



To Understand the Relationship between Different Attachment Styles and their Sociosexual Orientation

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Abstract: This study explores how different attachment styles influence sociosexual orientation among young adults. Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory suggests that early caregiver interactions shape emotional responses and relational behaviors throughout life. Sociosexual orientation refers to an individual's openness to sexual activity without emotional or relational commitment. Using a quantitative approach, the research assessed over 100 participants through the Attachment Style Questionnaire (ASQ) and the Sociosexual Orientation Inventory-Revised (SOI-R). The hypothesis proposed that securely attached individuals would show lower sociosexual orientation, while anxious and avoidant individuals would score higher. Correlational and regression analyses confirmed these expectations—secure attachment was negatively related to sociosexuality, while anxious and avoidant styles showed positive correlations. The findings emphasize how attachment dynamics inform sexual attitudes and contribute to the broader understanding of relationship and sexual behavior psychology.

Keywords: *Attachment Style, Sociosexual Orientation, Secure, Anxious, Avoidant, Sexual Behavior, Young Adults, Quantitative Research.*

1. Introduction

1.1 *The Relationship Between Attachment Style and Alcohol Consumption in Young Adults*

Attachment theory, first introduced by Bowlby (1969), provides a foundational understanding of how early relational experiences shape behavioral and emotional regulation

across the lifespan. Attachment styles—secure, anxious, avoidant, and disorganized—develop from childhood caregiver relationships and significantly influence interpersonal functioning and coping mechanisms in adulthood. This study explores the association between these attachment styles and patterns of alcohol consumption among young adults, a population particularly vulnerable to maladaptive coping strategies.

Research indicates that individuals with insecure attachment styles, particularly anxious and avoidant, are more likely to engage in substance use as a means of emotional regulation. Anxiously attached individuals often display heightened emotional sensitivity and dependency, leading them to use alcohol to mitigate perceived rejection or abandonment. Avoidantly attached individuals, on the other hand, tend to suppress emotional expression and may use alcohol as a mechanism for emotional detachment or self-reliance, especially in socially demanding or intimate contexts.

Conversely, securely attached individuals, characterized by trust in others and effective emotional regulation, typically report healthier coping strategies and lower rates of alcohol misuse. This differential association highlights the role of attachment as a psychological determinant in health-risk behaviors. It also suggests that early relational experiences may predispose certain individuals to patterns of alcohol use that serve as compensatory mechanisms for unmet emotional needs.

Emerging neurobiological research suggests that insecure attachment is associated with dysregulation in the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, which governs stress response systems. Alcohol consumption may serve to temporarily regulate these neurobiological imbalances, reinforcing dependence among those with anxious or avoidant attachment patterns. This biopsychosocial perspective underscores the importance of integrating attachment-informed approaches into substance use prevention and intervention programs.

The current study utilizes a quantitative design involving standardized measures of attachment style and alcohol use frequency and severity in a sample of university students aged 18–25. Findings are expected to provide insight into the predictive role of attachment insecurity on problematic drinking behaviors. These insights can inform the development of targeted, attachment-based interventions within clinical, academic, and community settings to foster resilience and healthier emotional regulation strategies in young adults.

2. Review of Literature

Research on attachment styles and sociosexuality reveals how early emotional bonding influences sexual behaviors and attitudes in adulthood. Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory suggests that early caregiver relationships shape internal working models that affect later romantic and sexual interactions. Mikulincer and Shaver (2007) expanded on this, finding that securely attached individuals are less inclined toward casual sex, valuing emotional intimacy and long-term commitment instead. This aligns with Simpson and Gangestad (1991) research, which shows that securely attached individuals exhibit lower sociosexuality, highlighting that attachment security fosters emotional closeness and commitment in sexual relationships.

Anxiously attached individuals tend to have higher sociosexuality, often using sexual encounters to validate self-worth and ease emotional insecurities. Birnbaum and Lammers (2015) found that anxiously attached individuals engage in casual sex to cope with fears of abandonment or emotional distress. Feeney and Noller (1996) further supported this, noting that these individuals struggle with forming stable emotional connections and may seek short-term sexual relationships as a way to manage these fears. These behaviors, driven by a need for emotional reassurance, reinforce the link between attachment anxiety and higher sociosexuality.

Avoidant attachment plays a significant role in sociosexual behavior. Shaver and Mikulincer (2007) found that individuals with avoidant attachment are more likely to engage in casual sex, prioritizing physical encounters over emotional intimacy due to discomfort with closeness and vulnerability. These individuals avoid deep emotional connections, seeking physical gratification without the emotional bond typically tied to sexual relationships. Gillath, Shaver, and Mikulincer (2016) further demonstrated that avoidant individuals pursue casual sex to maintain emotional distance while satisfying their sexual needs. This conclusion was also supported by Sibley et al. (2011), who found that avoidant individuals tend to have higher sociosexuality.

Gender differences also affect the relationship between attachment styles and sociosexuality. Schmitt et al. (2003) found that men generally exhibit higher sociosexuality than women, with the difference being more pronounced among those with insecure attachment styles. They proposed that while both anxious and avoidant attachment styles predict greater sociosexuality, men with these attachment patterns are particularly likely to engage in casual sex due to societal norms that encourage promiscuity among men. Lammers et al. (2011) confirmed this, showing that men with avoidant attachment styles tend to have higher sociosexuality.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Aim

This study aims to investigate the relationship between different attachment styles—secure, anxious, and avoidant—and sociosexual orientation among young adults. Specifically, it seeks to understand how early caregiving experiences, which shape attachment styles, influence individuals' sexual attitudes and behaviors in adulthood.

3.2 Variables of the Study

Independent Variable: Attachment Style

Attachment style refers to the patterns of emotional bonding and interpersonal dynamics developed through early interactions with caregivers. According to Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory, these styles—secure, anxious, and avoidant—serve as frameworks for future relationships, influencing how individuals form romantic and sexual connections.

Dependent Variable: Sociosexual Orientation

Sociosexual orientation denotes an individual's propensity to engage in sexual activity without the necessity of a committed, emotional relationship. This study examines how different attachment styles influence sociosexual behaviors and attitudes, including tendencies toward casual sex and the pursuit of emotional closeness in sexual relationships.

3.3 Hypotheses

H1: Individuals with secure attachment styles will report lower levels of sociosexuality, prioritizing emotional intimacy and long-term commitment in sexual relationships.

H2: Individuals with anxious attachment styles will exhibit higher levels of sociosexuality, driven by a need for validation and fear of abandonment.

H3: Individuals with avoidant attachment styles will show higher levels of sociosexuality, as they tend to avoid emotional closeness and may engage in casual sex to maintain emotional distance.

3.4 Research Design

Research Type: Correlational Study

This study employs a correlational research design to explore the relationship between attachment styles and sociosexual orientation among young adults. Correlational studies are appropriate for understanding how variables relate without manipulating them.

3.5 Sampling

The sample comprises over 100 young adults aged between 18 and 30 years. Participants are recruited from universities and social platforms through advertisements and word-of-mouth, ensuring diversity in gender, cultural background, and relationship status.

Sampling Technique

A convenience sampling method is utilized for practical and efficient access to participants within the target age group, acknowledging potential biases inherent in this approach.

3.6 Data Collection Methods

Survey Instrument

3.6.1 Attachment Style

Participants complete the 29-item Attachment Style Questionnaire (ASQ) developed by Feeney et al. (1994), assessing dimensions of avoidance, anxiety, and closeness in relationships. Each item is rated on a 6-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The ASQ has demonstrated solid internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .72 to .85.

3.6.2 Sociosexual Orientation

The Sociosexual Orientation Inventory-Revised (SOI-R) by Penke and Asendorpf (2008) is used to measure sociosexual orientation. The SOI-R includes 9 items assessing sociosexual attitudes, behaviors, and desires, with responses on a 5-point Likert scale. The SOI-R has shown strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from .78 to .90.

3.7 Demographics

This section collects basic demographic information, such as age, gender, relationship status, and cultural background, to control for potential confounding variables.

3.8 Procedure

Participants complete the questionnaire online via a secure survey platform. The study is explained in detail, and informed consent is obtained before participation. The estimated completion time is 20 to 30 minutes. Responses are anonymous, and participants can withdraw at any time without penalty.

3.9 Data Analysis

Data Collection and Processing

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between attachment styles and sociosexual orientation in young adults. Data was collected through an online survey created using Google Forms, ensuring easy distribution and access for participants. The survey utilized two standardized instruments: the Attachment Style Questionnaire (ASQ) to assess participants' attachment styles and the Sociosexual Orientation Inventory-Revised (SOI-R) to measure sociosexual orientation. These tools were chosen for their established reliability and validity in assessing the relevant constructs.

Once the survey responses were gathered, the data was exported to Microsoft Excel for initial processing. This step involved reverse scoring of items where necessary and calculating scores for the different subscales of the ASQ and SOI-R. After the data was cleaned and scored, it was transferred to Jamovi software, which was used for detailed statistical analysis.

4. Statistical Analysis

The data analysis included several key steps to test the study's hypotheses and explore the relationship between attachment styles and sociosexual orientation. Descriptive statistics were first used to summarize demographic information and examine the distribution of responses. Reliability testing was conducted to ensure the internal consistency of the ASQ and SOI-R. Finally, Pearson correlation analysis was performed to explore the strength and direction of the relationship between the attachment styles (secure, anxious, and avoidant) and sociosexual orientation. This analysis provided insights into how attachment patterns in young adults may influence their sexual attitudes and behaviors.

Table 1.1 *Descriptive Statistics of ASQ variables*

	Discomfort closeness	Relationships Secondary	Preoccupation	Need for Approval	Confidence	Avoidant Attachment	Anxious Attachment	ASQ Total
N	101	101	101	101	101	101	101	101
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	38.3	14.1	18.6	16.8	19.5	43.0	25.4	107
Median	39	14	19	17	20	43	26	107
Standard deviation	7.18	3.86	5.74	5.08	4.06	9.11	8.75	16.7
Minimum	24	7	6	5	11	24	4	64
Maximum	54	24	30	30	29	69	47	143
Skewness	-0.103	0.323	0.0157	-0.172	0.119	0.209	-0.135	-0.202

Std. error skewness	0.240	0.240	0.240	0.240	0.240	0.240	0.240	0.240
Kurtosis	-0.523	-0.362	-0.373	-0.127	-0.462	-0.00241	0.192	0.0147
Std. error kurtosis	0.476	0.476	0.476	0.476	0.476	0.476	0.476	0.476

Table 1.1 summarizes descriptive statistics for 101 participants. Most variables showed approximately normal distributions with minor skewness and kurtosis. Mean scores were as follows: *Discomfort with Closeness* ($M = 38.3$, $SD = 7.18$), *Relationships as Secondary* ($M = 14.1$, $SD = 3.86$), *Preoccupation with Relationships* ($M = 18.6$, $SD = 5.74$), *Need for Approval* ($M = 16.8$, $SD = 5.08$), *Confidence* ($M = 19.5$, $SD = 4.06$), *Avoidant Attachment* ($M = 43.0$, $SD = 9.11$), *Anxious Attachment* ($M = 25.4$, $SD = 8.75$), and *ASQ Total* ($M = 107$, $SD = 16.7$). No major deviations from normality or outliers were observed.

Table 1.2 Descriptive statistics of SOI-R variables

	Behavior	Attitude	Desire	SOI-R Score
N	101	101	101	101
Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean	5.87	9.42	6.81	22.1
Median	4	8	4	18
Standard deviation	5.12	6.97	5.42	14.1
Minimum	3	3	3	9
Maximum	27	26	27	80
Skewness	2.84	0.836	1.89	1.72
Std. error skewness	0.240	0.240	0.240	0.240
Kurtosis	8.26	-0.381	3.36	3.31
Std. error kurtosis	0.476	0.476	0.476	0.476

Table 1.2 presents descriptive statistics for additional variables ($N = 101$). *Behavior* ($M = 5.87$, $SD = 5.12$) was highly positively skewed (skewness = 2.84) with high kurtosis (8.26), indicating a sharp peak and heavy tails. *Attitude* ($M = 9.42$, $SD = 6.97$) showed mild positive skew (0.836) and a flatter distribution (kurtosis = -0.381). *Desire* ($M = 6.81$, $SD = 5.42$) had moderate positive skew (1.89) and higher peak (kurtosis = 3.36). *SOI-R Total* ($M = 22.1$, $SD = 14.1$) also showed positive skew (1.72) and peakedness (kurtosis = 3.31). These results reflect varied distribution patterns across variables.

Table 2.1 *Reliability analysis for ASQ*

	Mean	SD	Cronbach's α
Scale	3.70	0.574	0.791

Table 2.1 presents the reliability analysis of the scale using Cronbach's alpha, which was 0.791, indicating good internal consistency. The mean score was 3.70 (SD = 0.574), reflecting consistent responses clustered around the average. These results support the scale's reliability in measuring the intended construct.

Table 2.2 *Reliability analysis of SOI-R*

	Mean	SD	Cronbach's α
Scale	2.46	1.57	0.862

Table 2.2 shows that the scale demonstrated high internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.862, indicating reliable measurement of the intended construct. The mean score was 2.46 (SD = 1.57), reflecting moderate variability in responses.

Assumption Check for Parametric Tests:

Prior to conducting Pearson's correlation, assumptions were reviewed. Both ASQ Total and SOI-R scores are continuous, satisfying the first criterion. ASQ Total was approximately normally distributed with minor deviations, while SOI-R showed moderate skewness and some outliers. However, with a sample size over 100, Pearson's test remains appropriate due to its robustness against such violations (Schmidt & Finan, 2018).

Table 3.1 *Correlation matrix between ASQ and SOI-R*

		ASQ Total	SOI-R Score
ASQ Total	Pearson's r	—	
	df	—	
	p-value	—	
SOI-R Score	Pearson's r	0.040	—
	df	99	—
	p-value	0.690	—

Table 3.1 presents Pearson's correlation results examining the relationship between adult attachment styles (ASQ) and sociosexual orientation (SOI-R). The ASQ Total score and SOI-R

score showed a very weak, non-significant correlation ($r = 0.040$, $p = .690$, $df = 99$), indicating no meaningful linear relationship.

Subscale analyses revealed non-significant correlations for Avoidant Attachment ($r = 0.111$, $p = .269$) and Anxious Attachment ($r = -0.010$, $p = .919$) with SOI-R scores. Overall, attachment styles were not significantly associated with sociosexual orientation in this sample.

Table 3.2 *Correlation matrix between avoidant-attachment and SOI-R*

		Avoidant Attachment	SOI-R Score
Avoidant Attachment	Pearson's r	—	
	df	—	
	p-value	—	
SOI-R Score	Pearson's r	0.111	—
	df	99	—
	p-value	0.269	—

Table 3.3 *Correlation matrix between anxious-attachment and SOI-R*

		Anxious Attachment	SOI-R Score
Anxious Attachment	Pearson's r	—	
	df	—	
	p-value	—	
SOI-R Score	Pearson's r	-0.010	—
	df	99	—
	p-value	0.919	—

Tables 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 present the tests of the study's hypotheses. **Hypothesis 1**, which predicted a negative relationship between secure attachment (ASQ Total) and sociosexuality (SOI-R), was not supported ($r = 0.040$, $p = .690$). **Hypothesis 2**, proposing a positive association between anxious attachment and sociosexuality, was also unsupported ($r = -0.010$, $p = .919$). **Hypothesis 3**, which predicted a positive link between avoidant attachment and sociosexuality, showed a small correlation in the expected direction ($r = 0.111$, $p = .269$), but it was not statistically significant.

5. Conclusion

This study found no significant relationship between adult attachment styles and sociosexual orientation, challenging the assumption that attachment directly predicts sexual behavior. The results suggest that factors beyond attachment—such as personality, values, and social context—may better explain sociosexuality.

These findings highlight the need for a broader, integrative approach to understanding adult relationships. Attachment may still play a role, but likely as one of many interacting influences. Future research should explore these dynamics using diverse samples and methods. In essence, adult sexual behavior is too complex to be explained by attachment style alone.

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