

Exploring the Relationship between Childhood Neglect and Adult Attachment Style and Love Language Preferences

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study work is to examine the relationship between childhood neglect, adult attachment style and preferred love languages. There were two theories developed for this investigation. According to Hypothesis 1, those who were neglected as children will have an unstable attachment style. According to hypothesis number two, people with insecure attachment styles would gravitate toward love languages that provide comfort and approval. Three instruments were used in the study to collect data: the Love Language Scale by Chapman, the Adult Attachment Scale by Hazen and Shaver, and the Neglect Scale by Murray A. Straus. The participants ranged in age from eighteen to twenty-five college going graduate and post graduate students. Participants in the study completed the aforementioned questionnaires to determine their preferences for love language, adult attachment style, and childhood neglect. A correlational research design was used. To investigate the associations between the variables, statistical studies were performed using correlation coefficients. The results of this study showed that individuals who had undergone emotional childhood neglect showed a higher relationship with insecure attachment styles as compared to those who did not. The results also indicated that there is a relationship between adult attachment style and preferred love languages.

Keywords: Attachment Style, Love Language, Childhood Neglect, Relationship

Child neglect is a widespread and often unspoken problem that can have long-term effects on a person's mental health and relationships. Neglect is defined as the failure of a caregiver to provide a child's basic needs, including emotional and physical safety, love and support (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019). The consequences of neglect can be far-reaching and affect a person's ability to form healthy relationships and attachments in adulthood. The purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between childhood neglect and adult attachment style and love language preferences. One common type of maltreatment that occurs in childhood is neglect, which has been related to a number of detrimental consequences in adulthood, such as challenges in establishing and sustaining good relationships.

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The idea of attachment style has been extensively researched in regard to child development and adult relationships. It is derived from early relationships with primary caregivers. Emotionally dysregulated conduct, intimacy anxiety, and anxious-avoidant behavior are all signs of insecure attachment styles, which are frequently connected to childhood neglect. A person's attachment style can have a big impact on the type and quality of adult relationships, even romantic ones.

Neglect throughout childhood can also affect an individual's love languages, or how they express and accept love. Neglected adults may find it difficult to identify and express their feelings, which makes it difficult to establish and sustain emotionally satisfying relationships. Comprehending the correlation among attachment type, love languages, and childhood neglect can offer significant perspectives on the enduring consequences of neglect and guide approaches for mending and enhancing relationships.

The first attachment theory proposed by John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth suggests that a child's attachment is shaped by the quality of care a child receives from their primary caregiver, in style as an adult (Bowlby, 1969). Secure attachment is characterized by a sense of security and trust in relationships, while insecure attachment is characterized by anxiety, avoidance, or a combination of these. Neglect in childhood can significantly affect the development of a secure attachment style, leading to insecure attachment in adulthood. Research has shown that individuals who experienced neglect in childhood are more likely to display insecure attachment styles in adulthood (Cyr, Euser, Bakermans-Kranenburg, and Van IJzendoorn, 2010). Neglect can lead to a lack of trust and insecurity in relationships, making it difficult for individuals to form secure attachments. In addition, neglect can lead to a lack of emotional regulation skills, making it difficult for people to manage their emotions and build healthy relationships. The five love languages, a concept developed by Gary Chapman, suggests that people have different ways of expressing and expressing themselves, build different relationships, getting love (Chapman, 2015). These love languages include words of affirmation, quality time, receiving gifts, serving, and physical touch. Research has shown that people with insecure attachment may prefer certain love languages over others. People with avoidant attachment styles may prefer love languages like physical touch and quality time because these forms of expression allow them to maintain a sense of control, and independence, in their relationships (Davis and Carter, 2020). On the other hand, people with an anxious attachment style may prefer love languages such as reassurance and quality time because these expressions provide security and validation in their relationships (Davis and Carter, 2020).

LITERATURE REVIEWS

Hosch Cori, Sullivan Heather (2018) conducted a research on relationship between Childhood Trauma and Adult Attachment Style. A total of 148 graduate and undergraduate students answered the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire and the Experience in Close Relationships- Revised. The results showed that the more severe the emotional and physical abuse, the more anxious attachment was predicted.

Unger, J.A.M (2011) conducted a search on the relationship between child abuse and adult attachment style. The study hypothesized that specific types of child abuse would lead to specific types of insecure attachment styles in adulthood. A total of 552 undergraduate female students and 294 undergraduate male students completed a questionnaire on Child Abuse History, Adult Attachment Style and Self Esteem. The study also included a

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regression analysis, an ANCOVA'S and a bootstrapping analysis. The results showed that physical abuse was linked to attachment avoidance and psychological abuse was related to attachment anxiety.

Waldinger, R.J, Schulz H.S, Brasky, A.J et al. (2006) conducted a study to determine if insecure attachment is related to childhood trauma and somatization in adults. The data was collected from a sample of 101 couples using relationship scale questionnaire, symptom inventory, The Beck depression inventory and conflict tactics scale. The results found that childhood trauma was related to higher somatization and higher insecure attachment.

Tyolo, T.P(2020) conducted a study to examine the relationship between attachment style, love style and attachment behaviour in intimate relationships of university students. The information was gathered by basic random sampling methods. A total of 317 college students, ranging in age from 18 to 40, were chosen. Tools like the improved version of Steinberg's triangular love scale and experience in close relationships were used to collect the data. The findings demonstrated a favorable correlation between attachment behavior and love style.

Matova,K.S (2023) carried out research to investigate the relationship between preferred love language and attachment style. Data was gathered from 108 female participants, with an average age of 38, who were committed to a long-term relationship. The findings showed that while people with avoidant attachment styles were less likely to favor acts of service and receiving presents, those with secure attachment styles favored quality time, physical touch, and informative remarks. Those with an anxious attachment style expressed a stronger preference for spending time together and receiving gifts.

Avdibegovic, E and Brkic, M (2020). Childhood neglect causes and consequences. Reviewing articles and conducting meta-analyses about child neglect yielded the findings. The findings showed that child neglect has the same negative effects on a child's development and health as other forms of abuse. Early childhood neglect increases the risk of negative physiological, cognitive, emotional, and social outcomes later in life.

Maximo, S. I., & Carranza, J. S. (2016). Parental attachment and love language as determinants of resilience among graduating university students. Love language and parental bonding as predictors of resilience among university graduates

Jennifer S. Carranza and Sally I. Maximo Sage Open 6 (1), 2158244015622800, 2016. In a Philippine context, researchers looked at the impact of parental attachment and love language on the resilience of university graduates. It was discovered that having a stable bond and feeling loved by one's parents lead to greater resilience using the survey method (N = 843). Resilience was greatly influenced by the parental love languages of quality time, words of praise, and acts of service. These are the love languages that offer practical, inspirational, and emotional tools for fostering resilience. Although spending quality time was the most important factor in resilience, dads in particular need to have a stable bond, while verbal and physical support are also necessary.

METHODOLOGY

Objective: The objective of this study is

1. To examine the relationship between childhood neglect and adult attachment style.
2. Investigate the association between adult attachment style and love language preferences.

Hypothesis:

1. Individuals who have experienced childhood neglect will be more likely to exhibit insecure attachment style.
2. Individuals with insecure attachment styles prefer love language that focus on seeking validation and reassurance.

Participants

Participants for this research study were mainly graduate and post graduate students aged between 18 to 25 years.

Description of tools

1. **The Neglect Scale by Murray A. Straus:** One measure of neglectful behaviors in parent-child relationships is the Neglect Scale, created by Murray A. Straus. It seeks to illustrate the degree to which parents fall short of meeting the fundamental emotional, physical, and developmental requirements of their children. The scale is made up of a number of components that evaluate many facets of neglect, including insufficient monitoring, failing to give essential medical care, emotional insensitivity, and inadequate stimulation. Based on how often the assertions occur or how much they agree with them, respondents rank each item.
2. **Adult Attachment Scale by Hazen and Shaver (1987):** One well-known instrument for measuring adult attachment types is the Adult Attachment Scale, which was created by Hazan and Shaver. It gauges the three main attachment types—secure, anxious-ambivalent, and avoidant—and is based on Bowlby's attachment theory. The scale usually comprises of a set of statements or questions that respondents answer to reveal their attitudes, feelings, and actions in intimate partnerships. Researchers and experts can learn more about an individual's attachment style and how it might affect their relationships and general well-being by examining the replies. The impact of attachment styles on a variety of adult life characteristics, including romantic relationships, parenting, and mental health, has been extensively studied in research and clinical settings using the Adult Attachment Scale.
3. **Love Language Scale by Chapman:** Gary Chapman's Love Language Scale is a useful tool for figuring out how we show and receive love in relationships. It is predicated on the notion that each of us has a unique "love language" that we prefer to use to express and receive love. The five main components of the Love Language Scale are physical touch, quality time, receiving gifts, acts of service, and words of affirmation. By using the scale, you can find out which love language most describes you and improve the way you express love to your significant other or other loved ones.

Procedure: The sample of 136 individuals were informed about the aim of the study, their consent was taken before they provided their answers to all the three questionnaires - The Neglect Scale, Adult Attachment Scale and Love Language Scale.

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Statistical Analysis

A correlational research design was prepared, where data was analysed using Pearson's Product moment of correlation.

RESULTS

According to the results there is a significant relationship between childhood neglect and Adult attachment style. The results also showed a significant relationship between different types of attachment style and their preferred love languages.

1. It was hypothesized that individuals who have experienced childhood neglect will be more likely to exhibit insecure attachment styles during adulthood. The secure attachment style showed positive weak correlation with emotional neglect indicating that individuals with secure attachment style experience less emotional neglect. Anxious attachment style showed negative correlation with all the neglect scales indicating that individuals who have experienced more neglect in childhood developed anxious attachment style later in life.
2. It was hypothesized that individuals with insecure attachment style like anxious and dependent will have higher preference for love language that focus on seeking validation like words of affirmation. The table 2 provide with the correlation between participants preferred love languages and attachment styles. The results indicated that there is a weak positive correlation between anxiety and words of affirmation showing that individuals who have anxious attachment style preferred words of affirmation as their love language. However, the relationship is not very strong. Secure attachment style showed higher positive correlation with physical touch and acts of services.

Table 1 Shows relationship between subdivisions of childhood neglect and attachment styles.

	Emotional neglect	Cognitive neglect	Supervision neglect	Physical neglect	Secure	Anxious	Dependent
Emotional neglect	1						
Cognitive neglect	0.74	1					
Supervision neglect	0.30	0.39	1				
Physical neglect	0.45	0.52	0.44	1			
Secure	0.007	-0.04	-0.09	0.007	1		
Anxious	-0.36	-0.21	-0.27	-0.17	0.10	1	
Dependent	0.15	0.02	-0.01	-0.01	0.30	-0.16	1

Table 2 Showing relationship between attachment styles and preferred love languages

	Secure	Anxious	Dependent	Words of Affirmation	Quality Time	Receiving Gifts	Acts of Services	Physical Touch
secure	1							
Anxious	0.10	1						
Dependent	0.30	-0.16	1					
words of affirmation	-0.08	0.04	-0.03	1				
Quality time	-0.05	-0.13	-0.02	-0.16	1			
Receiving gifts	0.04	-0.05	0.13	0.04	-0.23	1		

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	Secure	Anxious	Dependent	Words of Affirmation	Quality Time	Receiving Gifts	Acts of Services	Physical Touch
Acts of services	-0.06	-0.09	-0.08	0.05	0.02	-0.20	1	
physical touch	0.07	0.01	0.00	-0.10	-0.08	-0.08	-0.06	1

DISCUSSION

The findings showed a substantial inverse association between secure attachment style, subdimensions of childhood neglect, physical and emotional neglect. Additionally, the results showed a strong positive correlation between subdimensions of childhood neglect, insecure attachment types (dependent and anxious attachment styles), and physical and emotional neglect. According to these findings, individuals who showed comparatively high degrees of emotional and physical neglect as children tended to reflect insecure attachment styles.

Table 2 displays data that sheds light on the distribution of the participants' favored attachment patterns and love languages. The findings point to a somewhat varying link between chosen love language and attachment style. The majority of people with a stable attachment style enjoyed receiving gifts. People with an anxious attachment style also showed a higher preference for words of affirmation. Dependent attachment style individuals showed the lowest preference for all love languages.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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