

Attachment and Relationship

- To What Extent Does Attachment Styles Influence Romantic Relationships?

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Abstract: Attachment is the emotional bond between a human infant or young nonhuman animal and its parent figure or caregiver. A theory related is to attachment theory by John Bowlby posits that early relationships with caregivers lay the foundation for how individuals perceive and engage in later relationships. This paper examines the extent to which attachment patterns established impact various dimensions of relationships in adulthood. According to attachment theory, there are three specific attachment styles: Anxious, avoidant, disorganized and secure. This paper examines the extent to which attachment styles influence the later romantic relationship. Aiming to introduce the reasons of attachment theory and the four styles and analyzes the influence of the four styles on romantic relationship. The other factors that influence romantic relationships are also introduced in this paper.

Keywords: Attachment patterns, Romantic relationship, Styles

1. Introduction

Attachment is an emotional bond between an infant and a caregiver that manifests itself on being claimed in the caregiver's presence and distressed when separated. The relationship can be defined as three parts: 2 people are marked by the expressions of love and intimacy. The third is continual, consensual interactions [1]. John Bowlby was the first man to develop the attachment concept, which showed that children need to develop a relationship that contains at least one primary caregiver for social and emotional development to occur properly [2].

The internal working model explains the attachment style of children proposed by John Bowlby. It is a psychological concept that represents an individual's mental framework or template for understanding and interpreting relationships with others. It is formed early in life, primarily through interactions with caregivers, and it shapes one's expectations, beliefs, and behaviors in future relationships. This model is not a conscious, explicit set of rules but rather an implicit, subconscious guide that influences how we perceive, approach, and engage in social connections. The model lists how the infant accepts the caregiver for the attitude and behavior, then conducts into the own attachment style. Here is the research investigating tenets of Bowlby's theory that focus majorly on different styles in young children. Mary Ainsworth, a developmental psychologist, has identified three primary attachment styles: avoidant, ambivalent, and secure [3]. The three attachment styles show that attachment behaviors related to comfort and base of security are together to human infants, but there are exist differences for the individual in attachment behavior pattern—attachment styles.

Later, as evidenced by numerous longitudinal studies, the continuity of childhood attachment patterns into adult attachment styles has become well-established. The terms 'attachment style' or 'attachment security' can similarly refer to an individual's unique approach to connecting with both their children and romantic partners. It characterizes how a person relates to others in close caregiving relationships, often revolving around the availability of the attachment figure as a stable and secure base that allows them to probe into the world without undue distress and can seek support, protection, and comfort during difficult times.

Many romantic relationships do not last forever, and there must be a reason why breakups happen. Adult romantic love shows the same 3 attachment styles according to the present literature. So, some believe that the attachment style in childhood will be maintained to adult and show prediction of their love style. As individuals grow and mature, they are consistently exposed to new environments and interact with a variety of people, which leads to the development of diverse communication styles, coping mechanisms, and survival strategies shaped by their experiences and interactions within society. Therefore, the way people navigate romantic relationships may not be solely determined by attachment styles, as these are just one of several factors that can influence their approach to intimate connections.

Furthermore, romantic relationships can be influenced by an array of factors, including biological elements such as hormones and pheromones, sociocultural aspects like values and beliefs, as well as various interpersonal dynamics like communication skills, emotional connection, fidelity, and jealousy. The extent to which these factors shape an individual's behavior in romantic relationships remains a subject of ongoing debate. Some argue that an individual's coping strategies in relationships are largely influenced by the internalization of their caregivers' behavior, known as attachment style, while others contend that numerous factors contribute to the quality and satisfaction of romantic relationships. Consequently, adult role models do not necessarily serve as rigid templates that dictate how individuals navigate partnerships. This paper first focuses on the exploration of factors that influence romantic relationships and creates a research question: To what extent does attachment style influence romantic relationships? To answer this question, a few peer-reviewed research studies from journals that emphasize the important role of attachment style in romantic relationships or discuss other influential factors will be investigated. The strengths and limitations of the studies will be carefully evaluated to provide a well-balanced conclusion.

2. Attachment Styles Influence the Adult Romantic Relationship

Numerous academic journals endorse the idea that an individual's attachment style can significantly impact their romantic relationships and even serve as a predictor of their love styles. This is because attachment styles tend to persist from childhood into adulthood, implying the attachment styles developed within the original family that exert influence on romantic relationships.

Hazan and Shaver conducted a study to explore romantic interactions, particularly the attachment dynamics between infants and their caregivers [4]. To recruit participants, they placed an advertisement in a newspaper, inviting readers to participate in a "love quiz." The study involved 2 distinct samples: one comprised of 205 men and 412 women spanning ages 14 to 82, and the other consisted of 108 students, including 38 men and 70 women. These participants were tasked with completing two questionnaires. The first questionnaire required them to select the statement that best described their romantic relationship from among three options. The second questionnaire focused on participants' recollections of their interactions with their parents during childhood, aligning with Ainsworth's attachment theories. Subsequently, researchers categorized their attachment styles based on participants' responses.

The study's results reveal compelling insights into the impact of attachment styles on adult romantic relationships. Respondents classified as secure attachment types tended to participate in

harmonious and committed relationships and made their friendships joyful and trustworthy. In contrast, insecure-resistant individuals displayed compulsive commitment driven by love but experienced constant worry about their partner's affection, fearing abandonment. Avoidant-insecure individuals, on the other hand, were apprehensive about intimacy and believed they could find happiness without falling in love. Hazan and Shaver's research also stressed that 3 attachment styles observed in children persisted into adulthood within the general population, emphasizing the lasting influence of one's internal working model shaped by their attachment style.

This study's strengths include the classification of participants' attachment styles based on Ainsworth's attachment theories, facilitating behavior-attachment style comparisons. Additionally, the questionnaire addressing participants' relationships with their parents supports Bowlby's continuity hypothesis, linking childhood attachment to adult romantic relationships. The inclusion of both genders enhances internal validity, allowing for an investigation into the effects of attachment styles on both sexes. However, the use of self-selected sampling through newspaper advertisements, while efficient, may limit representativeness and generalizability, as volunteers may differ in motivation from a broader population. Furthermore, the study relies on participants providing truthful and accurate information about their childhood experiences and self-perceptions within romantic relationships. Memory reconstruction over time and potential social desirability bias could affect data reliability and validity, highlighting the need for cautious interpretation. In summary, this research underscores the enduring influence of attachment styles on adult romantic relationships while acknowledging methodological strengths and potential limitations that warrant consideration in future studies.

Certainly, to provide a concise overview of the content, the research conducted by Stackert and Bursik aimed to investigate the relationship between adult attachment styles, irrational relationship beliefs, and romantic relationship satisfaction [5]. In this study, 118 single undergraduate students participated, and several hypotheses were proposed. The hypothesis posited that individuals possessing insecure adult attachment styles would be more likely to express relationship-specific irrational beliefs compared to those with secure attachment styles. To collect data, participants needed to complete a whole self-report measure honestly. All participants knew and accepted the Informed consent. The questionnaire often took less than one hour to finish. The study's findings indicated that own people with secure attachments tend to report higher levels of relationship satisfaction, characterized by greater emotional intimacy, communication, and trust in their romantic relationships. In contrast, individuals with anxious or avoidant attachment styles reported lower levels of satisfaction due to struggles with dependency and emotional distancing, respectively. The study also highlighted the impact of gendered irrational beliefs on relationship satisfaction for both men and women, showing that these beliefs contributed to unrealistic expectations and negative perceptions of romantic relationships, leading to dissatisfaction. Additionally, interaction effects between attachment styles and gendered irrational beliefs were observed, particularly amplifying the negative impact on relationship satisfaction for individuals with insecure attachment styles. This research offers valuable insights into the complex interplay of attachment styles, gendered irrational beliefs, and young adult romantic relationship satisfaction, shedding light on the factors that influence relationship dynamics. It also suggests potential areas for future research in the field of lifespan developmental psychology.

Besides, the work from Hazan & Shaver has been criticized by some. The reason is the simplification and categorization of the measurement for attachment. Levy and Davis found little correlation between some romantic styles and attachment styles and provided support for Hazan & Shaver and the associate's hypotheses [6]. The purpose of this study is to investigate the associations between attachment patterns, love styles, and features in relationships in unmarried dating couples. Specifically, it sought to investigate the predictive abilities of Lee's Love Styles Scale and the

Attachment Style Measure in understanding concurrent relationship qualities. Two studies were conducted to gather data on attachment patterns and love styles within the context of dating relationships. The first study involved 192 students aged 17 to 25, who were enrolled in a marriage psychology course. These participants volunteered for the research, and some scenarios included both individuals and their current romantic partners. The sample was diverse, including individuals of Hispanic, Asian, white, and black backgrounds. Participants completed various tests which covering the LAS (love attitude scale) investigated by Hendrick and Hendrick. Otherwise, Davis and Todd developed the Relationship Rating Form and Attachment Style Prototypes categorizing individuals into three attachment styles: secure, avoidant and ambivalent [7]. In the second study, 222 participants engaged individually in the research, and 117 of them also participated as couples. Similar assessments were conducted in both studies, examining love styles, attachment patterns, and relationship features.

The findings of the research supported the 3 attachment styles. Secure attachment was positively related to positive features, indicating that individuals with secure attachments tended to experience more fulfilling and harmonious relationships. In contrast, avoidant attachment is related to less satisfied relationships in personal ways and reduced intimacy within couples. The anxious-ambivalent attachment showed a negative relationship with positive relationship traits, suggesting that individuals with this attachment style tended to struggle with certain aspects of their relationships. This research sheds light on the interplay between attachment patterns, love styles, and relationship qualities in dating couples. It underscores the significance of attachment patterns in shaping relationship experiences, with secure attachment linked to more positive relationship features and avoidant and anxious-ambivalent attachments associated with various challenges in intimate partnerships. Furthermore, the study demonstrates the utility of Lee's Love Styles Scale and the Attachment Style Measure in predicting relationship dynamics among unmarried couples.

3. Other Factors Influence the Romantic Relationship

It's not customary for the elements that affect a romantic relationship to be consistent. Robinson and Blanton emphasized crucial elements of a fulfilling love partnership, such as intimacy, commitment, communication, alignment, and religious beliefs [8]. Many studies have explored various angles of the factors that could influence aspects of romantic relationships, including satisfaction and overall quality.

3.1. Distress in Response to Relationship Infidelity

One study explains influences to the relationship strategies for biological aspects that might be a force of gender differences and responses to issues [9]. Building on previous research indicating that men tend to experience a greater distress response to sexual infidelity, and women tend to be more distressed related to emotional infidelity in their partners, the researchers conducted a study with 156 participants. These participants were surveyed about their anticipated reactions to relationship infidelity, specifically for comparing responses to sexual versus emotional infidelity scenarios. The researchers also assessed the participants' sexual attitudes and romantic beliefs. The findings clearly showed a gender disparity in which the women were more inclined to identify emotional infidelity as the most distressing, while men were likely to perceive sexual infidelity as the most distressing form of infidelity. Otherwise, significant predictors of distress resulting from either form of infidelity were sexual attitudes, while distress arising from emotional infidelity was specifically predicted by romantic beliefs.

3.2. Satisfaction and Stability for Individual and Interpersonal Factors

Another aspect focuses on the individual and interpersonal factors on satisfaction and stability. While the researchers initially anticipated that both sets of factors would be linked to satisfaction, the hypothesis posited the daily interactional patterns would act as mediators in the association between the individual factors and satisfaction [10]. They first employed questionnaires to measure individual factors and satisfaction, and for interpersonal factors, the researchers utilized a 2-week daily interaction record. The findings showed that satisfaction was related to the self-factors of the motivation of attachment and autonomy. Above all, the results advised the attachment and prosocial communication are central dimensions that contribute to both satisfaction and stability in dating relationships.

4. Conclusion

Attachment style plays a significant role in romantic relationships, as previous studies have demonstrated the predictive influence of attachment style on romantic styles [4,6]. Therefore, the paper seeks to explore the extent to which attachment styles influence love relationships.

The research was conducted by Hazan & Shaver and Levy & Davis. They describe their relationships as happy, joyful, friendly, and reliable. In contrast, individuals with insecure-resistant attachment styles report lower levels of satisfaction and are often anxious about their partner's affection, fearing a potential breakup. Those with avoidant-insecure attachment styles, on the other hand, avoid intimacy and believe they can find contentment on their own. These findings collectively underscore the pivotal role of attachment style in determining the quality & satisfaction of romantic relationships. Furthermore, research has explored the impact of various factors in the studies conducted by Cann, Mangum, Wells, Fitzpatrick, and Sollie.

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