

Relation Between Maladaptive Attachment Styles in Adulthood Relationships and Global Self-Esteem

Anoushka Bhardwaj^{1*}

ABSTRACT

The present study will look at the link between maladaptive attachment styles in adult relationships and Global(overall) self-esteem. In this study, it is studied whether the type of attachment styles one has during mature relationships affects global self-esteem. This is an example of relational research. Purposive sampling was used to select 130 participants to constitute the research sample. The outcomes are as follows: Anxious attachment is significantly negatively correlated to global self-esteem, and as anxious attachment increases, so does self-esteem, avoidant attachment is non-significant but negatively correlated to global self-esteem, and as avoidant attachment increases, so does self-esteem. According on the current study's findings, we can further deduce that people with secure style of attachment in relationships also had low self-esteem, which could be due to extraneous variables such as age range, peer pressure, work-life balance, gender, and so on.

Keywords: Attachment Styles, Global Self-Esteem, Adulthood Relationships, Attachment, Attachment Theory

Bowlby and Ainsworth's findings served as the foundation for Attachment Theory (1991). Despite the fact that the theory's roots were laid earlier, the two writers' collaboration began in 1950. Bretherton (1992). Attachment Theory is influenced by developmental psychology, behavioural sciences, and psychoanalysis.

Attachment theory is concerned with the bond between a child and his or her mother. It also looks into the pandemonium that a youngster goes through when he or she is taken from or deprived of his or her mother or the caregiver who takes the mother's place. As a result, the philosophy's central idea is that having a strong bond with the mother or caregiver will benefit the individual's relationships.

Humans are wired to want to be with, trust, and communicate with others. During stressful situations, an individual's desire to solve the problem and return to a sense of security is demonstrated by an increased craving for connection. In other words, when a person is stressed, the desire to return to the mother's secure arms emerges. Attachment is the cornerstone of a child's early emotional development, but it is also a biological-social process

¹Amity University, Uttar Pradesh, India

*Corresponding Author

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meant to protect the newborn from environmental dangers. Attachment types emerge early in life and reflect a person's proclivity to form ties with others.

According to Bowlby (1969), Everyone is born with a certain attachment style. Attachment theorists believe that once a person's attachment style is judged to be secure or insecure, it remains that way for the rest of his or her life and impacts the person's life. Attachment styles, in other words, shape an individual's social and emotional connections (Ekşi, Sevim, & Kurt, 2016). Even if it does not last, the basic relationship type developed throughout childhood is kept.

For example, Ainsworth et al. (1978) classified three attachment styles: anxious/ambivalent, anxious/avoidant, and secure. In contrast, Hazan and Shaver (1987) distinguish between secure, avoidant, and anxious attachment. Attachments are safe, scared, obsessed, and dismissive, according to Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991). In this context, positive and negative self-models, as well as external models, may have different implications. According to Bartholomew and Horowitz, when the self-model and the others-model are both positive, there is internalised self-esteem, and the individual thinks he/she is deserving of affection and desires closeness and support from others (1991). When these are negative, the person seeks acceptance from others, avoids close relationships, and has low expectations for relationships. The four attachment types are as follows:

- Secure style of Attachment
- Ambivalent/Anxious style of Attachment
- Avoidant/Dismissive style of Attachment
- Disorganized style of Attachment

Secure style of attachment

Because they are sympathetic and capable of setting appropriate limitations, people who have secure attachments are much more confident, steady, and satisfied in their intimate relations. They may not mind being alone, but they thrive in deep, meaningful connections.

The impact of stable style of attachment

A consistent style of attachment demonstrates that you are confident and secure in your own skin, that you value your self-worth, and that in an intimate relationship, you can be yourself. You're at ease expressing your emotions, hopes, and needs. Your primary caregiver was most likely able to connect with you as a baby while successfully managing their own stress and calming and soothing you when you were disturbed. They always made you feel at ease and protected. They made you feel safe and comfortable on a constant basis, communicated with you via emotion, and responded to your shifting needs, allowing your nervous system to become "securely connected."

Attachment style that is ambivalent or anxiously preoccupied

Anxious-preoccupied, "anxious attachment" people are extremely dependent on others. People with this attachment style, as the names suggest, are typically apprehensive and uncertain, with low self-esteem. They seek emotional contact but are afraid of being rejected by others.

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The impact of ambivalent attachment type

Anxiously preoccupied people may have excess need for affection, which may bother others. Alternatively, you may be exhausted by worry over whether or not your sweetheart is cheating on you. You want to be close to others but struggle with trust and setting boundaries, which produces worry.

Your perceived worth is influenced by your role in a relationship and how you are treated. You may feel nervous or envious when you are apart from your spouse, and you may turn to controlling behaviour or be manipulative. Your sweetheart must continually reassure you and give you his or her whole attention. As an infant, your mom or primary caregiver's parenting style was most likely unpredictable, sometimes attentive and sensitive to your requirements and other times inaccessible or busy. This caused you to be apprehensive, and you needed reassurance in all following relationships.

Attachment style is avoidant-dismissive

Those who are avoidant-dismissive insecure have quite different attachment patterns than adults who are ambivalent or anxious-preoccupied. They avoid emotional connection with people rather than seeking it because they are afraid of being near them. They tend to be independent.

Avoidant attachment style impact

It may be tough to create emotional connection if you have an avoidant-style of attachment. Because you place such a high importance on your uniqueness and independence, intimacy and closeness in a love relationship make you feel uneasy, if not struggled. You are self-sufficient and do not require the assistance of others. An avoidant-dismissive attachment style is frequently the result of growing up with a parent who was absent or rejected.

Attachment style that is disorganized/disoriented

Extreme anxiety, which is typically the result of childhood trauma, neglect, or abuse, causes disorganized/disoriented attachment. Adults who have this type of attachment think they are undeserving of love, or genuine connection.

The impact of a disorganized attachment style

If you have a disturbed attachment style, both your relationships and your surroundings may feel threatening and hazardous since you have likely never mastered to self-soothe your emotions.

Causes of insecure attachment

- Even a caring, conscientious parent may fail to create a stable attachment bond with a newborn for a variety of reasons. Insecure attachment can be caused by a young or inexperienced mother with weak parenting skills.
- Because of loneliness, a lack of social support, or hormonal disorders, your caregiver grew sad, prompting them to withdraw from the caregiving role.
- The attachment process was disturbed by traumatic circumstances such as a serious illness or an accident.
- Poor nutrition, insufficient exercise, and refusal to address medical conditions are all examples of physical neglect.

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- Neglect or exploitation of one's feelings. Physical injury or violation can come from abuse, whether physical or sexual.

A person's overall impression of oneself is referred to as their global self-esteem. In other words, a person's sense of global self-esteem corresponds to their perception of themselves as a desirable and helpful human being. Global self-esteem may be both positive and bad.

Rationale

The present study assessed the link between maladaptive attachment styles in adult relationships and Global(overall) self-esteem. In this study, it is studied whether the type of attachment styles one has during mature relationships affects global self-esteem. According to attachment theory, our early experiences with caregivers build our internal attachment working models, which affect our subsequent relationships and mental well-being. In contrast, self-esteem is an important component of our self-concept and has a substantial influence on our mental health and functioning.

Previous research has linked attachment types to a variety of characteristics of psychological functioning, including self-esteem. The nature and strength of this link, however, remain unknown. Certain research have linked secure attachment to improved self-esteem.

According to the findings of this study, Attachment anxiety and global self-esteem have a significant negative association, which implies that higher levels of attachment anxiety are associated with lower levels of self-esteem. Similarly, there was a non-significant negative connection between attachment avoidance and global self-esteem, indicating that higher attachment avoidance levels were related with lower self-esteem levels. These findings support attachment theory and prior studies that showed insecure attachment is associated with poorer self-esteem.

Finally, this work contributes to the expanding corpus of data demonstrating the relationship between attachment styles and overall self-esteem. These findings have important implications for understanding the role of attachment in psychological well-being and developing therapies to improve healthy attachment and self-esteem.

METHODOLOGY

Aim

Understanding the relationship between maladaptive attachment styles in adulthood relationships and global self-esteem.

Objectives

1. Understanding the relation between maladaptive attachment styles –in adulthood relationships and the concept of global self-esteem.
2. To understand the types of attachment styles.
3. To specify what constitutes attachment style and how it develops.
4. To understand how adulthood relationships are affected by self-esteem.
5. To understand how attachment styles play a role in adulthood relationships.
6. To understand the concept of Self-esteem.
7. To understand how anxious and avoidant attachment styles affect a person's global self-esteem.

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Inclusion and Exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria

- Adults from the age range of 18-45
- Adults who are currently or have been in a romantic relationship.

Exclusion criteria

- People under 18 and above 45 years of age.
- People who have never been in a romantic relationship.

Research Design

The findings for this study, which looked at the link between maladaptive attachment styles in adulthood and global self-esteem, was collected during the winter semester of the 2022-2023 academic year. The study employed a Descriptive approach and included attachment type and global self-esteem assessments. The relational research design explores the relationship between two variables and then describes it using correlational analysis.

Hypotheses

- **Null Hypothesis-** Maladaptive styles of attachment in adulthood relationships and global self-esteem have no relationship.
- **Alternative Hypothesis:** Maladaptive styles of attachment in adulthood relationships and global self-esteem are related and influence each other.

Variables

- Attachment styles
- Global self-esteem

Tools used

1. **Rosenberg RSE (self-esteem scale)** - RSE is a standard 10-item scale for assessing self-worth and global self-esteem, both positive and negative elements of it. It was developed in 1965. It had been under revision for a long period before being amended in 2006.
2. **The Experience in Close Relationship Scale (ECR-S) Short Form-** It is a 12-item close relationship questionnaire that is a simplified and revised variant of the original Experiences in Close Relationship Scale. It assesses maladaptive attachment patterns such as anxious attachment and avoidant attachment and is based on Ainsworth's neonatal attachment types. It was established in 1998 and last updated in 2007.

Data Analysis

Pearson's correlation is a statistical technique for determining the magnitude and directional relationship of a linear relation between two variables. It computes the correlation coefficient, represented by the symbol r and ranging from -1 to 1. Pearson's correlation is a popular research tool for investigating the relationship between two variables and making predictions based on that relationship.

It is especially valuable when studying cause-and-effect interactions since it allows researchers to investigate the direction of the link between two variables. Pearson's correlation can also be used to evaluate the strength of a link between two variables in order

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to create models or make predictions. Overall, Pearson's correlation is a commonly used and powerful data analysis method that can provide valuable insights into variable interactions.

The Pearson correlation coefficient (abbreviated "r") is a numerical statistic that represents the strength and direction of a linear connection between two continuous variables. It is calculated by dividing the covariance of two variables by their standard deviations.

Reliability

- 1. Experiences in close relationship scale (ECR-SF)-** The scale's short form had two variables with high internal consistency, with coefficient alphas of .78 (Anxiety) and .84 (Depression) (Avoidance). The correlations between the Anxiety and Avoidance subscales were minor ($r = .19$), showing that these two measures reflected different levels of attachment.
- 2. Rosenberg Self-esteem scale-** Internal consistency was 0.77, while the Coefficient of Reproducibility was at least 0.90. Rosenberg, M. (personal correspondence, April 22, 1987). Independent studies on demographics such as parents, males over the age of 60, high school students, and government employees found alpha coefficients ranging from 0.72 to 0.87. (all fairly high). Test-retest reliability after two weeks was 0.85, and after seven months, it was 0.63. Silber and Tippett (1965); Shorkey and Whiteman (1965). (1965). (1978)

Validity

- 1. Experiences in close relationship scale (ECR-SF) -** Cronbach's alpha, a commonly used measure of dependability, was utilized to analyze the ECR-SF's internal consistency. The alpha coefficient for the anxiety subscale was .87, while the alpha coefficient for the avoidance subscale was .84, indicating that both subscales had strong internal consistency. The high alpha values for both subscales indicate that the scale items are highly related and have good internal consistency.
The considerable negative associations between ECR-SF anxiety and avoidance scores and measures of relationship satisfaction and emotional regulation support the scale's construct validity. The amplitude of the correlations ($r = -.50$, $r = -.44$, $r = -.42$, and $r = -.39$) suggests that the ECR-SF is a credible measure of attachment styles and that it is meaningfully related to other measures of relationship functioning.
- 2. Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale-** RSE has a high level of predictive validity. Cronbach's alpha, a commonly used measure of dependability, was utilized to analyze the RSES's internal consistency. A coefficient of .85 shows that the scale's elements are significantly related to one another and that the scale is internally consistent.
The construct validity of the RSES was assessed by comparing it to other depression and anxiety measures. The considerable negative relationships between RSES scores and depression and anxiety support the scale's construct validity. The size of the correlations ($r = -.50$ and $r = -.43$) suggests that the credible and valid.

RESULTS

Purposive sampling was used to choose 130 people for the study.

Table 2 displays the Pearson's correlation patterns between the scores on the two scales. Table 3 demonstrates a significant negative relationship between Attachment anxiety and Global self-esteem. There is no correlation between attachment avoidance and overall self-esteem.

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Table 1: Analysis of scores of both the scales

Scales	Sub-scales	Total (n=130)	Mean	SD
ECR-SF	Attachment Anxiety	3199	24.60	6.28
	Attachment Avoidance	2419	18.60	4.91
Rosenberg self-esteem scale	Global Self-esteem	1934	14.87	3.19

Table 2: Analysis of data using Pearson's correlation

Scales	t value	p-value	r value
Attachment Anxiety and Global Self-esteem	15.75	0.036	-0.1849
Attachment Avoidance and Global Self-esteem	7.26	0.359	-0.0817

Significant = $p < 0.05$

DISCUSSION

The current study's objective is to look at the link between maladaptive attachment styles in adult relationships and overall self-esteem. In this study, it is studied whether the type of attachment styles one has during mature relationships affects global self-esteem. This is an example of relational research. To generate the research sample, a total of 130 people were chosen via purposive sampling. The research was carried out as part of a research dissertation. The age range was 18-45.

Bowlby's research is the foundation of Attachment Theory. He believed that every person is born with an attachment style, which later serves as the foundation and template for developing new relationships. Ambivalent (anxious), secure, avoidant, and disordered are the four attachment styles. The current study solely looked at anxious and avoidant attachment types. A person's global self-esteem is defined as entire image of themselves, how they respect themselves as individuals, and how they value their own worth. The Rosenberg self-esteem scale was used to assess the Global self-esteem variable, and the Experiences in intimate relationships scale-short form was utilized to assess the attachment styles of participants in mature relationships.

According to the statistical results of 130 responses, 33 patients have insecure attachment styles, 31 have anxious attachment styles, and 2 have avoidant attachment styles. In contrast to anxious adults, avoidant-dismissive insecure adults who are so terrified of being close to others that they avoid emotional connection with them, people with an anxious attachment style are overly clingy. They would rather not rely on or be dependent on others.

Overall, the findings indicate that the subjects have a stable attachment style and a general sense of self-worth. According to the Rosenberg self-esteem scale, 49 people scored low, indicating that they have low self-esteem. Anxious attachment style was discovered in 13 patients with low self-esteem, and 2 subjects were found to have an Avoidant attachment style and 34 subjects had secure style of attachment, which could be the result of extraneous circumstances.

In Table 1, further analysis of scores has been done by calculating the total scores, mean and standard deviation.

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In Table 2, results are displayed after using Pearson's correlation method. To calculate the appropriate scores and result, the t-value, p-value, and r-value of the scores from both scales were taken out. After running the scores through the computer programme Graphpad, the results were displayed as follows -

The Pearson correlation test results show a significant negative link between X and Y, with attachment anxiety/anxious attachment style and global self-esteem correlation coefficient (-0.18) ($r(128) = .185, p = .035$). This implies that when anxious attachment grows, so does a person's self-esteem, and the sample results are statistically significant.

It was also shown that the Pearson correlation coefficient for avoidant attachment and global self-esteem (-0.08) shows a non-significant extremely slight inverse relationship between X and Y ($r(128) = .0817, p = .356$). This shows that, although avoidant attachment can be detrimental to self-esteem, the results are not significant enough to be generalized and accepted.

With this result, we rejected our null hypothesis and accepted our alternative hypothesis, which claimed that there is a link between attachment types and overall self-esteem as our results demonstrated that anxious style of attachment is significantly associated with low global self-esteem and as anxious attachment increases, self-esteem decreases, which shows negative correlation, while avoidant attachment is not significantly but negatively correlated to global self-esteem, stating that According to the current study's findings, respondents with secure style of attachment patterns in relationships also had low self-esteem, which could be due to extraneous variables such as age range, peer pressure, work-life balance, gender, and so on.

The result of the present research can be validated based on past research that has been conducted keeping attachment styles and self-esteem as variables for their study, as stated below-

A study was conducted to examine the relationship between adult romantic attachment types and global self-esteem. (1991, Bartholomew and Horowitz). (1979, Rosenberg) Questionnaires for self-report on attachment types, global self-esteem, and self-perceived competence in several areas of life. When compared to the fearful participants, the secure people exhibited greater self-esteem and average competency levels.

Another study looked at how different attachment system components affect self-esteem stability. The results showed a clear link between high attachment anxiety and low self-esteem. Attachment avoidance, on the other hand, was unrelated to self-esteem stability. These findings are consistent with the developmental and social-cognitive components of attachment anxiety. They also lend support to prior findings that apprehensive attachment moderates the impact of social input on self-evaluation. The discussion focuses on the theoretical and practical consequences of the findings.

Finally, research has consistently demonstrated that attachment styles are connected to self-esteem, with secure attachment associated with higher levels of self-esteem and insecure attachment (both anxious and avoidant) connected with poorer levels of self-esteem. According to the findings, those with insecure attachment may struggle with feelings of self-worth and confidence in relationships, leading to lower self-esteem. Understanding the role of attachment types in self-esteem development is crucial because it can affect therapies aimed

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at enhancing relationship functioning and boosting self-esteem. By recognizing and correcting insecure attachment patterns, therapists and counsellors may help individuals improve their sense of self-worth and develop more positive and meaningful relationships. More study is required to fully comprehend the complicated interaction between attachment patterns and self-esteem.

CONCLUSION

The current study began with a purpose, i.e. to investigate the association between maladaptive attachment styles in adult relationships and global self-esteem. In this study, it is studied whether the type of attachment styles one has during mature relationships affects global self-esteem. This is an example of relational research. To generate the research sample, a total of 130 people were chosen via purposive sampling. The research was carried out as part of a research dissertation.

In conclusion, past research has repeatedly shown that attachment styles influence self-esteem, Secure attachment is connected with higher levels of self-esteem, while insecure attachment (both anxious and avoidant) is connected with poorer levels of self-esteem. According to the study, people with insecure attachment may struggle with emotions of self-worth and confidence in relationships. Understanding the impact of attachment types in self-esteem development is critical because it can influence therapies targeted at raising self-esteem and improving relationship functioning. Therapists and counsellors can help individuals enhance their feeling of self-esteem and build more positive and meaningful relationships by identifying and addressing insecure attachment patterns.

Limitations

- 1. Participant characteristics-** Uncontrollable extraneous variables such as age range, peer pressure, work-life balance, gender, marital life, and so on may have an impact on the outcome of secure style of attachment in relationships, as 34 people who had low self-esteem according to the results, had a secure attachment style compared to only 13 people with anxious attachment style.
- 2. Limited generalizability of the findings owing to the narrow age range respondents -** Regardless of the fact that the age range was broad and set from 18 to 45, the average responses collected were from those aged 18 to 30, which could have influenced the results and so cannot be extrapolated to an older group.

Future Implications

- **Personal awareness:** Individuals who are aware of their attachment style can utilise this information to better understand their self-esteem and, if necessary, implement measures to improve their self-esteem.
- **Counselling and therapy:** This research can help mental health practitioners develop treatment strategies for clients who have poor self-esteem, including interventions that address attachment types.
- **Parenting and child development:** This study can help parents and caregivers better grasp the role of early attachment experiences in promoting good self-esteem development in children.
- **Relationship development:** Individuals who understand their own attachment style as well as the attachment styles of their love partners can use this information to better communication and build stronger, more rewarding relationships.

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- **Future research:** The present study can pave way for future research while guiding them to understand the association of attachment styles and self-esteem, leading to a better knowledge of the phenomena and potential therapies to address poor self-esteem.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interests.

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