relational trauma form adult attachment styles and further limit how those styles are transferred to parenting. Second, a significant portion of the literature studied is Eurocentric, concentrating on the nature of the Western nuclear family while overlooking cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity. Studies using non-Western models of parenting, or community-based systems of care, are still scarce.

Furthermore, despite the high prevalence of the topic of parental stress and coping mechanisms being discussed, there is limited research on how various styles of attachment mediate the effects of trauma on parental coping and child outcomes. Additionally, there are not many longitudinal studies that look at the passage of intergenerational trauma through time, especially within clinic or high-risk samples. The available studies have the limitation that they are primarily based on self-reports, which can introduce bias or errors in data collection. The existence of such gaps highlights the importance of further integrative, culturally adaptive, and methodologically sound studies to enhance the body of knowledge and inform the proper application of therapy.

Following the multifaceted nature of the interplay between trauma, attachment, and parenting existing in the literature, it becomes apparent that specialized interventions are critical in breaking the maladaptive patterns and inducing resiliency in families dealing with emotional shock. Evidence-based therapeutic strategies aimed at helping overcome these difficulties and ensuring healthier relations between parents and their children are discussed in the following section. Given the gaps in literature, this article will provide therapeutic interventions that can bridge the gap.

Therapeutic Interventions

The interplay between trauma, attachment, and parenting is very complex and requires the application of comprehensive and evidence-based therapeutic intervention. These interventions not only intend to enhance the psychological health status of parents who have not overcome the traumatic experience but also intend to protect the developmental and emotional health of the children. This section explores four empirically supported therapeutic approaches—Attachment-Based Therapy, Bowen Family Systems Therapy, Mindfulness-Based Interventions, and Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT)—analyzing their theoretical foundations, mechanisms of action, and relevance to intergenerational trauma and attachment repair.

Attachment-Based Therapy

Attachment-Based Therapy revolves around the idea that initial attachment disturbances, especially traumatic ones, determine the formation of internal working models, which are carried into adulthood and influence parenting decisions. This treatment orientation is used to enhance the emotional tuning capacity of parents and facilitate the formation of a secure attachment between parents and their children. As Pitillas and Berastaegui (2021) describe, the key interventions within attachment-based treatment are correcting the ruptures in the parents' attachment history and developing reflective functioning skills, which enable the recognition and reaction to the child's mental states. Repair work, in the form of dyadic video feedback and experiential activities, can help parents reframe their attachment history, generate insight, and experience corrective emotional experiences.

Notably, empirical evidence suggests that attachment-focused intervention strategies can enhance parental sensitivity and help eliminate negative parenting patterns in vulnerable groups. Letourneau et al. (2023) revealed that attachment-based therapy groups for mothers with a history of maltreatment experienced considerable gains in responsiveness and emotional availability to their children. The role of treatment usually encompasses both individual therapy and parent-child interaction therapy (PCIT), which enables therapists to monitor and manage on-the-cycle relational issues.

Moreover, attachment-based treatment helps to end the intergenerational trauma transmission cycle through the treatment of underlying cognitive-affective distortions and thoughts that hinder secure parenting. According to Barlow et al. (2021), one of the priorities for breaking the cycle of disorganized attachment is to enhance the reflective functioning of parents, ensuring that their children do not repeat the same mistakes in the future. The barriers to scaling such interventions still exist in various settings, but evidence from multiple studies supports their effectiveness in trauma-informed care models.

Bowen Family Systems Therapy

Bowen Family Systems Therapy provided a multigenerational framework through which it could treat the traumas and breakages of attachment in the family. Created by Murray Bowen, the approach refers to the person's

behavior that is impossible to examine independently of the emotional family process (Bowen, 1978). Central to this therapy is the concept of self-differentiation—the ability to maintain autonomy while remaining emotionally connected to others.

Trauma often manifests in poorly differentiated family members as heightened reactivity, emotional cutoff, or triangulation. Therapeutic goals thus include increasing self-awareness, improving emotional regulation, and reducing chronic anxiety transmitted through family relationships. According to Schlüter (2021), tools such as genograms, emotional process mapping, and relational coaching enable clients to identify and restructure intergenerational trauma patterns and maladaptive relational dynamics.

Bowenian therapy is beneficial in cases where attachment injuries are embedded within broader familial scripts. Downey and Crummy (2022) highlight how emotional triangles—a dynamic wherein two individuals pull a third into their conflict—often reflect unresolved trauma and can perpetuate relational instability across generations. By increasing differentiation and reducing emotional fusion, parents can achieve greater clarity and intention in their caregiving roles.

Clinical applications of Bowenian therapy in trauma-affected families reveal positive outcomes in anxiety reduction, improved communication, and healthier boundaries (Papero, 1990). Papero (1990) emphasizes the significance of self-differentiation within family systems therapy, highlighting how individuals with higher self-differentiation can maintain emotional autonomy while engaging in healthy relationships. This concept directly relates to the discussion of Bowen Family Systems Therapy, as it underpins the therapeutic goal of helping parents manage intergenerational trauma without becoming emotionally reactive or enmeshed. By promoting differentiation, therapists can support trauma-affected parents in developing more adaptive, regulated responses to relational stress, ultimately fostering secure attachment patterns in their children. Nevertheless, it requires considerable emotional intelligence, as well as time, and not every family may be able to afford it. Nevertheless, despite these problems, it has a systemic orientation that is valuable as a supplement to treatments with a higher individual focus.

Mindfulness-Based Interventions

The effectiveness of Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs) as a modality for use in trauma-affected populations and emotional regulation in parenting is receiving wider acknowledgment. These guided practices, based on Buddhist meditation courses that incorporate Western psychological constructs, promote a non-judgmental awareness of the present moment (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). Trauma-exposed parents can use mindfulness, which provides them with strategies to decrease reactivity, learn to tolerate distress, and discontinue automatic maladaptive cycles.

Mindful Parenting and other similar MBIs have improved parent-child co-regulation, emotional availability, and parental stress in the parenting context. The enhancement of self-compassion explains the results, thought flexibility, and the ability to watch, rather than respond to, provoking child behaviors (Sansone, 2024). At the neurobiological level, mindfulness has been found to enhance connections between the prefrontal cortex and the limbic system, which suggests that it improves executive functioning and emotion regulation.

Specific techniques are employed, including breath meditation, body scans, and grounding. These enable parents to be more tolerant of painful feelings and can also make them more responsive and less reactive towards their children. According to Van der Kolk (2014), the practice of mindfulness can provide a person with the feeling of agency and bodily security, which is significant to trauma survivors since they regularly feel dissociation and hyperarousal.

Even though MBIs necessitate regular practice and will not necessarily alleviate long-standing attachment breakdowns straight away, their immediate availability and flexibility provide invaluable support to trauma-oriented treatment. According to longitudinal surveys, parental and child mental health outcomes have typically improved in the long term, especially when mindfulness has been incorporated into family routines and relational habits (Neff, 2011).

Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT)

Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT), developed by Greenberg and Johnson, emphasizes the centrality of emotion in human functioning and relational healing. EFT aims to help individuals access, understand, and transform maladaptive emotional responses, particularly those rooted in attachment injuries (Fülep et al., 2021). It works particularly well with those parents who went through an experience of emotional child neglect or invalidation and are having difficulties managing their emotions as part of a caregiving situation. EFT interventions occur in phases, including the discovery of primary emotions, identification of unmet relationship needs, and creation of new emotional experiences through corrective interactions (Mendoza & Leeth, 2025). In parent-oriented EFT, clinicians help clients identify a pattern of emotional inhibition, avoidance, or overexposure that hinders their ability to become responsive parents. Ansar et al. (2021) identify the common elements of the sessions as role-play, expressive practice, and focused conversations, through which parents can further cultivate their emotional perception and change their defensive mode into natural expression.

According to Başer et al. (2025), EFT demonstrated a substantial advantage in lessening manifestations of damage and expanding relational fulfilment among the participants of the study with histories of emotional abuse. Emotional coherence and its improvement with the help of EFT facilitate secure bonding and enhance the parents' ability to experience emotional containment and attunement, which are essential aspects of healthy attachment development in children. The focus on the processing of emotions as opposed to cognitive restructuring without much emphasis on processing can be seen as a reason why the given therapy is best suited to clients with somatic responses to the trauma or attachment-based shame (Aryannejad et al., 2023). The advantages of EFT are related to its organized yet flexible structure, its attachment theory-based approach, and the fact that it can be implemented not only in individual situations but also in dyadic situations. Still, it can produce good results with experienced facilitation and should not be used alone as an intervention with complex PTSD unless a client has been stabilized.

Integrative Insights and Comparative Evaluation

Although these therapies are beneficial individually in several ways, combining the two presents a more comprehensive approach to treating injured parents. Attachment-Based Therapy and EFT focus on emotional congruence and remedial relational experiences, which are aimed directly at reducing dysregulation and distrust prevalence in insecurely attached parents. Bowenian Therapy gives a systemic perspective in the conceptualization of intergenerational trauma and advocates differentiation as a way of achieving emotional stability. In the meantime, mindfulness promotes present-moment awareness and adaptability to stress, offering easily accessible techniques that complement other modalities. The synergistic nature between these approaches is becoming increasingly recognized. For example, integrating Bowenian instruments with mindfulness practices may facilitate a more differentiated experience of emotions and help break down dysfunctional family units. Likewise, using mindfulness to prepare clients for the emotionally intensive work of EFT or attachment repair therapy can enhance emotional readiness and reduce therapeutic dropout. Programs that integrate psychoeducation, experiential work, and relational processing are likely to offer the most sustained benefits.

However, limitations exist. Access to trained clinicians, cultural adaptability, cost, and treatment duration can all affect the feasibility of an intervention. Moreover, the evidence base for integrated models remains emergent, necessitating further empirical validation.

Summary

Therapeutic interventions targeting trauma and attachment disruptions must address both the individual's internal emotional landscape and the broader relational and systemic context. Attachment-Based Therapy, Bowen Family Systems Therapy, Mindfulness-Based Interventions, and Emotion-Focused Therapy each offer distinct yet complementary tools for promoting secure attachment, emotional regulation, and intergenerational healing. Their thoughtful integration, tailored to client needs and cultural context, holds promise for transforming parenting outcomes and safeguarding children's mental health. Further research will be needed to understand how trauma has been affected more effectively to promote healthy parenting and address generational traumas.

Future Research

Future research should prioritize a more nuanced understanding of how trauma affects attachment across various life stages and diverse sociocultural contexts. Although existing studies offer preliminary insights, there is a significant need for longitudinal research that tracks the long-term effects of trauma-informed interventions on both parents and children. Evaluating how therapeutic modalities function across different demographics, including fathers, non-Western populations, and caregivers from marginalized communities, would strengthen the generalizability of the findings. In particular, studies should investigate the interplay between attachment styles and culturally embedded parenting practices. Additionally, integrating attachment theory with complementary frameworks such as neurodevelopmental theory, ecological systems theory, and resilience theory could yield more robust models of intervention. Future work must also explore the structural and systemic barriers to accessing attachment-informed care. These efforts help identify practical solutions for improving service delivery and ensuring that effective therapeutic interventions reach families most in need. Grounded in empirical evidence and theoretically informed, such research would significantly enhance the field's capacity to break cycles of trauma and promote intergenerational well-being.

CONCLUSION

This study underscores the critical need for trauma-informed, attachment-sensitive interventions in promoting healthier parenting practices and mitigating the intergenerational transmission of psychological distress. By examining four major therapeutic approaches—Attachment-Based Therapy, Bowen Family Systems Therapy, Mindfulness-Based Interventions, and Emotion-Focused Therapy—the article contributes to an integrated understanding of how emotional regulation, relational functioning, and intergenerational dynamics intersect within the parent-child relationship. A key finding is that no single intervention is universally effective; instead, individualized, context-sensitive, and often integrative approaches yield the most promising outcomes.

Despite these insights, limitations persist. The variability in therapeutic access, the scarcity of culturally responsive frameworks, and the lack of long-term outcome data across diverse populations constrain the generalizability of current findings. Moreover, the need for empirical validation of integrated treatment models remains pressing. These gaps highlight the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration and sustained research investment.

Practitioners are encouraged to adopt flexible, multi-modal strategies that align with clients' cultural, developmental, and psychological profiles. Researchers should prioritize longitudinal studies and explore the efficacy of combining multiple therapeutic modalities in real-world clinical settings. For policymakers, the imperative is to expand equitable access to trauma-informed family interventions, especially in underserved communities. Collectively, these efforts can foster more resilient families and promote emotional well-being across generations.

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