



Impact of Attachment Styles on Romantic Relationship Satisfaction, Psychological Well-Being and Anxiety

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Abstract: This study examines the influence of adult attachment styles on romantic relationship satisfaction, psychological well-being, and anxiety among young adults. Grounded in attachment theory, it explores how the dimensions of closeness, anxiety, and dependence relate to emotional and relational outcomes. A total of 149 participants (98 females, 51 males), aged 18–25, completed the Adult Attachment Scale (AAS), the Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI-32), the Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWB), and the Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale (GAD-7). A correlational design was used to analyze the relationships among variables. AAS Dependence positively correlated with relationship satisfaction ($r = .198$, $p < .05$) and PWB Personal Growth ($r = .250$, $p < .01$). AAS Anxiety showed a negative association with PWB Self-Acceptance ($r = -.248$, $p < .01$), and AAS Closeness negatively correlated with PWB Environmental Mastery ($r = -.174$, $p < .05$). Both AAS Anxiety and AAS Dependence were positively associated with anxiety symptoms ($r = .207$ and $r = .202$, respectively; $p < .05$). Romantic relationship satisfaction was strongly linked to greater Personal Growth ($r = .391$), Positive Relations ($r = .342$), and Self-Acceptance ($r = .346$), all at $p < .001$. Anxiety negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction ($r = -.199$, $p < .05$) and with aspects of psychological well-being including Personal Growth and Purpose in Life.

Keywords: *Attachment Styles, Romantic Relationship Satisfaction, Psychological Well-Being, Anxiety, Young Adults*

1. Introduction

Attachment theory, developed by John Bowlby (1969) and expanded by Mary Ainsworth (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978), posits that early caregiver-child bonds shape relational patterns across life. Bowlby emphasized four key components of attachment: proximity maintenance, haven, secure base, and separation distress. The internal working models developed in early life influence expectations and behaviors in adult relationships (Bowlby, 1982). Consistent caregiving tends to result in secure attachment, while inconsistent or neglectful caregiving may foster anxious or avoidant attachment styles. Mary Ainsworth identified three primary infant attachment styles through the Strange Situation: secure, anxious-ambivalent, and avoidant (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Securely attached children show confidence in caregiver availability and seek comfort when distressed. Anxious-ambivalent children show clinginess and emotional volatility. Avoidant children display emotional suppression and independence. Later, Main and Solomon (1986) introduced disorganized attachment, typically linked to trauma or neglect, which can persist into adulthood and affect relational patterns (Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

Attachment styles continue to shape emotional intimacy, communication, and conflict resolution in adult romantic relationships. Secure individuals form trusting and stable relationships, while anxious individuals often display clinginess, fear of abandonment, and emotional hypersensitivity. Avoidant individuals may struggle with emotional closeness, prefer independence, and avoid vulnerability (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

In contrast, anxious attachment correlates with heightened fear of rejection, emotional excesses, and hypervigilance to signs of partner withdrawal (Cassidy & Berlin, 1994). Anxiously attached individuals seek constant reassurance and often misinterpret neutral cues as threatening (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016), which can lead to relational distress (Collins & Read, 1990).

Ryff's (1989) multidimensional model of psychological well-being includes self-acceptance, positive relations, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. Keyes (2002) further emphasized the concept of flourishing, which means high levels of well-being across emotional, social, and psychological domains. Attachment styles significantly affect psychological well-being. Secure attachment fosters resilience, self-esteem, and emotional stability (Brennan et al., 1998; Shaver et al., 2008).

Anxiety, defined as a future-oriented state of tension and anticipation (Barlow, 2002; APA, 2013), is frequently linked to attachment insecurity. Anxiously attached individuals often experience heightened sensitivity to social threats and rejection, leading to persistent worry and

rumination (Ein-Dor & Doron, 2020). This preoccupation is especially evident in individuals with generalized anxiety disorder (Marganska, Gallagher, & Miranda, 2019), where emotional dysregulation and catastrophizing are common. Avoidant individuals, though less outwardly expressive, suppress emotions and withdraw from intimacy.

1.1 Rationale

This research examines how attachment styles influence romantic relationship satisfaction, psychological well-being, and anxiety in young adults. Bowlby's (1982) attachment theory states that early caregiver bonds shape adult relational patterns. While secure attachment is associated with greater relationship satisfaction and well-being, and insecure attachment with heightened anxiety and lower satisfaction, limited research explores how these variables intersect within romantic relationships. Since young adulthood is a formative period for reinforcing attachment patterns, studying this group offers valuable insight into long-term relational and psychological outcomes. Findings can inform interventions aimed at enhancing relationship quality and reducing anxiety.

1.2 Hypothesis

- There is no significant correlation between attachment styles and romantic relationship satisfaction.
- There is no significant correlation between attachment styles and psychological well-being.
- There is no significant correlation between attachment styles and anxiety.
- There is no significant correlation between romantic relationship satisfaction and psychological well-being.
- There is no significant correlation between anxiety and romantic relationship satisfaction.
- There is no significant correlation between anxiety and psychological well-being.

2. Review of Literature

Three primary attachment styles—close, avoidant, and anxious—were studied by Reddy and Nails (2024). A sample of 120 participants, both male and female, completed measures of relationship satisfaction (RAS) and attachment styles (RAAS). One-way ANOVA and correlation were the statistical methods employed. Higher degrees of anxiety in attachment are associated with lower relationship happiness, according to the findings, which show a strong negative association between anxious attachment style and relationship satisfaction.

Relationship happiness was found to positively connect with stable attachment types, underscoring the need of a secure foundation in creating wholesome, satisfying partnerships. Relationship satisfaction and attachment types did not significantly change according to gender or employment position, according to the study.

In their study, Sagone et al. (2023) examined the relationships between adult attachment styles and psychological well-being with regard to age groups (young adults versus adults) and relationship status (singleness versus close relationships). They discovered that those who had stable, close relationships had higher psychological well-being than those who were single. Additionally, singles exhibited an attachment style linked to avoidance, relationships as secondary, and discomfort with proximity when compared to those in stable, close partnerships. Last but not least, in single individuals, psychological well-being was highly and negatively predicted by attachment type characterised by the need for approval, but modestly and positively predicted by attachment style characterised by confidence.

In a sample of young adults, Gleeson and Fitzgerald (2014) investigate the relationship between attachment types in romantic relationships, relationship satisfaction, and views of early encounters with parents. The participants filled out a list of adjectives that described their parents and their parents' relationship, as well as a series of self-report questionnaires that evaluated their attachment style in romantic relationships and their level of pleasure in their present romantic relationship. Females tended to have a secure or avoidant-fearful style, but most males had an avoidant-fearful type. The results showed that the participants' attachment style was related to how they described their mother, father, and connection with their parents. Individuals with a stable attachment type were significantly more likely to be in a romantic relationship than those with an avoidant-fearful approach. Compared to those with insecure attachment patterns, secure participants expressed greater satisfaction in their relationships.

In a longitudinal study including 144 dating couples, Simpson (1990) investigated the effects of secure, anxious, and avoidant attachment styles on romantic relationships. Secure, anxious, and avoidant attachment styles have been linked to romantic relationships with varying qualitative characteristics, according to individual-level investigations. Individuals with a secure attachment type are more likely to be in relationships with people who are more interdependent, trustworthy, committed, and satisfied. People with insecure styles, especially those who are extremely avoidant, typically have relationships that are characterised by the opposite set of traits. Furthermore, there is a high correlation between the three attachment styles and distinct emotional experience patterns in relationships. People with a secure style

have relationships where pleasant emotions occur more often and negative emotions occur less frequently, while people with an anxious or avoidant style have the reverse pattern.

In order to determine the connections between attachment and psychological well-being (PWB) and examine the personality traits that mediated these connections, Marrero-Quevedo et al. (2018) conducted research. There were 1403 adults in the sample, with a mean age of 37.2 years. The findings showed that whereas avoidant and anxious attachment were adversely correlated with PWB, secure attachment and PWB dimensions were positively correlated. Attachment orientations and other Big Five personality traits, especially neuroticism, were found to be significantly correlated. Strong correlations between attachment orientations and self-esteem were also found. For various PWB dimensions, dominance analyses showed that some personality traits—extraversion, agreeableness, self-esteem, and neuroticism—were more significant than attachment orientations.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study utilized a correlational research design to examine the relationships among attachment styles, romantic relationship satisfaction, psychological well-being, and anxiety in young adults. This non-experimental design allowed for the assessment of natural associations among variables without manipulation.

3.2 Variables

Independent Variable:

Attachment Style (measured by the Adult Attachment Scale; Collins & Read, 1990).

Dependent Variables:

1. Romantic Relationship Satisfaction (Couple Satisfaction Index-32; Funk & Rogge, 2007)
2. Psychological Well-Being (Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale – 18 items; Ryff, 1989)
3. Anxiety (Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale-7; Spitzer et al., 2006)

3.3 Participants

A total of 149 participants (98 females and 51 males), aged 18–25, currently involved in romantic relationships were recruited through online platforms. Inclusion criteria required participants to be between 18–25 years old and in a current romantic relationship.

3.4 Psychological Tools

Adult Attachment Scale (AAS)

Developed by Collins and Read (1990), the AAS consists of 18 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale and assesses three dimensions: Close, Depend, and Anxiety. Based on these, individuals are categorized into secure, anxious, or avoidant attachment styles. The scale has shown acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha: .69–.75) and test-retest reliability.

Couple Satisfaction Index-32 (CSI-32)

This 32-item scale measures relationship satisfaction across various domains including intimacy, communication, and conflict resolution (Funk & Rogge, 2007). Responses are on Likert and semantic differential scales. The CSI-32 has excellent internal consistency ($\alpha = .98$) and strong construct validity. Scores below 104.5 indicate dissatisfaction.

Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale (18-item version)

This brief version evaluates six dimensions of well-being: Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth, Positive Relations, Purpose in Life, and Self-Acceptance (Ryff, 1989). Items are rated on a 6-point Likert scale. The scale has acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .65$ –.80) and good validity.

GAD-7 (Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale)

The GAD-7, developed by Spitzer et al. (2006), measures anxiety severity through 7 items on a 4-point scale. Scores ≥ 10 suggest clinically significant anxiety. The scale shows high internal consistency ($\alpha = .92$) and excellent criterion and construct validity.

3.5 Procedure

Data collection was conducted via online surveys. Participants provided informed consent before completing demographic questions and the four psychological scales. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout.

4. Result

Table 1. *Correlation Matrix Among Attachment Styles, Relationship Satisfaction, Psychological Well-Being, and Anxiety*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
AAS Closeness	—										
AAS Anxiety	.00	—									
AAS Dependence	.198*	.00	—								
CSI-32	-.135	-.092	.198*	—							
PWB Autonomy	-.019	-.019	.072	-.001	—						
PWB Env Mastery	-.174*	.070	.159	.159	.332***	—					
PWB PersGrowth	-.137	.250**	.391** *	.391** *	.309***	.643** *	—				
PWB PosRelations	-.131	-.108	.342** *	.342** *	.225**	.488** *	.059	—			

PWB PurpLife	.030	.079	-.032	-.032	.169*	-.203*	.281**	-.431**	—		
PWB SelfAccept	-.248*	.346**	.315**	.346**	.315***	.643**	.391**	.499**	.391**	—	
GAD-7	.207*	.202*	.202*	-.199*	-.161	-.127	-.167*	.190*	-.199*	*	

Note. AAS = Adult Attachment Scale; CSI-32 = Couples Satisfaction Index-32; PWB = Psychological Well-Being; GAD-7 = Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale-7. $p < .05^*$, $p < .01^{**}$, $p < .001^{***}$

5. Discussion

This study investigated the associations between adult attachment styles, romantic relationship satisfaction, psychological well-being, and anxiety. Contrary to the initial null hypotheses, significant correlations emerged, broadly aligning with existing research.

A significant positive correlation between AAS_Dependence and CSI-32 ($r = .198$, $p < .05$) suggests that comfort in relying on one's partner enhances relationship satisfaction. This aligns with the literature emphasizing secure attachment as a foundation for intimacy and relational stability (Collins & Read, 1990; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). In contrast, insecure styles—especially avoidant and anxious—undermine emotional closeness (Fraley & Shaver, 2000; Nourialegha et al., 2023). Recent studies also confirm that secure attachment predicts greater satisfaction and emotional regulation (Di Fini et al., 2023), often mediated by emotional competencies like regulation and expression (Kim & Cho, 2024).

AAS_Anxiety correlated negatively with PWB_Self-Acceptance ($r = -.248$), and AAS_Dependence positively with PWB_Personal Growth ($r = .250$), indicating that secure attachment promotes well-being, while insecure styles hinder it. This echoes findings by Mikulincer & Shaver (2005) and Wei et al. (2005) linking attachment security to resilience. Sagone et al. (2024) and Bajwa & Arif (2024) observed similar trends, with secure attachment supporting coping and emotional balance. Emotional regulation acts as a mediating mechanism (Di Fini et al., 2023), while attachment insecurity contributes to stress sensitivity and maladaptive coping (Mallinckrodt & Wei, 2005).

AAS_Anxiety and AAS_Dependence both showed positive correlations with GAD-7 scores ($r \approx .20$), indicating that insecurity—whether fear of abandonment or over-reliance—relates to higher anxiety. This supports past findings that link insecure attachment with emotional dysregulation and anxiety vulnerability (Carnelley et al., 2011; Marganska et al., 2013). Yi et al. (2024) and Kim & Cho (2024) highlighted the role of insecure attachment in diminishing resilience, especially during uncertainty. These results underscore the need to address attachment insecurity to reduce anxiety symptoms.

CSI-32 was positively correlated with PWB dimensions such as Personal Growth ($r = .391$), Positive Relations ($r = .342$), and Self-Acceptance ($r = .346$), consistent with research showing that fulfilling relationships enhance psychological flourishing (Diener & Seligman, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2001). Studies by Nourialeagha et al. (2023, 2024) and Di Fini et al. (2023) confirm that relationship satisfaction mediates the attachment–well-being link, highlighting the protective function of secure relational bonds.

A negative correlation between GAD-7 and CSI-32 ($r = -.199$, $p < .05$) suggests that anxiety hampers romantic satisfaction, likely due to heightened worry, emotional reactivity, and impaired communication (Whisman et al., 2004; Campbell et al., 2005). High anxiety leads to behaviors like reassurance-seeking and emotional withdrawal, which strain romantic relationships (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016). Kim et al. (2023) and Randall & Bodenmann (2017) further emphasized that anxiety impairs empathy and emotional availability, worsening relationship quality.

Negative correlations between GAD-7 and PWB dimensions (e.g., Purpose in Life, $r = -.199$) suggest that anxiety undermines self-actualization. Chronic anxiety consumes cognitive resources and narrows attention, hindering personal growth and autonomy (Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Barlow, 2002). Recent studies (Sagone et al., 2024; Bajwa & Arif, 2024) confirm that anxiety disrupts self-regulation and goal pursuit, contributing to lower well-being across multiple domains.

5.1 Implications

The nuanced correlations suggest that attachment may interact with mediators like communication and emotional intelligence, warranting further exploration. Clinicians should attend to romantic dynamics and attachment issues, as enhancing relational satisfaction may improve mental health.

5.2 Limitations and Future Directions

This study relied on self-reported data, which may be influenced by social desirability bias. Future research should incorporate observational or longitudinal designs and examine diverse age and cultural groups, as attachment and relationship norms vary contextually.

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