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Peter's Immature Attitude in His Ambivalent Attachment in Sara Pennypacker's *PAX: Journey Home* Novel

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Abstract

This study examines the portrayal of immature attitude as a manifestation of ambivalent attachment in Peter, in the novel PAX: Journey Home by Sara Pennypacker. Using John Bowlby's attachment theory and a qualitative research approach, the study analyzes Peter's emotional struggles, highlighting his dependency, impulsive reactions, and difficulty processing loss. His immature attitude is reflected in his self-doubt, emotional instability, and avoidance of painful memories, all of which comes from unresolved grief and inconsistent emotional support. However, as the novel progresses, Peter's journey illustrates the potential for emotional growth through self-reflection and meaningful connections. This study highlights the role of attachment experiences in shaping emotional maturity and highlights the process of overcoming immaturity through personal development.

Keywords : Ambivalent Attachment, PAX: Journey Home, Peter, Sara Pennypacker

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INTRODUCTION

Every person, without a doubt, must have a story about childhood memories and forgotten dreams. Having a favorite toy, pet or dolls are common for people. Without them realizing it, these things become emotionally attached to them. A psychological and emotional link between two people is called attachment, and it usually occurs between a kid and their primary caregiver (Bretherton, 2013; Cassidy & Berlin, 1994). In human life, there are several types of attachment. One of which is Ambivalent Attachment. This type of attachment occurs when youngsters struggle to explore their surroundings and interact with other kids and they can display both clinging and avoidance behaviors.

According to John Bowlby, Attachment is usually seen negatively because it makes a person overly reliant on their relationship. Ambivalent attachment is anxious-ambivalent attachment as a type of insecure attachment where the youngster feels anxious and obsessed about the caregiver's availability, and the caregivers respond inconsistently (Bowlby, 1979). Ambivalent Attachment does not only happen in psychology, but also in real life. Toxic relationships become the example of ambivalent attachment. Identifying toxic relationships can be complicated, especially when it comes to the change from clinging to possessiveness (Sagone et al., 2020; Patel, 2022). In literary psychology, the term ambivalent attachment describes a complicated and multidimensional phenomenon that can have a big impact on a child's social and emotional growth.

Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory and John Bowlby's attachment theory have important conceptual similarities, even though Bowlby both expanded upon and deviated from Freud's core theories. In contrast to Freud, Bowlby emphasizes that a healthy psychological growth depends on the emotional link itself, not merely the meeting of bodily requirements. The study of the psychological effects of literature on readers is known as the psychology of literary works (Sagone et al., 2020; Patel, 2022).

PAX: Journey Home is a novel by Sara Pennypacker that was published on September, 7th 2021 (Pennypacker, 2021). This novel tells the story of the friendship between Peter and a fox named Pax who were separated. Their separation occurred because Peter's father, who was going to war, decided to invite Peter to move house and told Peter to dump Peter's pet fox. A year has passed since Peter last saw Pax, his beloved fox (Pennypacker, 2021). After welcoming a litter of kits, Pax and his

partner Bristle now have a hazardous planet to guard. Peter, who was left an orphan after the war and is filled with loneliness and remorse, leaves his adopted home with Vola to join the Water Warriors, a group of individuals whose mission is to cure the land of the war's scars. When Pax's kit becomes gravely ill, he goes to the one person he knows he can rely on (Pennypacker, 2021). And love finds a way inside Peter's damaged heart despite his best efforts to keep it that way. Both the kid and the fox are now traveling in search of their homes, healing, and each other once more.

METHOD

This study design uses explorative methods through qualitative type of research. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research data is taken in terms of documents or visual material. In addition, samples taken qualitatively are not random or only seen from large numbers like quantitative ones. Furthermore, this research data was collected more in the form of descriptive explanations using words rather than numeric.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Peter's Immature Attitudes in *PAX: Journey Home*

This novel is a complex children's literature compared to other kinds of works. It is commonly known that children's literature is quite simple because it usually contains moral messages. Meanwhile, *PAX: Journey Home* is rich in meaning because it provides a complex story between a child and a fox. It explains the character between a child and a fox in which the fox is personified as a true friend for Peter (Pennypacker, 2021). This novel also reflects a complex story of such problematic attachment in which loss and inclining attachments are involved between Peter and Pax. The proof of immature attitudes is stated in the quotations as follows.

Data 1

"He fell back on his heels, cursing. When was he going to learn? That was how knots were: sneaky, hiding under the surface." (Chapter 2, Page 1)

The quotation above shows when Peter is in the moment of building his own cabin. He crouches over the offending floorboard, and he uses a tool that is different from a screwdriver (Pennypacker, 2021). When Peter is in the middle of doing that, he hurts his hand. The phrase "When was he going to learn?" conveys Peter's dissatisfaction with his own lack of development and his sense that he is always battling issues that appear out of nowhere, much like knots that become tangled in unexpected ways.

Data 2

"If he could avoid seeing Vola's racoon, he could go days without remembering he'd ever had a pet." (Chapter 2, Page 3)

Vola's pet raccoon makes Peter remember his pet fox, Pax. If he can avoid seeing Vola's pet raccoon, he thinks of Pax less and less (Pennypacker, 2021). Although Peter had kept Pax as a pet, he regrets the decision he made to let the fox out into the wild due to unanticipated circumstances. Peter suffers from the memories of Pax and the remorse he feels for letting him go. Seeing the raccoon reminds Peter of the strong emotions he had for his own pet fox, even if it has nothing to do with Pax.

Data 3

"You couldn't give memory a way in." (Chapter 2, Page 3)

Because all the new things that happen always make Peter flash back to the memories he has with his fox pet, Pax, he cannot let those memories in (Pennypacker, 2021). The happy memories he has with Pax. He does not want to remember them because he feels so guilty toward Pax because of what he has done.

Data 4

"Peter doubted that Vola did understand, since he didn't understand himself." (Chapter 2, Page 4)

Peter is going through a lot of emotional instability at this time in this novel. Peter has serious doubts about the choice to release Pax into the wild and feels bad about it. Confusion and sadness are part of Peter's internal conflict since he is unsure of why he took the choices he did and how to deal with the consequences.

Data 5

“Skittish and hesitant, he darted under the step at the slightest noise or shadow.” (Chapter 5, Page 2)

Pax turns to watch his kits. All their movements confuse him, but he can tell them apart now, starting from the largest to the smallest. The smallest kit is skittish and hesitant. That is how Pax knows and gets closer with his kits. She is probably unfamiliar with the wild and lacks the sense of security and survival skills needed to successfully explore it (Pennypacker, 2021). Since she is still getting used to her surroundings, which are dangerous and unpredictable for young animals by nature, these words capture her nervous state.

Data 6

“No. You should be proud,” she said smiling with him.” (Chapter 6, Page 1)

The quotation above explains that Peter feels shy when Vola compliments his hard work on the new cabin (Pennypacker, 2021). It shows the immature attitude of Peter but it is actually a reaction to Vola's honest appreciation. Vola's support serves to offset negative emotions by reassuring him of the importance and value of his acts. The focus on pride helps Peter regain his feeling of self and implies that he has done something brave, even if it was challenging.

Data 7

““Not this stupid place!” Peter said” (Chapter 6, Page 3)

Vola tells Peter that his parents also want him to have a place to live. Peter says that he does not like anything about the new cabin, but that is not true because Vola has watched him build it herself. Vola knows that Peter likes this cabin, but Peter denies it (Pennypacker, 2021). Peter is venting his repressed rage, which may be aimed at the location, at himself, or even at the events that brought him to this moment.

Data 8

““You're not my mother!” Ben said” (Chapter 6, Page 3)

The quotation above explains when Vola asks Peter what happens and raises her arms toward him, but Peter rejects her, saying that Vola is not his mother. Vola still thinks of Peter as a child but he says no about it (Pennypacker, 2021). This sentence captures Peter's emotional complexity and the difficulties he has navigating his relationships while grieving and developing. In particular, the death of his mother and the separation from his fox, Pax, have caused Peter to experience a great deal of grief and instability in his life. He has become emotionally guarded as a result of these experiences and is sensitive to obvious attempts to replace or control his relationships.

Data 9

““I don't need anyone,” Peter said, trying to walk back the sharpness of his words.” (Chapter 6, Page 3)

After hearing Peter say that Vola is not his mother, Vola tries to understand him. However, Peter insists that he does not need anyone (Pennypacker, 2021). The immaturity that is highlighted with anger actually shows Peter's immaturity even more. His declaration and following attempt to take it back reveal his inner struggle between wanting to connect and being afraid of being vulnerable.

Data 10

“He had let his tears flow - his face all juice - wet in the dark anyway.” (Chapter 10, Page 2)

Peter wonders if Vola remembers that peaches were the first thing he ate when he arrived in this country a year ago, starving and broken-boned. He sneaks out at midnight—there was no moon, but fireflies glitters as he eats those soft peaches. That night marks the first time he has given up on Pax (Pennypacker, 2021). Peter's tears reveal his unsolved sorrow and deep sadness about Pax.

Data 11

“Peter sometimes carried a strange grief - yearning and that day it was as strong as his joy.” (Chapter 11, Page 3)

Pax travels with Gray, a fox from the Broad Valley, to a place where a river falls and then flattens out beside an old stone mill. At that time, the war-sick humans arrive, and there, Gray dies. It

is also where Peter comes back. Pax barks for help, and Peter arrives. Pax feels great relief and joy at the reunion with Peter, knowing that Peter feels the same way (Pennypacker, 2021).

Data 12

“Now, every minute he’d be thinking about his pet.” (Chapter 12, Page 3)

Peter cannot help but think about Pax as a kit. He recalls the moment he lifts the ball of fur out of the den and senses its heartbeat. Peter lifts his gaze to the dark woods beside him, wondering if Pax and his family may be living there (Pennypacker, 2021). This line captures Peter's internal conflict as he tries to make sense of his choice to let Pax live freely in the wild, as nature intended. Even though Peter recognizes the importance of his decision, it is challenging to completely let go of Pax because of their strong emotional connection.

Data 13

“And Peter was glad for the dark, because he felt himself blush.” (Chapter 14, Page 3)

Peter, Jade, and Samuel are exhausted. They sit together and eat their food. Samuel compliments Peter for his birch-bending, making Peter feel uneasy. The sentence above also connects to Peter's continuous emotional development (Pennypacker, 2021). He is learning how to deal with difficult emotions like regret, love, and loss. In this case, blushing indicates that Peter is experiencing feelings that are both new and deep.

Data 14

“He liked what it meant: that he was closer to being a man.” (Chapter 14, Page 3)

Peter presses his fingertip to his throat and feels the new hard bulge of his larynx. Last summer, he unpredictably changed his voice, and it was embarrassing. However, now he likes that his voice sounds tougher. Peter is shocked by his transformation into a grown man (Pennypacker, 2021). Peter's internal struggle is reflected in his recognition of his changing voice. Although he is becoming stronger and more independent, he is still confused about what it takes to be a true adult. His voice represents his attempt for self-awareness and the difficulties he faces as he grows older in accepting who he is.

Data 15

“You cannot know them by their color. They shed their skin at will.” (Chapter 15, Page 2)

Pax awakens, alert at the sound of human voices. Climbing up to the ridge, he looks back north and sees the humans bending to the grass, igniting small flames before walking west, lighting more along the way. Realizing the danger, Pax hurries back and wakes his vixen kit (Pennypacker, 2021).

Data 16

“Still, he felt anxious.” (Chapter 15, Page 3)

Pax settles into the niche, pressing himself against the cool stone, grateful for the shelter it provides. The nook is snug and offers a sense of security, but his instincts remain on high alert (Pennypacker, 2021). Despite the absence of prey or predators in the immediate area, an unsettling feeling lingers in his chest. The sentence highlights Pax's development and bravery while also acknowledging the fragility of peace in a world marked by threat and tragedy.

Data 17

““I think humans would have evolved to do it if we could. If I were a tree, I could just think ‘hey I need help’ and anyone in the area would get the message and sent whatever I needed” Jade said.” (Chapter 18, Page 4)

Jade says to Peter that she knows a lot about trees. Jade says that trees are amazing. Jade asks Peter if he knows that trees communicate with each other. Jade says that it is better because they do not have to do it directly, tree to tree. It is more like a chemical telepathy (Pennypacker, 2021). Jade's understanding of trees' natural ability to communicate support suggests a desire for a society in which support is provided without conditions and without the possibility of rejection or misunderstanding.

Data 18

“A new sweet scent, mingled with the smell of wood fire and of Peter, Triggered memory.” (Chapter 19, Page 2)

Pax can smell the scent of Peter, as if the scent gets carried away by the breeze. This sentence shows the deep bond between Pax and Peter, as well as the power of scent in evoking memories and emotion (Pennypacker, 2021). When Pax smells the scent of Peter, it is not simply a simple memory, it is an acute, emotional experience related to a severe longing for connection.

Data 19

“Pax was relieved. It had been a few days since she had eaten, and now her belly was round.” (Chapter 23, Page 2)

Pax scoops out leathery eggs and gives them to his little vixen. Pax pops a leathery shell and spills the yolk so that his daughter can eat it easily. The little vixen gulps it down (Pennypacker, 2021). The fact that Pax feels relieved indicates a strong emotional need to protect her life and wellbeing. Pax's anxiety at her lack of food for "a few days" reveals a sense of being unsure and loss of anxiety.

Data 20

“In the silence, Peter could hear the dull thunder of the rapid, far off but ominous.” (Chapter 24, Page 3)

Jade feels disappointed because Peter does not want to go to her grandparents' house. Jade wants to talk face to face with Peter (Pennypacker, 2021). The statement occurs when Jade tries to get closer to Peter, possibly for intimacy or emotional support—but Peter pulls away. He departs emotionally because he wants closeness but is afraid of the vulnerability that accompanies it.

Immature Attitudes and Its Relations with Ambivalent Attachment

People who have ambivalent attachment patterns frequently experience severe anxiety and emotional reactivity because they fear that their loved ones or caretakers may leave them (Rosenbaum, 2024; Papini, 2020). Anxiety and tension might arise from an ambivalent attachment person's ongoing need for affirmation and assurance from their partners or caretakers. This desire for confirmation may be a sign of mistrust or insufficient faith in the caregiver's attentiveness and availability (Rosenbaum, 2024; Papini, 2020).

People who have ambivalent attachment may also use avoidance and apathy as a coping strategy, especially when they are feeling uncertain or uneasy. They may use this avoidance as a coping mechanism for their nervousness and rejection dread. Those who are ambivalently attached frequently need constant affirmation or evidence of their partner's commitment, and they may display jealousy and possessiveness in their relationships (Kruglanski, A. W., & Szumowska, 2020; Malott, & Kohler, 2021).

Their need for continuous comfort and their dread of being abandoned may be the root causes of this jealousy. These immature attitudes and actions are indicative of ambivalent attachment and can have a serious negative effect on a person's capacity to establish and preserve wholesome relationships over the course of their lifetime (Jobson, 2020; Tang & Peng, 2022).

Peter's Immature Attitudes in His Ambivalent Attachment

This section examines how the Peter's Conversation in PAX: Journey Home reveal the factor that leads to the ambivalent attachment. The factor is based on how they emphasize it through the reflection of immature attitudes. The aspect is explained further below:

In **Data 1**, the quote shows that A person with ambivalent attachment may be always worried about what to expect because of the unpredictable nature of the knot, which is a reflection of the inconsistent emotional reactions of caregivers. Deeper emotional and psychological needs can be seen in Peter's frustration and self-criticism, thus ambivalently attached people frequently struggle with self-regulation and react more strongly to difficulties (Wei et al., 2021). When he asks himself "When was he going to learn?", he demonstrates self-doubt, which frequently results from an insecure attachment style in which the individual is uncertain of their own skills or value.

In **Data 2**, the quote explains that Peter struggles with unresolved attachment-related feelings, which are shown in his avoidance of the raccoon and his wish to forget his pet when viewed through the perspective of ambivalent attachment. Ambivalently attached people are more sensitive to having trouble controlling their emotions, particularly when they are reminded of important losses (Obeldobel, 2023). Peter's immature response can be seen as a component of emotional instability, a condition frequently seen in people with ambivalent attachment. Peter shows a problem with dealing with emotions when he claims that he can go "days without remembering." By staying away from any outside triggers that could bring up memories of his pet, he tries to numb his emotions of loss and sorrow. This is an example of an immature reaction to the emotional complexity of separation anxiety; instead of confronting the feelings directly, Peter attempts to ignore or suppress them.

In **Data 3**, the quote in this data reveals how Peter's internal battle with emotional control, loss, and unresolved grief is reflected in his desire to keep thoughts of Pax out of his mind, according to the theory of ambivalent attachment. He could have found comfort in his attachment to Pax, and the loss of this bond triggers feelings of anxiety and anxiety. Peter's decision to block off his pain about losing Pax rather than deal with it shows emotional immaturity, which is common in those with ambivalent attachment styles (Sekowski & Prigerson, 2022). Because they may find it difficult to manage their attachment needs and unresolved emotions in a healthy manner, ambivalent people may turn to avoidance or numbing as an escape.

In **Data 4**, the quote shows how Peter feels alone as a result of this uncertainty because he thinks no one is capable of understanding the depth of his feelings, particularly Vola, who is assisting him in his physical recuperation following an injury. The ambivalent attachment lens reveals Peter's emotional confusion, insecurity, and trouble trusting others to meet his emotional needs through his concern that Vola can understand him because he does not understand himself. He experiences intense distress as a result of his loss and grief for Pax, which is typical of people with ambivalent attachment who have trouble controlling their emotions and are anxious in social situations.

In **Data 5**, the quote explains that people with ambivalent attachment tend to be extremely alert to possible dangers and react violently to even small disruptions. Similar to how an ambivalently connected individual may have a heightened fear of rejection or abandonment as a result of inconsistent caring in early life, the kit's hesitancy demonstrates an insecure attachment to her surroundings (Folwarczny & Otterbring, 2021). Similar increased awareness of surroundings is shown by Pax's daughter's sensitivity to shadow or noise, which is caused by an undeveloped sense of being safe in her surroundings.

In **Data 6**, the quote shows how Vola establishes a loving and reassuring emotional connection with Peter by smiling at him and saying encouraging things. For Peter, who could have previously battled with inconsistent emotional support, this sentence shows a significant validation experience. For Peter to begin feeling safe in his choices, he must offer secure emotional care in the form of reassurance. Peter may have trouble controlling his emotions when it comes to getting good attention, as evidenced by his hesitation in response to the compliment (Spruit et al., 2021). People with an ambivalent connection frequently struggle with confirmation and appreciation. Because of their past experiences with uneven caregiving, they may yearn for attention and acknowledgment but simultaneously feel undeserving or uneasy accepting it. They would not know how to react when they feel threatened by praise or affection.

In **Data 7**, this quotation reveals how Peter has received care and encouragement from Vola during the cabin's construction. But instead of accepting something that truly represents his development and effort, he reacts with annoyance and rejection (Adlparvar et al., 2021). People who are ambivalently attached frequently struggle to control their feelings. Peter may have been frustrated by his physical surroundings as much as the feelings they arouse, as evidenced by his exclamation. The term of "stupid place" might represent deeper unresolved emotions that are typical of people with this attachment style, such loss or abandonment. Since he is still unable to accept the safety that Vola's assistance signifies, Peter is avoiding the emotional comfort that comes with the cabin by rejecting it; his resentment of the cabin may be a coping mechanism for the vulnerability he experiences when someone provides him care or comfort.

In **Data 8**, the quote shows how Peter's response to Vola's gesture shows the complexity of ambivalent attachment, in which worry and anxiety dominate the need for connection. His guarded attitude highlights his emotional journey in the story and highlights the difficulties people with this

attachment type have accepting care and establishing trust (Ekinici & Akat, 2023). Peter's rejection can be interpreted as a manifestation of his anxiety about becoming dependent on someone other than his biological family. The desire for emotional support and the fear of rejection or abandonment are often at conflict in ambivalently attached people. For Peter, taking on Vola's caregiving responsibilities would expose him to vulnerability and dependence, which is upsetting for someone with ambivalent attachment. This conflict frequently comes from childhood experiences of inconsistent caregiving, which enhances sensitivity to the idea of being let down by others.

In **Data 9**, this quotation explains how Peter's unwillingness to rely on people, especially after suffering an emotional loss, is probably the root of his attempt to remove himself. Even while he could feel exposed or afraid of being disappointed, his attempt to "walk back" his comments reveals a deeper longing for connection. This back-and-forth is common in ambivalent attachment, a condition in which people have trouble controlling their emotions and frequently give opposing signals about how they want to be close.

In **Data 10**, the quote in this data explains how Peter deals with loss, sadness, and the difficulties of letting go, Peter experiences a powerful moment of raw emotion that is captured in the sentence. Peter battles the process of recovering from his horrible events, both physically and emotionally, as well as his changing relationship with his fox friend, Pax. The uneasiness and fear of abandonment are linked to Peter's denial and unwillingness to face his loss (Parkes, 2021). He chooses a symbolic, lonely act that allows him to feel but not fully understand his emotions rather than confronting them directly.

In **Data 11**, the quote shows how Peter's inability of balancing conflicting emotions is demonstrated by his simultaneous sentiments of joy and sadness. His joy symbolizes the brief satisfaction of being reunited with Pax, while his "strange grief" symbolizes unresolved emotional distress associated with their separation. His loss of Pax, his fox friend, and the deeper emotional wounds he bears from losing his mother, as well as managing the difficulties of his family life, are all part of this complicated and complex grief (Sekowski & Prigerson, 2022). It appears that Peter reflects his feelings onto Pax because his understanding of Pax's relief and happiness at the reconnection reflects his own emotions. This suggests that he lacks the maturity to distinguish between his own feelings and those of others.

In **Data 12**, the quotation from this data explains how the process of letting go of Pax is comparable to the more significant life changes that Peter is going through, such as maturing, dealing with grief, and redefining his relationships. The use of the word "every minute" implies that Pax practically takes up all of Peter's thoughts, highlighting how difficult it is for him to break free from a relationship that used to provide him comfort and safety (Maranges et al., 2022). Ambivalently attached people frequently have trouble dealing with loss as a result of inconsistent caring during childhood. Because separation triggers intense concerns of abandonment and emotional suffering, they often prolong the grieving process.

In **Data 13**, the quotation in this data shows that although the behavior is immature, it also demonstrates development. Although Peter might not fully understand or control his emotional response (blushing), it shows that he respects Samuel's viewpoint. This is a turning point in his attempt for self-acceptance and the capacity to maintain a balance between confidence and vulnerability (Eilert & Buchheim, 2023). This behavior shows that Peter is still figuring out how to effectively manage and communicate his emotions, which is a characteristic frequently observed in people who are not yet completely confident in who they are (Domic-Siede et al., 2023).

In **Data 14**, the quote shows a common, immature understanding of manhood that is based on external and physical changes, even though it also represents a moment of progress. Like many teenagers, Peter is still learning that physical developments and appearance are not the only signs of maturity (Delgado et al., 2022). Peter's interest in his physical transformation reveals an immature dependence on surface-level measures that confirm his development, rather than internal emotional growth or adaptability. When ambivalently attached people move into new roles or phases of life, they frequently experience feelings of inferiority. They may overemphasize outward signs of growth, such as change in voice, to justify their progress because of their unpredictable emotional basis, which may make them doubt their capacity to live up to expectations.

In **Data 15**, the quote explains that As Peter matures and gains more life experience, he starts to comprehend the complex and difficult aspects of life, which is why it comes up in the context of his

observations of nature and his developing understanding of life's complexities (Gagliardi et al., 2021). The term "complexities" also describes the complex and connected problems that Peter faces, including situational, moral, and emotional ones. It involves his developing awareness of how these factors influence his identity and interactions with the outside world.

In **Data 16**, the quote in this data explains how Pax's inability to balance his internal concern with the external safety of his surroundings is what makes this sentence immature. Although this could appear immature to humans, it is also a normal reaction influenced by survival instincts and previous experiences. This "immaturity" is a necessary stage in Pax's emotional and psychological path toward healing and trust when seen through the perspective of growth and development (Ekinci & Akat, 2023). The stress that comes with ambivalent attachment is vividly portrayed by Pax's continuous anxiety, even in a secure environment. A history of unpredictable or dangerous encounters is the root cause of this worry, which results in increased alertness and emotional discomfort. By viewing Pax's actions through the perspective of ambivalent attachment.

In **Data 17**, this quotation explains that According to Jade's statement, she is unhappy with how people communicate, especially the possibility of miscommunications or the work needed to voice specifications and get support. This might have resulted from personal experiences in which she felt frustrated or disappointed because her emotional needs were not constantly addressed. Peter's internal response to this idea of effortless, spontaneous communication reveals a combination of immaturity, uneasiness with showing vulnerability, and a possible desire for simpler, more direct interactions (Silverio et al., 2021). Peter's ambivalent attachment styles could have contributed to his response to Jade's suggestion. Peter's closeness with Pax demonstrates his desire for connection, but he is also cautious about relying on other people because he has not always felt safe in previous interactions.

In **Data 18**, the quote shows how Pax's reliance on Peter's scent might be an indication of ambivalent attachment's characteristic lack of emotional stability and self-control. This kind of attachment style usually entails having trouble controlling emotions without the primary attachment figure's continuous confirmation (Nordahl et al., 2021). The scent of Peter is loaded with an underlying, frequently unresolved yearning for security and proximity, which may cause Pax to feel both relieved and confused, corresponding to the inner conflict of an insecure relationship.

In **Data 19**, the quote reveals the delicate balance between parenting and letting go is shown by Pax's relief. Taking care of the young vixen may be both a joyful and emotionally difficult task for Pax. The fact that he feels "relieved" implies that his capacity to take care of her is a requirement for his sense of security and self. His reliance on carrying out this responsibility and the stress that he experiences when he is unable to do so demonstrate an immature attitude to caregiving that may be the result of ambivalent attachment (Silverio et al., 2021). This behavior is a normal reaction to attachment anxiety, a condition in which people may overreact to perceived needs or threats and caregiving and emotional control become closely related.

In **Data 20**, the quote shows that Through the lens of ambivalent attachment, which sets the need for connection against the anxiety of being emotionally overwhelmed or reliant on others, Peter's actions in this case can be explained (Wisniewski, 2023). The thunderous sound of the rapids represents the increasing emotional tension inside Peter. He might not be able to maturely analyze or face his feelings. When the chance for emotional closeness presents itself, Peter retreats into emotional distance and silence, even if he desires to be close to someone, like Jade. This is a typical reaction for someone with ambivalent attachment, where avoidance of intimacy might result from feelings of fear and worry.

CONCLUSION

The novel *PAX: Journey Home* by Sara Pennypacker illustrates the complexities of ambivalent attachment through the character of Peter. By analyzing Peter's emotional struggles using John Bowlby's attachment theory, the study reveals that his ambivalent attachment manifests in immature behaviors. The root causes of his attachment issues include unresolved grief, regret, and prolonged loneliness. Throughout the novel, Peter's journey reflects the profound impact of early attachment experiences on personal growth and emotional well-being. His path toward healing highlights the importance of consistent support, self-reflection, and meaningful connections in overcoming attachment-related struggles. Ultimately, *PAX: Journey Home* presents a compelling

narrative of self-discovery and emotional resilience, demonstrating how one can gradually heal from past wounds and form healthier relationships.

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