



Investigating Gender differences in Adult Attachment, Procrastination, Codependency, and Impulsivity among Young Adults

Vritti Johar, Graduate from D.A.V College, Panjab University, Chandigarh

vrittijohardec1@gmail.com

Abstract

Teenage is the stage where an individual goes through several physical, psychological, and hormonal changes. Teenagers face numerous challenges that are, forming identities and opinions, adapting to a newer environment, and everything around them seems to be changing. Young adults who move out from their homes face issues in adaptability and personality formation, which leads to consequences such as impulsivity and procrastination. Substantial research has found that maladaptive outcomes occur due to childhood adversity. Moreover, disturbances in attachment relationships may arise from childhood adversity, which can be associated with increased impulsivity. The current research study aims to identify gender differences in Adult Attachment, Procrastination, Codependency, and Impulsivity among young adults. The study was conducted on a total of 78 young adults, including 39 females and 39 males, who fall in the age range of 18-25. Standardized scales were used to measure Adult Attachment, Procrastination, Codependency, and Impulsivity. The result found that there is a significant positive correlation between Procrastination and Adult attachment style. Moreover, a significant positive correlation was found between Impulsivity and Codependency. The

dimensions of impulsivity showed a positive relationship with the dimensions of Adult attachment. Major gender differences are observed in Impulsivity, males are more prone to be impulsive as compared to females.

Keywords: *Adult Attachment, Procrastination, Codependency, and Impulsivity*

Introduction

“Man is largely a creature of habit, many of his activities a more or less automatic reflexes from the stimuli of his environment.”

- G. Stanley Hall

An individual's personality is shaped through various experiences one has gone through. Attachment styles are formed based on how you behave in a relationship. According to the Attachment theory of Bowlby and Ainsworth, the emotional connection you form as an infant with your primary caregiver- mostly your mother, determines how you relate to people as well as respond to intimacy throughout your life. However, one's personality and intervening experiences in childhood and adolescence also play a vital role in shaping one's attachment style. Codependency is a dysfunctional behavior pattern, where an individual neglects his/her well-being or needs and prioritizes the other individual's needs over his/her own. An individual overly depends on the other individual to satisfy their emotional and self-esteem needs.

Procrastination is another trait or habit that is delaying tasks intentionally even though one's expecting negative consequences, prevalent in Adolescents. Impulsivity is a tendency to respond spontaneously without thinking about the consequences. In a review study, three predictions were tested which were derived from an evolutionary account that stated that procrastination arose as a by-product of impulsivity. The results found out that procrastination

and impulsivity are moderately heritable (46% and 49% respectively). Further, it was suggested that impulsivity and procrastination are initially linked on genetic influences (Gustavson et al., 2014).

A study was conducted on college students to investigate the relationships between parenting, attachment, codependency, and mental health factors. The results found that attachment anxiety and avoidance are partially mediated by parenting and mental-ill health. It was also found that insecure attachment style showed higher levels of co-dependency (Gottuso & Joseph, 2021). Kobak et al. (2009) conducted a study on adolescent attachment and trajectories of hostile impulsive behavior to identify the development of borderline personality disorders in early adulthood. The results suggested that preoccupied females showed a slower decline in hostile emotions in comparison with males.

Adult Attachment

The concept of adult attachment style as tapped by self-report measures has been defined as a constellation of knowledge, expectations, and insecurities that people hold about themselves and their close relationships (Fraley & Roisman, 2018). Adult attachment refers to the “emotional and interpersonal patterns that individuals develop based on their early experiences with their caregivers” (Sable, 2008).

A study was conducted on 733 university students consisting of 513 females and 220 males, to determine the effects of attachment styles and academic procrastination on subjective well-being in university students. Standardized scales were used to collect the data that included, the Subjective Well-being Scale, the Academic Procrastination Scale, and the Relationship Scales Questionnaire. Results showed that a preoccupied attachment style has a

direct, positive effect on Academic procrastination while Academic procrastination has a direct, negative effect on subjective well-being (Berber et al., 2022).

Alavi et al. (2020) conducted a study to show that Family Functioning is associated with patterns of adult close relationship attachment which works differently in Western and non-Western societies. The sample consisted of 600 young adults (294 males, 306 females). The study found that family adaptability, cohesion with anxiety, and close depend attachments. Higher family adaptability is associated with higher anxiety attachment.

Procrastination

Procrastination involves unnecessary and unwanted delay, be it decisional, implemental, or lack of timeliness (Lay, 1986; McCown et al., 1989; Mann et al., 1997; Steel, 2010). Procrastination is commonly conceptualized as an irrational tendency to delay required tasks or assignments despite the negative effects of this postponement on the individuals and organizations (Lay, 1986; Steel, 2007; Klingsieck, 2013).

A study was conducted on 161 college students who were enrolled in an Introductory Psychology class. Through keeping a record of their overall academic records, the study found that students who had lower grades had higher levels of attachment anxiety and procrastination and low levels of self-efficacy (Kurland et al., 2016).

A study was conducted by Ajaikumar (2021) to determine active procrastination and impulsivity as predictors of resilience on around 150 students from 19 countries. Standardized measures were used to measure resilience, active procrastination and impulsivity, respectively. Results found out that, active procrastination was a significant positive predictor of resilience, which interpreted 6.5% of the variance in resilience. Impulsivity is the significant negative predictor of resilience, that expounded 2.8% of the variance in Resilience.

Codependency

Originally, “the term ‘codependent’ described persons living with, or in a relationship with an addicted person” (Lampis et al., 2017). Modern understandings of codependency now refer to “a specific relationship addiction characterized by preoccupation and extreme dependence—emotional, social and sometimes physical—on another person” (Lampis et al., 2017).

A study was conducted to investigate the role and predictive weight of impulsivity and codependency on Internet Addiction. The study included sample size of 481 young adult university students. Standardization measures were used. Findings showed that 38% of the participants were in the dependency range, while 37.7% demonstrated Internet abuse behavior. Furthermore, male participants were more dependent, more impulsive and more co-dependent, with increasing age between 18-30 (Diotaiuti et al., 2022).

A review study was conducted to investigate the construct validity of codependency, differences between young adults on a measure of codependency. It was observed individuals who scored high on codependency reported significantly more family of origin difficulties, and parental health problems (Cullen et al., 1999).

Impulsivity

A personality trait that reflects a predisposition toward rapid, unplanned reactions to internal or external stimuli without regard to the negative consequences of these reactions to the individual or to others (Moeller et al., 2001). Wypych et al. (2018) intended to untangle the connections of impulsivity, emotion regulation and motivation to procrastination. Standardized measures were used to collect the data from the sample size of 600. Findings showed that the strongest contributions to Procrastination came from lack of value, delay discounting, and lack

of perseverance. The model also interpreted the moderating role of expressive suppression between several aspects of impulsivity and procrastination.

A study was conducted to investigate the relation between procrastination and ADHD-related symptoms of inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity on the sample consisting of 54 students. Standardized measures were used. Findings indicated that inattention came to be correlated with Procrastination (Niermann et al.,2014).

Methodology

Purpose

The purpose is to study Adult Attachment, Procrastination, Codependency, and Impulsivity in Young Adults.

Hypothesis

1. There will be no significant correlation between Adult Attachment and Procrastination.
2. There would be gender differences in Impulsivity.
3. There will be a positive correlation between Impulsivity and Codependency.
4. There will be a significant positive correlation between Codependency and Adult Attachment.
5. There will be no significant correlation between Adult Attachment and Impulsivity.
6. There will be a significant correlation between Impulsivity and Procrastination.
7. There will be a significant positive correlation between Codependency and Procrastination.
8. There would be no gender difference in Adult attachment.

Method

Sample

A total of 78 young adults i.e., between the age group of 18-25 participated in the research study. 38 responses were received both from Males and Females.

Measures

Adult Attachment Scale: The scale was officially developed in 1990 and built based on earlier work of Hazen & Shaver (1987) and Levy & Devis (1988). The scale consists of 18 items scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale. It measures Adult Attachment styles named as 'Secure', 'Anxious', and 'Avoidant'.

The General Procrastination Scale (GPS): was given by Lay, in 1986. Lay (1986) matched Procrastination with traits, the Big 5 theory, perfectionism, anxiety, agitation, dejection, self-discrepancy, etc. The scale consists of 20 items scored on a 5-point Likert scale. Score 3 on the scale is Neutral, the statement is neither characteristic nor uncharacteristic of you. The scale is a one-factor-only scale, with Cronbach alpha of 0.82 (Lay,1986) and a retest reliability of 0.80 (Ferrari,1989)

The Spann Fischer Codependency Scale: was given by Spann and Fischer in 1990. The scale is a 16-item self-report instrument that has been proposed as a measure of co-dependency. Individual items are rated on a 6-point Likert Scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 6 (Strongly Agree) and then summed with two reverse items. The scale is reported to have good test-retest reliability ($>.80$) and acceptable internal consistency ($.62 < < .92$) across studies.

State Impulsivity Scale (SIS): was given by Iribarren et al. (2011) as designed to evaluate impulsive behavior defined as a state, that is impulsivity a manifest behavior that can

vary in the short term. It consists of 20 items, distributed into three subscales: Reward, Automatism, and Attentional. The response is based on a four-point Likert Scale. The authors found high reliability for both the total scale (0.88) and each of its sub-dimensions: Reward (0.84), Automatism (0.80), and Attentional (0.75).

Procedures

The participants were informed about the purpose of the research and the questionnaires were filled out through Google Forms. Informed consent was taken from each participant before data collection. Standardized Psychological Tests were administered to the participants.

Analysis of Data

Results

The responses of participants were analyzed using t-test to examine the gender differences in Adult Attachment, Procrastination, Codependency, and Impulsivity among young adults. Table 1 shows the correlation between Adult Attachment (Secure, Avoidant, Anxious), Procrastination, Codependency, and Impulsivity (Reward, Automatism, Attentional). Mean and Standard deviation are presented in Table 2. Table 3 shows the gender differences in Adult Attachment, Procrastination, Codependency, and Impulsivity among young adults

Table 1

Correlation

Correlation Matrix																				
	Secure		Avoidant		Anxious		Total Adult Attachment		Procrastination		Co-dependency		Reward		Automatism		Attentional		Total Impulsivity	
Secure		—																		
Avoidant		-0.309	**	—																
Anxious		0.046		0.242	*	—														
Total Adult Attachment		0.328	**	0.545	***	0.731	***	—												
Procrastination		-0.084		-0.096		-0.177		-0.245	*	—										
Co-dependency		-0.325	**	0.307	**	0.165		0.052		0.158	—									
Reward		0.043		0.077		0.268	*	0.150		0.303	**	0.311	**	—						
Automatism		0.081		0.193		0.193		0.204		0.117		0.246	*	0.627	***	—				
Attentional		0.075		0.171		0.141		0.154		0.128		0.212		0.598	***	0.675	***	—		
Total Impulsivity		0.082		0.162		0.229	*	0.192		0.214		0.291	*	0.857	***	0.868	***	0.881	***	—
Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001																				

Table 2

Independent Sample T-Test

		Statistic	df	p	Mean difference	SE difference
Secure	Student's t	0.4062	74.0	0.686	0.316	0.777
Avoidant	Student's t	-0.1498	74.0	0.881	-0.132	0.878

Anxious	Student's t	- 0.8629		74.0	0.391		-0.868	1.006	
Total Adult Attachment	Student's t	- 0.0883		74.0	0.930		-0.132	1.489	
Procrastination	Student's t	0.3747	^a	74.0	0.709		0.737	1.967	
Co-dependency	Student's t	0.4264		74.0	0.671	1.263		2.962	
Reward	Student's t	- 3.1237		74.0	0.003	- 3.500		1.120	
Automatism	Student's t	- 2.1561		74.0	0.034	- 2.158		1.001	
Attentional	Student's t	- 2.5134		74.0	0.014	- 3.000		1.194	
Total Impulsivity	Student's t	- 3.0854	^a	74.0	0.003	- 8.711		2.823	

Discussion of Results

The result found that there is a significant positive correlation between Procrastination and Adult attachment style ($r = 0.245$, $p < 0.5$). The result also found that there is a significant positive correlation between Co-dependency and Secure Adult attachment styles ($r = 0.325$, $p < 0.5$). Additionally, there is a significant positive correlation between Co-dependency and Avoidant adult attachment style ($r = 0.307$, $p < 0.5$).

According to Collins (2023), a study was conducted on 50 adult participants on the effects of Secure, Ambivalent, and Avoidant Attachment Styles on a number of codependent behaviors and Relationship satisfaction. The results suggested that it is important to examine these variables with codependency behaviors as codependency is increasingly causing

unhealthy behavior patterns. Further, it was found that it was hypothesized that individuals with ambivalent and avoidant attachment styles are associated with poorer life satisfaction and higher codependent behaviors, the results supported it.

It was found out that there is a significant positive correlation between Reward and Anxious Attachment Style ($r=0.268$, $p.<0.5$). Results also confirmed that there is a significant positive correlation between Reward and Procrastination ($r=0.303$, $p.<0.1$).

A study was conducted on 1004 individuals to examine the evidence of relational ambivalence in individuals with both Anxious and Avoidant attachment styles. The results found that individuals with high anxious attachment styles experience intense and similar perceptions of threat and reward, while those with avoidant attachment styles had similar but less intense perceptions (Macdonald et al., 2013).

According to Wilke et al. (2020) a study was conducted on 616 adults to examine the relationship between adverse childhood experiences with problematic media used mediated by i) attachment anxiety ii) attachment avoidance iii) both the dimensions of attachment with Impulsivity. The results suggested a significant association between adverse childhood experiences and increased problematic media use. Both, anxious and avoidant attachment independently mediated this relationship, with avoidant attachment linked to less problematic media use and anxious attachment linked to more. The series of avoidant attachment with impulsivity, as well as anxious attachment with impulsivity, partially explained the connection between adverse childhood experiences and problematic media use.

Results confirmed that there is a significant positive correlation between Impulsivity and Anxious Adult attachment style ($r=0.229$, $p.<0.5$). Moreover, a significant positive correlation was found between Impulsivity and Co-dependency ($r=0.291$, $p.<0.5$).

Furthermore, it was found that there is a significant positive correlation between Reward and Co-dependency ($r=0.311$, $p.<0.5$) as well as between Automatism and Co-dependency ($r=0.246$, $p.<0.5$).

In terms of Impulsivity, the mean of males is more as compared to the mean of females (46.7 & 38 respectively). The gender difference was majorly depicted in all the subdivisions of Impulsivity. The results suggest that impulsivity is more prevalent in young males in comparison to young females. Our present study is supported by previous literature that is done by (Chapple & Johnson,2007). A research study was conducted to study the gender differences in Impulsivity and to find out whether the biological, structural, and familial predictors differ by gender. Multiple group analysis was conducted. The results found that the relationships between discipline, and impulsivity, as well as attachment and impulsivity, differ by gender (Chapple & Johnson,2007).

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