

The Association of Playing Hard-to-get Dating Strategies and Different Attachment Styles

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Abstract: In modern society, dating is a standard method in a close relationship. Our research question is whether there is an association between attachment styles and the dating strategies such as playing hard-to-get and easy-to-get. By chatting with women who play different dating strategies, participants who are heterosexual males will then complete the ECR questionnaire and self-reported survey. This study is important and novel because we focused on online attachment style and dating strategies. Our expected results will be high anxious participants would score higher to HtG confederate and respond to higher social desirability.

Keywords: hard-to-get, attachment style, easy-to-get, interest, dating strategy

1. Introduction

Most people believe that playing hard-to-get can attract potential dating partners. There are several reasons behind romantic attraction, including similarity, reciprocity, security, and beauty. According to Luo & Zhang, physical attractiveness is the most vital factor of attraction in romantic attraction, and some support for reciprocity principle [1]. Besides, some relations and interactions between attraction and motivation in romantic attraction exist. Fisher, Aron, Mashek & Brown hypothesized at least three discrete, interrelated emotion-motivation systems in the mammalian brain for mating, reproduction, and parenting: lust, attraction, and attachment [2]. Therefore, we can think about romantic attraction with two composing elements: physical attraction and motivation.

Playing hard-to-get (HtG) is a popular word to describe a particular set of relational behaviors and attitudes. Hidi & Renninger illustrates four phases of developing an individual's interests: triggered situational interest, maintained situational interest, emerging individual interest, and well-developed individual interest [3]. In order to get interest from potential partners, make oneself appear desirable, and generate others' pursuits, people tend to use the strategy called playing HtG. Interest can influence attention, goals, and levels of learning. Thus, elusiveness and value may be associated because individuals discover through their own experience that there is more competition for socially desirable dates than undesirable partners. Thus, being HtG can be associated with value and motivate people to pursue them as a goal. Indeed, according to LeFebvre, many popular dating sites and applications allow users to revise their profiles and decide when and how to respond to others' expressions of interest by clicking or swiping [4]. Walster, Walster, Piliavin & Schmidt conducted five experiments to demonstrate that dating a hard-to-get person is more valuable than dating an easy-to-get person [5]. There are many researchers studying factors predicting the tendency to play HtG. However, very few

studies focus on research pursuing others who play HtG in the information and social media era. Thus, in this study, the researcher focuses on people with different attachment styles reacting to the chatter who plays HtG and EtG in online situations.

1.1. Theoretical Rationale of HtG

Some researchers illustrate that playing HtG increases one's desirability [5]. There are some underlying explanations for this phenomenon.

Cognitive dissonance theory postulates that when thoughts or beliefs are inconsistent with individuals' behavior in some underlying psychological tensions. For example, Gerard & Mathewson predicts that people always view their goal as appreciative when they need to expend significant energy to achieve it [6]. In the HtG date, the suitor needs to expend more effort than he usually does.

Learning theory demonstrates how a person receives, processes, and retains knowledge during learning. There are two types of learning: classical conditioning and operant conditioning. Operant conditioning means the modification of voluntary behaviors through the occurrence of consequences. For example, the hard-to-get woman can maximize the impact of the whole process from the beginning of a high sexual drive state to the momentary frustration and then the rewarding moment.

Social perception theory states that impressions are made from the observer's dispositions and an average of the target person's characteristics and traits. For instance, people tend to deem very socially desirable dates hard to get than undesirable partners. The concepts "hard to get" and "socially desirable" can be related. If a girl can be HtG, then other people may believe she is a socially desirable person in their perception.

1.2. Attachment Style and HtG

Since the publication of John Bowlby's works of attachment theory, it has inspired an impressive amount of research and studies on further research on the function and structure of a close relationship [7]. For example, Meyer & Pilkonis demonstrates that attachment style describes people's comfort and confidence in a close relationship, their fear of rejection and yearning for intimacy, and their preference for independence and their social distance from others [8].

Individuals always weigh the advantages and disadvantages to fulfill their goals and also minimize the losses and rejections from others [9,10]. Thus, play HtG people tend to achieve their goals in a close relationship by managing social and personal motives. Individual differences in attachment style can predict how people view their goals and the way to respond to potential mates in a close relationship.

According to Brennan, Clark & Shaver, an individual has differences in attachment styles, and attachment style is assessed mainly in two dimensions: anxiety and avoidance [11]. Davis, Shaver, & Vernon deems that attachment avoidance is positively associated with partner manipulation and negatively associated with efforts to achieve closeness and reassurance [12]. Avoidant individuals tend to focus on themselves and pursue self-serving goals [12]. Shaver & Hazan illustrates that avoidance positively correlates with a "game-playing" style of loving [13]. However, attachment anxiety is positively related to achieving closeness, reassurance, stress reduction, and protection from partner negativity [12,14].

Attachment style is also associated with the HtG phenomenon. Avoidant individuals tend to escape from intimacy and commitment and avoid emotional closeness and have long-term commitments with others. Conversely, Collins & Read believes that individuals with high anxiety wish to have emotional closeness with others and experience uncertainty regarding self-worth [15]. Thus, anxious individuals may seek partners playing HtG because the uncertainty makes them doubt their self-worth.

2. Experiment

2.1. Method

This section will report all measurements, manipulations, and exclusions applied in our study. All participants received and agreed with the informed consent letter. The study was conducted online during the daytime; no participants got injured during our study.

2.2. Participants

Twenty-one young men were recruited as participants by convenience sampling and snowball sampling. Of participants aged 16 to 25 years, most (N= 19) are heterosexual, and a few of them(N=2) is homosexual or bisexual by self-reporting. 10 CNY rewarded all participants. The data of participants who are not heterosexual(N=2) would be excluded as undesirable results. The unfinished questionnaire (Task achievement < 80%) would not be accounted for. Those who reported withdrawing their data would not be accounted for.

2.3. Hypothesis

Previous studies had shown that HtG individuals are less prevalent in dating than EtG [5]. Therefore, we predict that people who are highly anxious in attachment style would be more willing to date EtG individuals and report higher social desirability since chatting with EtG individuals provides higher self-esteem, satisfaction, and relation proximity. The following two aims are given:

Aim 1: The increase in anxiety on attachment style would lead to a higher preference to be involved in a relationship with EtG individuals.

Aim 2: The increase in anxiety on attachment style would lead to higher social desirability of participants.

2.4. Standardization

2.4.1.HtG Confederate's Response

As Learning theory postulates, HtG girls' responses should consistently be as brief as possible. Memes and Emojis are allowed once participants show their unwillingness to focus on the conversation, serving as a reward to participants.

2.4.2.EtG Confederate's Response

EtG girl plays the opposite style compared to HtG girl. Behaviors performed are comprised of a sweet tone, active attitude expecting interaction with participants, and frequent use of cute memes and emojis.

2.5. Procedure

Initially, participants were given an informed letter (see appendix a) to be acquainted with the study. Those who agreed with the letter would subsequently receive two QR codes of HtG and EtG confederates and were instructed to chat with them. Nevertheless, they were not permitted to reveal the truth of the experiment to the confederates and were required to arouse their interest. However, the confederates were genuinely familiar with the study. Participants then would chat with confederates via WeChat. After the conversation ended, approximately 15 minutes for each trial, which enables participants to have a quick impression of two confederates, who will switch to play HtG and EtG characteristics when facing different participants to avoid the effect of their fake

appearance in 'Moment' and their fake basic information (More detail see Appendix b). After the conversation ended, participants were instructed to complete the ECR-R questionnaire. Finally, a survey was introduced to detect participants' willingness and social desirability. Participants were then debriefed and asked whether they wanted to withdraw their data.

2.6. Measurement

2.6.1. Experience in the close Relationships-revised Questionnaire (ECR-R)

The ECR-R questionnaire measures two subscales of an individual: anxiety and avoidance, based on 36 items. The version of the questionnaire we applied is from the 'Vivid Mind Project.' (<https://www.thevividmind.org/blog/test/relationship-attachment-questionnaire/>)

2.6.2. Self-reported Survey (Chinese version)

This survey will report demographic questions, participants' social desirability, and willingness to date confederates. The question 'After the conversation you conducted just right now, would you be willing to date PuPu~/落日贩卖社 (Both are the nickname of confederates)' provided opportunities for participants to rate from 0 to 10. 0 means 'reluctant', five means 'neural', and ten means 'content'. The question 'After the conversation you conducted just right now, to what extent would you think you are attractive to PuPu~/落日贩卖社 (both are the nickname of confederates)' reflects the social desirability of participants, who would rate from 0, meaning 'unattractive,' to 10, meaning 'attractive.'

2.6.3. Statistical Method

The variation of willingness score will be integrated as one variable, the difference of willingness on EtG or HtG, which makes the prediction more visualized. Every index will be compared by using.

3. Result

According to the anxiety level and avoidance level, the success of using dating strategies and participants' social desirability is drawn into the following graphs:

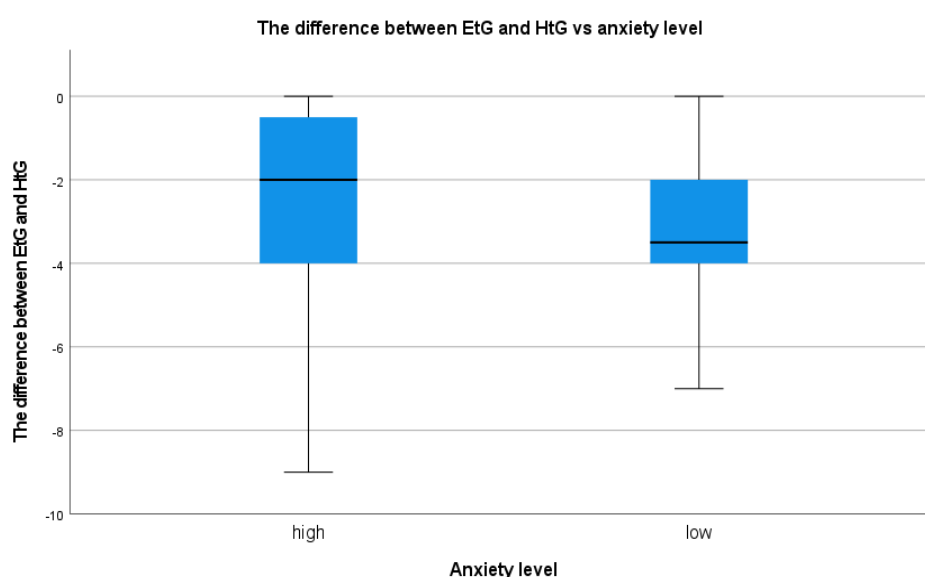


Figure 1: Dating strategies comparison of the difference in anxiety level.

From Fig1, it is apparent that no positive value is given, which means all participants were attracted more preferably by EtG confederates. High anxious participants have a more significant variation in the attractiveness of EtG strategy, shown by a more excellent interquartile range. However, the less harmful value of highly anxious participants may indicate their difficulties in expressing distress when they cannot date EtG individuals.

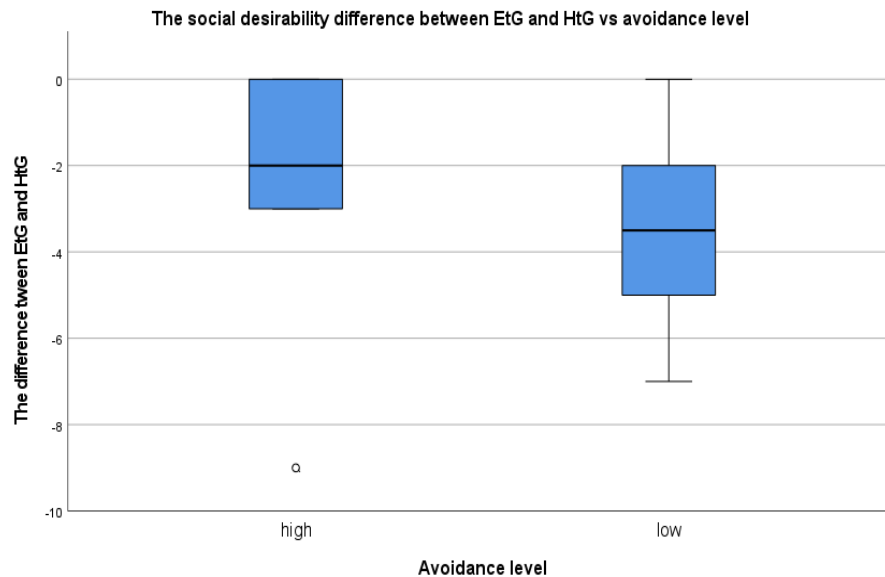


Figure 2: Dating strategies comparison of the difference in anxiety level.

From Fig2, again, no positive value is given, which means all participants were attracted more preferably by EtG confederates. Low avoidant participants have a more significant variation in the attractiveness of EtG strategy, shown by a more excellent interquartile range. High avoidance reports a less harmful value than high anxiety, which may indicate that a fearful attachment style contributes to a lower willingness to express their wants to date EtG individuals. Further investigation can focus on such an item.

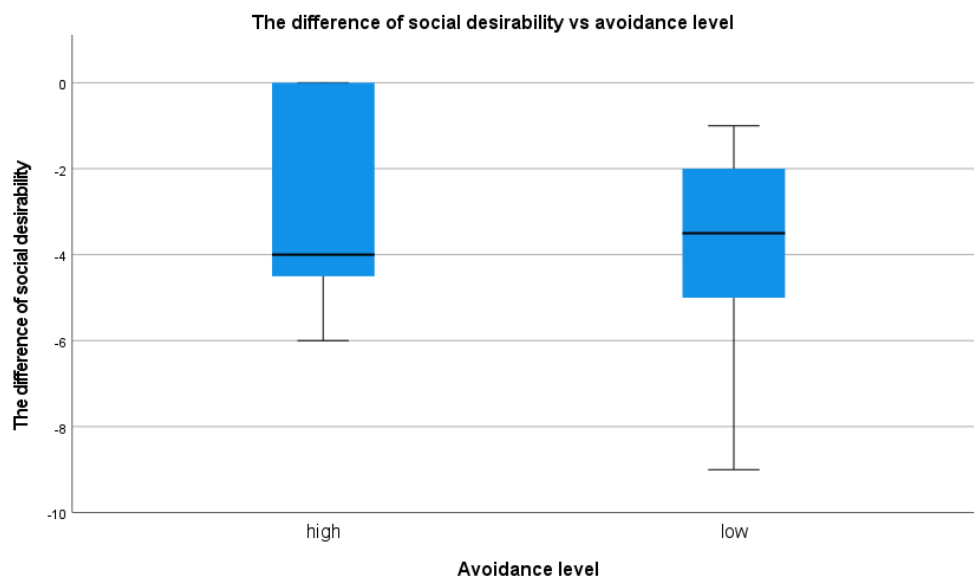


Figure 3: Social desirability comparison of the difference in avoidance level.

This graph illustrates that all participants show a relatively higher social desirability when facing EtG confederates than HtG confederates. A low avoidance level gives a more significant negative value, which means low-avoidant individuals may feel more personally attractive than highly avoidant individuals. This may be explained by the fact that highly avoidant individuals disregard their struggles to maintain a relationship, so they probably prefer to belittle their values.

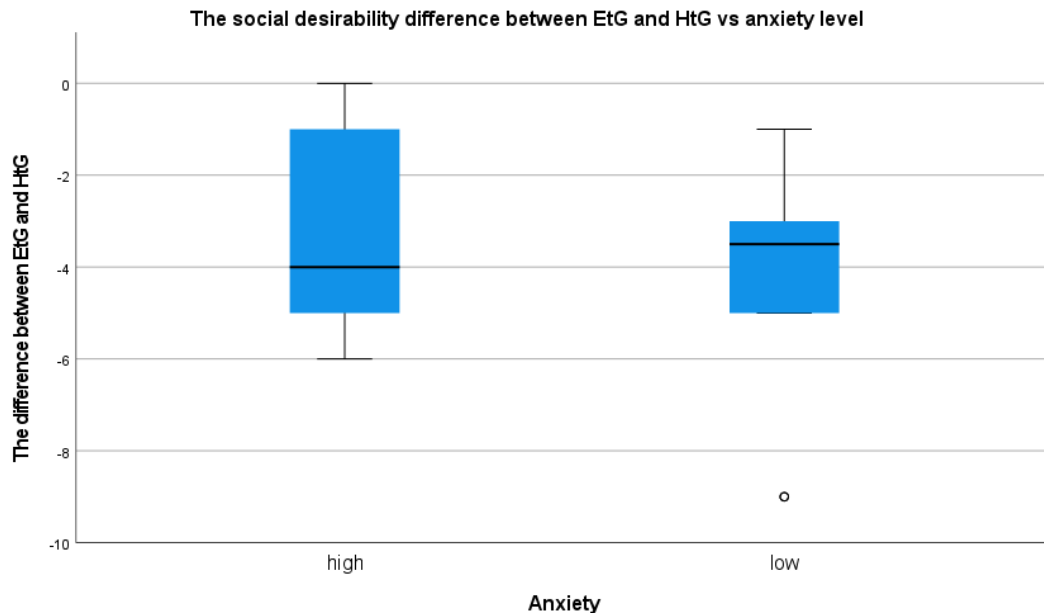


Figure 4: Social desirability comparison of the difference in anxiety level.

This graph explains that most participants, no matter who is high or low in anxiety level, prefer EtG confederates. The fact that highly anxious individuals have more significant variation, as well as mean value tells, may be interpreted by their extreme desire to maintain a close relationship which is constructed by showing their confidence. The outlier showing on the low anxiety column may indicate that attachment style is not an absolute indicator of social desirability, the personal experience also plays a role.

4. General Discussion

Based on the nature of our study method, quasi-experiment, it is conspicuous for the absence of causation, which means that the differentiation of attachment style cannot be recognized as a reason for the variation of participants' reactions in the study, but they might be correlated. Furthermore, the predicted results do not include the aspect of avoidance, which furnishes researchers with a clear direction to move on. However, the fact that all data are non-positive may infer, without the support of studies yet, that the avoidance cannot be applied as a sign to predict individuals' willingness to date HtG individuals as well as their social desirability. Further consideration of previous work on the experiment is concentrating on the number of participants, which is hugely less than the required number of 226, probably seen as a reason for the fact that the correlation between willingness to date and anxiety level is not statistically significant ($p=.67$). Plus, a myriad of observation of participants' response is not standardized, including the frequency of using memes, the way to open a topic and so on, which thus remains some questions waiting to be explained. Therefore, it is too early to say that the hypothesis is rejected.

5. Conclusion

This essay briefly summarized the previous work of HtG dating strategies and attachment styles. It illustrated the impact of HtG dating strategies on individuals with different attachment styles by conducting a quasi-experiment. According to the experimental results and statistical analysis ($p=.67$), Individuals' attachment style does not influence individuals' willingness to date targets who applied HtG or EtG dating strategies. Instead, all participants prefer to date EtG individuals with apparently high social desirability. This work has been done well in terms of experimental design aiming to collect data but lacked standardization of observation. The next step of improvement of investigation of the relationship between HtG dating strategies and attachment style can focus on the number of participants since the effect size is not achieved in this study and the standardization of the observation.

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Appendix

Appendix a:

Hello, we are performing an experiment for our project. We are investigating one's 1st impression of a female for a man. Once you meet your 'dating' partner, please do not tell her the truth of experiment. We would like to ask you to be part of our experiment.

If you agree to take part in this experiment, you are informed that:

1. Your personal information and the data we obtain throughout the experiment and survey will be kept anonymous and confidential.

2. You have the right to withdraw the experiment and survey at any time.
3. You will receive information about the nature of the experiment and the results obtained once the experiment is complete.

I agree to participate voluntarily. I give the researchers permission to use my data as part of their experimental study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix b: Basic information of “fake” confederates:

PuPu~:

Age:18

Birthday: 04.Aug.2004

Major: Nutrition

Univ: NYU

Current location: Hangzhou

Hobbies: Constellation,
Metaphysics

落日贩卖社 :

Age: 18

Birthday:

20.May.2004

Major: Communication

Univ: NYU

Current location: Wuhan

Hobbies: photography, Singing

The moments of “fake” confederates:



就算是万丈深渊 走下去也是前程万里

30 Jul



09 Jul



08 Jul



08 Jul



serendipity

28 Jul



27 Jul

