



Attachment and Emotional Intelligence among Young Adults

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Abstract

Attachment is a deep enduring emotional bond that connects one person to another across time and space. Attachment is assessed based on observable behavioral interactions and the child's subjective experience of a care givers responsiveness and availability. Emotional intelligence refers to an individual's capacity to perceive, understand and manage emotions both within oneself and in others in a way that facilitates effective communication, empathy and relationship building. Young adults typically refer to individuals who are in a transitional phase between adolescence and full adulthood usually ranging between 18 to 25 years. Young adulthood is a critical developmental stage where individuals experience autonomy and responsibilities while undergoing identity exploration and consolidation. The current research revolves around assessing the level of attachment and emotional intelligence among young adults. The research involves classifying participants into three categories of attachment (close, depend, and anxious) to further compare and relate those styles to emotional intelligence among young adults. The questionnaire used in this study included 18 item Adult Attachment Scale and the Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale, BEIS-10. There was no significant

relationship found between attachment and emotional intelligence. Higher emotional intelligence will make people relationships better and enhance their attachment style. Engaging in self-reflection and seeking therapy or counselling can enhance both attachment security and emotional intelligence by fostering self-awareness and healthier relationship dynamics.

Keywords: Attachment, Emotional Intelligence, Young Adults

Introduction

Attachment is defined as an emotional bond with another person. One's ability to form an emotional and physical attachment to another person provides stability and security. John Bowlby described attachment as a lasting psychological connectedness between human beings. Bowlby wanted to study the separation anxiety experienced by children when separated from their primary caregiver. Attachment is based on the concept of internal working models, which are mental representations developed through early interactions with caregivers. These internal working models shape an individual's expectations, beliefs, and behaviors in relationships throughout their lifespan. It is a concept derived from attachment theory, a psychological framework proposed by John Bowlby and further developed by Mary Ainsworth.

The strange situation procedure created by Mary Ainsworth is the most frequently used method by the researchers to gauge attachment quality. This procedure involves observing and assessing the child's behavior during a series of brief separations and reunions with the caregiver in a controlled laboratory setting. Understanding the nature of the attachment can be gained by observing the child's behaviors such as closeness seeking exploration and responses to the caregivers return.

Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand, manage, and use our emotions to our advantage. Studies have consistently found that attachment styles predict levels of emotional

intelligence. Emotional intelligence involves a set of skills that enable individuals to navigate social interactions, build relationships and make effective decisions based on social cues.

Attachment

According to Bowlby (1997), attachment theory conceptualizes “the propensity of human beings to make strong affectional bonds to particular others.” The author further suggested that an attachment system evolved to maintain proximity between infants and their caretakers under conditions of danger or threat. However recent formulations view the attachment system as functioning continuously to provide children with a sense of “felt security” which facilitates exploration by the child (Ainsworth et al. 1978; Sroufe & Waters, 1977).

Adult attachment is thought to be influenced by childhood experiences and events, such that attachment styles are relatively stable over the adult lifespan (Bowlby, 1982; Collins & Read, 1990; Fraley & Shaver, 2021).

Grossmann and Kindler (1981), in their study, titled, ‘Early care and the Roots of Attachment and Partnership Representation,’ aimed to describe the ‘early contact’ that was observed during the births of infants. Thus, as a part of their research, they began by attending the births of infants they aimed to study. They began their assessments by using various scales like the Brazelton scale and an experiment like the ‘Strange Situation’ by Ainsworth to assess levels of attachment during infancy, Separation Anxiety Test during childhood and then the Adult Attachment Test during their adolescence and adulthood. They stated that the initial goal of their study was to replicate the link between maternal care and infant attachment security that they had observed in Ainsworth’s Baltimore study in a German middle-class sample. This project was also known as the Bielefeld Project.

According to Fraley and Shaver (2021), attachment theory describes how enduring beliefs and tendencies around interpersonal relationships develop in infant-caregiver interactions and

transfer to other interpersonal relationships. These enduring traits are known as attachment styles. Bowlby (1970) proposed that attachment theory is broadly understood as the development of emotional and social connections between people beginning in early childhood. According to Bowlby's theory, the attachment system maintains emotional and physical caregiver-infant proximity with children internalizing the early attachment relations with caregivers prototypical of later relationships.

Emotional intelligence

The abilities to perceive and express emotions are together considered to be the most basic component of emotional intelligence (Ciarrochi et al., 2000; Mayer et al., 1999).

Feldman et al. (2000), in their study, titled, "The Underlying Psychological Components that when brought together emerge as Emotional Intelligence," represented in the Introduction section of the book, 'The Wisdom in Feeling: Psychological Processes in Emotional Intelligence,' published in 2002, examined the component processes of emotional intelligence using the model outlined by Mayer and Salovey (1997). The purpose of the study was to understand the appraising and perceiving emotion, use of emotion to facilitate thought, understanding and communicating emotion concepts, and managing emotions in ourselves and others. The chapters of the study researched affect and emotion to the ideas in emotional intelligence concept, this provided evidence for the value of emotional intelligence as a framework for organizing theory and research on emotions.

Purpose

The purpose is to study the attachment and emotional intelligence among young adults.

Hypothesis

- There is no significant relationship between close attachment and emotional intelligence.
- There is no significant relationship between depend on attachment and emotional intelligence.
- There is no significant relationship between anxious attachment and emotional intelligence.

Method

A total of 30 people participated from Delhi in the study. The age of the subjects ranges from 18 to 25 years.

Measures

- **Adult Attachment Scale, AAS** as developed by Hazen and Shaver (1987) consists of 18 items with three subscales (close, depend, and anxious). The responses are given on a 5- point Likert type scale. Ranging from 5 – very characteristic of me to 1- not at all characteristics of me. Some of the items were reversed.
- **Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale, BEIS** has developed by Salovey and Mayer (1990) consists of 33 items. The responses are given on a 5-point Likert type scale. Ranging from 5 – strongly agree to 1- strongly disagree.

Procedure

The participants were informed about the purpose of the research and the questionnaires were filled through Google forms; each participant was thanked for their cooperation. Standardized Psychological Tests were administered to the participants.

Analysis of Data

Results

Table 1

N, Mean, and Standard deviation

	close attachment	depend attachment	anxious attachment	emotional intelligence
N	30	30	30	30
Mean	19.0	15.7	16.4	115
Standard deviation	3.67	3.65	4.45	20.6

Table 2

Correlation between Attachment and Emotional intelligence with their respective sub dimension

	close attachment	depend attachment	anxious attachment	emotional intelligence
close attachment	—			
depend attachment	0.281	—		
anxious attachment	-0.266	-0.079	—	
emotional intelligence	-0.202	-0.290	-0.061	—

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Discussion

The results found that there is no significant relationship between attachment and emotional intelligence among young adults. Emotional intelligence and attachment are complex

constructs influenced by various internal and external factors. The lack of significant relationship in the study doesn't necessarily mean there is no relationship at all but might be that the relationship is nuanced or influenced by other variables that were not accounted for in this research.

Kong and Zhao (2013), in their study, titled, "Emotional Intelligence (EI) in the Academic Literature," investigated the relationship between trait emotional intelligence (EI) and life satisfaction, with focus on the mediating role of affective states. The study also examines whether the mediating process differs based on demographic factors such as gender, student status, and family conditions. The sample comprised 620 young adults from mainland China. Previous research has shown that individuals with higher EI tend to have greater life satisfaction. Trait EI refers to a set of behavioral dispositions and self-perceptions related to emotion, measured through self-report inventories. The study utilizes the Wong Packer Emotional Intelligence Scale to measure trait EI. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) is employed to analyze the data. The results reveal that both positive and negative effects mediate the relationship between trait EI and life satisfaction. The findings suggest that positive affect plays a crucial mediating role in the relationship between trait EI and life satisfaction. These results contribute to the understanding of the mechanisms through which trait EI influences subjective well-being.

Caron et al. (2012), in their study, titled, "Comparisons of close relationship: An evaluation of relationship quality and patterns of attachment to parents, friends and romantic partners in young adults," published in the online journal, "Canadian Journal of Behavioral Science." This study aimed to investigate two theoretical models of attachment. The trait model conceptualizes attachments as relationship specific. Participant parent relationship quality, attachment patterns in relationship to friends, and attachment patterns in relationships to romantic partners were

examined to determine whether participants experience one general, trait-like attachment orientation or whether attachment patterns are context-specific. A sample of 2,214 young adults, predominantly female, aged between 17 and 25 years, was recruited from psychology courses at a university. The participants completed a survey package consisting of self-report measures assessing relational dimensions in relationships with parents, friends, and romantic partners, as well as a measure of psychological well-being. The results from exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses supported the notion that attachment patterns are content specific variables. Distinction was found between attachment patterns and the quality of relationships with parents, friends, and romantic partners.

Conclusion

Attachment is a deep enduring bond that connects one person to another across time and space. Attachment was assessed based on the observable behavioral interactions and the child's subjective experience of a care giver's responsiveness and availability. According to Bowlby's theory, the attachment system maintains emotional and physical caregiver-infant proximity with children internalizing the early attachment relations with caregivers prototypical of later relationships. Emotional intelligence refers to an individual's capacity to perceive, understand and manage emotions both within oneself and in others in a way that facilitates effective communication, empathy and relationship building. A total sample of 30 individuals in the age 18-25 years were collected. The results found out that there is no correlation between attachment and emotional intelligence.

The sample size which was opted was only restricted to one vicinity which could have been expanded to the other surroundings also giving a wider view, the area chosen for the study was

only restricted to Delhi. The sample size which was chosen should have extended a little which would have provided greater insight in studying the sample.

Attachment patterns are often formed during the initial years of life, but it is believed to influence later social interactions and beliefs about the self. A better attachment style can be achieved by having proper care giving environment, proximity with the initial caregivers and acknowledging that there are two people in a relationship and how the behavior may be affecting the other person. Another way could be keeping an emotion journal or diary, noting down the patterns where a person may not feel loved enough.

Better emotional intelligence defines positive attachment pattern because of the ability to deal with relationships in a more balanced way. People with a high emotional intelligence can manage conflicts efficiently resulting to better relationship with their partner. Low emotional intelligence results into unresolved conflicts. Due to the inability of their partner in validating their partners emotions. Validating emotions can be done only when the person has a high emotional intelligence.

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