



To Explore the Relationship between Attachment Styles, Personality Predispositions and Loneliness Among Emerging Adults

¹ **Kashish**, *Department of Psychology, Amity university Mohali, Punjab, India*

Kashishchugh1401@gmail.com

² **Dr Supriya**, *Assistant Professor of Department of Psychology, Social Sciences, Amity*

University, Mohali Punjab, India

ssharma3@pb.amity.edu

³**Dr. Jyoti Mishra**, *Assistant Professor of Department of Political Science, Social Sciences,*

Amity University, Mohali, Punjab, India

Jmishra1@pb.amity.edu

Abstract: The present study examined the relationship between attachment styles, personality predispositions, and loneliness among young adults. The sample consisted of 160 participants aged between 18 and 25 years. Participants were recruited via convenience sampling. The research design was cross-sectional. The data collection was measured using the Revised Adult Attachment Scale (RAAS), Mini-IPIP Scale and UCLA Loneliness Scale (Version 3). The results showed that: several significant between attachment style, personality inventory, and loneliness correlations were identified; the attachment close was A lot correlated with extraversion and Quite a bit negatively correlated with loneliness, while attachment anxiety was Much positively correlated with extraversion, Quite a bit negatively correlated with neuroticism and Much positively correlated with loneliness; personality inventories of extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness were A lot negatively correlated with loneliness whereas neuroticism and openness were not A lot correlated with loneliness. Overall, the hypotheses were only partially supported.

Keywords: *Attachment Styles, Personality Predispositions, Loneliness, Emerging Adults, Big Five Personality Traits, Adult Attachment*

1. Introduction

Emerging adulthood is a crucial developmental stage marked by identity exploration, emotional transitions, and changing interpersonal relationships, which unfortunately make young adults physically and mentally susceptible to loneliness and emotional distress. It is a time when individuals look up to emotional closeness, social belongingness, and interpersonal connections, which dramatically affect their psychological well-being. John Bowlby (1969) gave the attachment theory that accounts for how the very first interactions with caregivers determine how one regulates emotions and functions interpersonally throughout life. The later work of Mary Ainsworth et al. (1978) associated secure, anxious, and avoidant types of attachments, while more recent researchers have implied that these attachment styles continue to impact adult relationships and emotional states (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Studies reveal that insecure attachment styles are frequently accompanied by problems in trust, emotional closeness, and social adjustment, which might cause higher levels of emotional distress and loneliness (Suri et al. 2019; Sahin Kralp & Serin, 2017). On the other hand, researchers found people with a secure attachment style tend to have better interpersonal relationships, be more emotionally stable, and have a higher sense of social support (Bernardon et al. 2011; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Besides attachment styles, personality traits play a role in emotional and social behaviors. The Five-Factor Model of personality traits gets to the core by the identification of neuroticism extraversion agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness as the central traits that determine the emotions and behavior of the individuals (Robert McCrae and Paul Costa, 1999). Research indicates that people who are high on the neuroticism scale are more prone to experiencing emotional turbulence and feelings of loneliness, whereas those scoring high on extraversion and agreeableness are better socially adjusted and are less lonely (Lee & Ko, 2018; Vanhalst et al. 2012). On top of that, Nofle and Shaver (2006) discovered that people who are anxious about their attachment tend to score high on neuroticism, while those who avoid attachment are low on agreeableness and extraversion, thereby emphasizing the link between attachment styles and personality traits. Loneliness is generally understood as the gap between one's desired and actual social relationships (Perlman & Peplau, 1981). It has become widespread among young adults

due to shifting social roles, relationship instability, and emotional changes. Studies tracking over time as well as meta-analyses reveal that loneliness is highest in the period of young adulthood and is Really related to attachment insecurity and personality factors (Mund & Neyer, 2021; Buecker et al. 2021). While earlier research separately focused on attachment, personality traits, and loneliness, hardly any study has explored the combined association of these factors in young adults Mainly in the Indian setting. Therefore, the present study aims to examine the relationship between attachment styles, personality predispositions, and loneliness among emerging adults.

1.1 Objectives

To examine the relationship between attachment styles and personality predispositions among emerging adults.

To examine the relationship between attachment styles and loneliness among emerging adults.

To examine the relationship between personality predispositions and loneliness among emerging adults.

1.2 Hypotheses

H₁: There will be a significant relationship between attachment styles and personality predispositions among emerging adults, such that secure attachment styles will be associated with adaptive personality traits (high extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness), while insecure attachment styles (anxious and avoidant) will be related to higher neuroticism.

H₂: There will be a significant relationship between attachment styles and loneliness, such that insecure attachment styles (anxious and avoidant) will be positively associated with loneliness, whereas secure attachment styles will be negatively associated with loneliness among emerging adults.

H₃: There will be a significant relationship between personality predispositions and loneliness, such that neuroticism will be positively correlated with loneliness, whereas extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness will be negatively correlated with loneliness among emerging adults.

2. Method

2.1 Participants

The current study's sample consisted of 160 emerging adults obtained through

convenience sampling from private universities.

Inclusion Criteria

Participants age between 18 to 25 years, Male and female participants who are currently studying in college or university, unmarried individuals, Individuals willing to participate in the study.

Exclusion criteria

Individuals younger than 18 years or older than 25 years , Participants who are married, or divorced, Individuals diagnosed with any severe psychiatric or neurological disorder, Participants who submit incomplete questionnaires or fail to complete the responses, Individuals who do not provide informed consent or choose to withdraw during the data collection process.

2.2 Tools

Mini-International Personality Item Pool Scale (Mini-IPIP), Donnellan et al. (2006):

A concise 20-item self-report measure of the Big Five personality traits: Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness to Experience. Each personality trait is made up of four items ranked on a 5-point Likert scale from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree, " where a few items are reverse scored. This measure has been proved to have sound reliability and validity, with Cronbach's alpha values between .62 and .77.

Revised Adult Attachment Scale (RAAS): Collins (1996) (Close relationship version):

A self-report tool consisting of 18 items designed to measure adult attachment styles. The instrument tracks three aspects of attachment: Close, Depend, and Anxiety. Participants indicate their agreement with statements on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 means "Not at all characteristics of me" and 5 means "Very characteristic of me." RAAS can be a reliable and valid measure, with internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) coefficients for its subscales ranging from .78 to .85.

UCLA Loneliness Scale (Version 3): Russell (1996): It contains 20 statements related to loneliness and being socially isolated, and the respondents have to rate their feelings on a 4-point scale from 1 (Never) to 4 (Always). Some of the questions are reverse scored. The scale is highly reliable with Cronbach's alpha values between .89 and .94 and has strong validity evidence.

2.3 Procedure

Participants were selected by using convenience sampling. People from age 18 to 25 years were contacted via online platforms and academic networks. Informed consent was obtained before Data collection standardized self-measures tools including the Revised Adult Attachment Scale (RAAS), the Mini-IPIP Personality Scale, and the UCLA Loneliness Scale (Version 3). questionnaires were distributed through google forms Participants were asked to answer honestly and were assured that their responses would be kept confidential and anonymous. After the data collection answers were checked. Then the data were coded and input into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) for analysis. Descriptive statistics were conducted to have an overall view of both the sample and study variables. Besides, Pearson's correlation was utilized to explore the relationships versus attachment styles, personality predispositions, and loneliness.

3. Results and Discussion

Statistical analysis the findings of the statistical analysis that was done to examine the connection between attachment styles, personality traits and loneliness among emerging young adults. The present research consists of a sample of 160 participants in the age range between 18-25 years. The data was collected through standard self-report questionnaires that measured attachment styles, personality traits and loneliness. Descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation were used to analyze the collected data to reveal the interrelationships between the variables. The statistical analysis results were verified at the 0.05 level of significance. The results of the present study are shown by using various tables such as participants' sociodemographic characteristics, descriptive statistics of the variables and hypothesis-wise analysis with interpretation of the results.

Table 1. Showing demographic details (N=160)

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	80	50.0
	Female	80	50.0
Age group	18-25	160	100
Marital status	Unmarried	160	100

\

Table 2. Showing the descriptive statistics for all study variables, including measures of central tendency, dispersion and distribution.

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Close	160	1.00	4.33	2.6333	0.58151	-0.093	-0.067
Depend	160	1.00	5.00	2.8063	0.68677	0.128	0.140
Anxiety	160	1.17	4.67	2.9906	0.84535	-0.146	-0.885
Extraversion	160	1.00	4.75	2.8109	0.70697	-0.170	-0.079
Agreeableness	160	1.75	5.00	3.5859	0.63199	-0.235	0.404
Conscientiousness	160	1.75	5.00	3.3281	0.69431	0,039	-0.260
Neuroticism	160	1.50	5.00	3.0938	0.61414	0.180	0.775
Openness	160	2.00	5.00	3.4266	0.61723	0.455	0.071
Loneliness	160	15	48	33.36	6.477	-0.381	0.381

The descriptive statistics showed that the attachment styles, personality predispositions traits and loneliness were mostly at a moderate range. The average score for attachment anxiety was 2.99 (SD = 0.84), and close attachment (M = 2.63, SD = 0.58) and dependence (M = 2.80, SD = 0.68) also showed moderate levels in the participants. These data points indicate that the participants' attachment features are a mix of secure and insecure elements. From the perspective of personality traits, the highest average scores were for agreeableness (M = 3.58, SD = 0.63) and conscientiousness (M = 3.32, SD = 0.69), which lead to the assumption of the existence of well-functioning personality dispositions. Extraversion (M = 2.81, SD = 0.70) and openness (M=3.42, SD = 0.61) were observed at moderate levels, whereas neuroticism (M = 3.09, SD = 0.61) depicted a moderate level of emotional instability. Participants' average score for loneliness (M = 33.36, SD = 6.47) was indicative of a moderate extent of perceived social isolation. In general, the findings point to the fact that the sample is not exhibiting extreme behavior but instead is variable across the different measured constructs.

Testing Of Hypotheses 1

H1: There will be a significant relationship between attachment styles and personality predispositions among emerging adults, such that secure attachment styles will be associated with adaptive personality traits (high extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness), while insecure attachment styles (anxious and avoidant) will be related to higher neuroticism.

Table 3. Pearson Correlation

Dimensions	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness	Neuroticism	Openness	Interpretation
Close	.186*	-.38	.009	-.114	-.138	Very weak positive significant
Depend	-.004	.100	-.113	.042	0.92	No significant
Anxiety	-.159*	.129	-.058	.263**	.081	Very weak negative (extraversion) Weak positive (neuroticism)

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

The results in the above-mentioned table reveal the relationship between attachment styles and personality predispositions is partially significant. In particular, individuals with close attachment style has moderate but significant positive correlation with extraversion ($r = .186$, $p < 0.05$), which indicates that these individuals are most comfortable with closeness, tend to be more social and outgoing whereas, individuals with anxiety attachment style were negatively correlated with extraversion personality trait at a weak level of significance ($r = -.159$, $p < 0.05$) however the anxiety attachment style is positively correlated at a weak level of significance with neurotic personality traits ($r = .263$, $p < .01$), which explains that individuals who are highly anxious are probably less outgoing and more emotionally unstable. Dependent attachment style however remained unrelated to personality predispositions. In sum, these results imply that respective attachment styles are linked with certain personality traits, but only few associations (close attachment with extraversion and attachment anxiety with extraversion and neuroticism) are statistically significant hence only partially supported Hypothesis 1.

Testing of Hypotheses 2

H₂ There will be a significant relationship between attachment styles and loneliness, such that insecure attachment styles (anxious and avoidant) will be positively associated with loneliness, whereas secure attachment styles will be negatively associated with loneliness among emerging adults.

Table 4. Pearson Correlation

Dimensions	r	p	Interpretation
Close	-0.193*	.014	Very weak negative significant
Depend	0.016	.843	Very weak positive non - significant
Anxiety	0.280**	.000	Weak positive highly significant

The results revealed that in Hypothesis 2, a Pearson product-moment correlation was analyzed to get the relationship between attachment dimensions (close, depend, and anxiety) and loneliness in young adults. The findings revealed that close attachment was negatively and weakly correlated with loneliness at a significant level, ($r = -.193$, $p < 0.05$) meaning people who are comfortable with closeness usually have lower levels of loneliness. In Dependent attachment style did not show a significant relationship with loneliness ($r = -.016$, $p > 0.05$). However, attachment anxiety showed a weak positive but highly significant correlation with loneliness, ($r = .280$, $p < .01$) which means that people with higher attachment anxiety are more likely to feel lonely. Since some, (close attachment- loneliness and attachment anxiety- loneliness) but not all, the relationships were significant, the results indicate that Hypothesis 2 is partially supported.

Testing of Hypotheses 3

H₃ There will be a significant relationship between personality predispositions and loneliness, such that neuroticism will be positively correlated with loneliness, whereas extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness will be negatively correlated with loneliness among emerging adults.

Table 5. Pearson Correlation

Personality traits	r	p	Interpretation
Extraversion	-0.396**	.000	Moderate negative highly significant
Agreeableness	-0.259**	.001	Weak negative highly significant
Conscientiousness	-0.351**	.000	Moderate negative highly significant
Neuroticism	0.124	.118	Very weak positive non-significant
Openness	-0.135	.088	Very weak negative non - significant

The results were revealed in Hypothesis 3, a Pearson product moment correlation analysis to get the relationship between personality dispositions and loneliness in young adults. According to the findings, extraversion had a moderately negative quite a highly significant correlation with loneliness ($r=-.396, p<.01$) indicating that individuals who are less social and outgoing are more likely to be feel lonely. Agreeableness showed a very weak negative but highly significant correlation with loneliness, ($r=-.259, p<.01$) implying that more agreeable individuals tend to report slightly lower loneliness have. In addition, conscientiousness had a moderately negative highly significant correlation with loneliness, which means that conscientious individuals are less lonely. However, neuroticism showed a very weak positive and statistically insignificant correlation with loneliness ($r=.124, p> 0.05$) which means that neuroticism was quite not significantly associated with loneliness in this study, while openness to experience had a very weak negative but a statistically insignificant correlation with loneliness.

To conclude, although several personality traits were significantly correlated with loneliness, all expected associations were not confirmed. Hence, Hypothesis 3 is partially supported since some (extraversion - loneliness, agreeableness-loneliness and conscientiousness-loneliness) but not all relationships were significant.

Summary of Hypotheses Testing Results (Table 6)

Hypotheses	Hypotheses statement	Key statistic	Decision
H1	There will be a significant relationship between attachment styles and personality predispositions	Close - Extraversion ($r=.186$, $p < 0.05$) Anxiety-Extraversion ($r=-.159$, $p < 0.05$) Anxiety - Neuroticism ($r=.263$, $p<.01$)	Partially supported
H2	There will be a significant relationship between attachment styles and loneliness	Close- loneliness ($r=-.193$, $p=.014$) Anxiety - Loneliness ($r=.280$, $p=.001$) Depend - Loneliness ($r=.016$, $p=.843$)	Partially supported
H3	There will be a significant relationship between personality predispositions and loneliness	Extraversion - Loneliness ($r=-.396$, $p<.01$) Agreeableness-Loneliness ($r=-.259$, $p<.01$) Conscientiousness-Loneliness ($r=-.351$, $p<.01$)	Partially supported

Overall findings indicate that attachment patterns, personality traits, and loneliness are deeply interwoven and each affect the other in various ways. Since the hypotheses were only partially confirmed, apparently the associations between these variables are not straightforward but rather they depend on specific facets and contexts. Besides initial relational experiences, the research highlights the role of personality traits in determining emotional well-being in young adulthood.

3.1 Limitations

The research design of this study was cross-sectional in nature and so causal inferences cannot be made on attachment styles, personality dispositions and loneliness. The sample was a relatively small sample of only 160 unmarried emerging adults 18-25 years of age, who were recruited through convenient sampling, and this might have had an effect on the generalizability of the findings. Also, self-report may have compromised the validity of the results. And other risk factors like social support culture stress and mental health variables were not examined in this study but they could have potentially contributed to the outcomes of the present research.

4. Conclusion

The present study examined the relationship between attachment styles, personality predispositions, and loneliness among young adults. Results showed that close attachment was negatively related to loneliness and attachment anxiety was positively related. Personality traits of extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness also had negative relationships with loneliness. Overall the hypotheses were partially supported implying that loneliness can be affected by the combination of various emotional and personality factors.

References

- Ainsworth, M. D. S., Blehar, M. C., Waters, E., & Wall, S. (1978). *Patterns of attachment: A psychological study of the strange situation*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Arnett, J. J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American Psychologist*, 55(5), 469–480. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.5.469>
- Asendorpf, J. B., & Wilpers, S. (1998). Personality effects on social relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74(6), 1531–1544. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.74.6.1531>
- Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117(3), 497–529. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.117.3.497>
- Bartholomew, K., & Horowitz, L. M. (1991). Attachment styles among young adults. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 61(2), 226–244. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.61.2.226>
- Bernardon, S., Babb, K. A., Hakim-Larson, J., & Gragg, M. (2011). Loneliness and attachment. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science*, 43(1), 40–51. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0019699>
- Bouchard, T. J. (2004). Genetic influence on psychological traits. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 13(4), 148–151. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0963-7214.2004.00295.x>
- Buecker, S., Maes, M., Denissen, J. J. A., & Luhmann, M. (2020). Loneliness and the Big Five personality traits. *European Journal of Personality*, 34(1), 8–28. <https://doi.org/10.1002/per.2229>
- Buecker, S., Horstmann, K. T., et al. (2021). Changes in loneliness across the lifespan.

- Psychological Bulletin*, 147(8), 787–805. <https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000336>
- Cacioppo, J. T., & Hawkley, L. C. (2009). Perceived social isolation and cognition. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 13(10), 447–454. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2009.06.005>
- Costa, P. T., & McCrae, R. R. (1992). *NEO PI-R professional manual*. Psychological Assessment Resources.
- Denissen, J. J. A., & Penke, L. (2008). Motivational individual differences. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 42(5), 1285–1302. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2008.04.002>
- DiTommaso, E., Brannen-McNulty, C., Ross, L., & Burgess, M. (2003). Attachment and loneliness. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 35(2), 303–312. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869\(02\)00190-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869(02)00190-3)
- Fraley, R. C. (2002). Attachment stability. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 6(2), 123–151. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327957PSPR0602_03
- Gross, J. J. (1998). The emerging field of emotion regulation. *Review of General Psychology*, 2(3), 271–299. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2680.2.3.271>
- Hazan, C., & Shaver, P. R. (1987). Romantic love as attachment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 52(3), 511–524. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.52.3.511>
- Hawkley, L. C., & Cacioppo, J. T. (2010). Loneliness matters. *Health Psychology*, 29(2), 124–132. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0017576>
- John, O. P., & Srivastava, S. (1999). Big Five taxonomy. In L. A. Pervin & O. P. John (Eds.), *Handbook of personality*. Guilford Press.
- Lucas, R. E., & Diener, E. (2001). Personality and well-being. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 30(1), 3–19. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869\(00\)00009-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869(00)00009-1)
- Malouff, J. M., Thorsteinsson, E. B., & Schutte, N. S. (2005). Big Five and loneliness. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 39(2), 245–259. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2004.04.001>
- Mikulincer, M., & Shaver, P. R. (2007). *Attachment in adulthood*. Guilford Press.
- Mikulincer, M., & Shaver, P. R. (2016). *Attachment in adulthood: Structure, dynamics, and change* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.
- Mund, M., & Neyer, F. J. (2021). Loneliness across lifespan. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspp0000332>
- Noftle, E. E., & Shaver, P. R. (2006). Attachment and Big Five. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 40(2), 179–208. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2004.11.003>

- Perlman, D., & Peplau, L. A. (1981). Loneliness theory. In R. Gilmour & S. Duck (Eds.), *Personal relationships*.
- Qualter, P., et al. (2015). Loneliness and mental health. *Journal of Adolescence*, 40, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2014.12.005>
- Vanhalst, J., et al. (2012). Personality and loneliness. *Journal of Adolescence*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2011.10.003>
- Von Soest, T., Luhmann, M., & Gerstorf, D. (2020). Loneliness development. *Developmental Psychology*, 56(8), 1551–1564. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dev0000999>
- Wei, M., Russell, D. W., & Zakalik, R. A. (2005). Attachment and loneliness. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52(4), 602–614. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.52.4.602>
- Zimmermann, P. (2004). Attachment and personality. *European Journal of Personality*, 18(2), 159–171. <https://doi.org/10.1002/per.518>