

## Impact of Attachment Styles on Academic Performance and Self-Esteem

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### ABSTRACT

The current study explores an impact of adult attachment styles on self-esteem and academic performance among young adults aged 18-25. A quantitative research design was adopted using adult attachment scale, academic performance scale and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, with data collected from 200 participants. Pearson correlation and t-test was carried out to study the relationships among variables and gender-based differences. Results showed no notable correlation between academic performance and any other variables, including self-esteem, avoidant, secure, and anxious attachment styles. Also, crucial negative association was found among avoidant and secure attachment styles and a notable positive association between avoidant and anxious attachment styles ( $r = 0.341, p < .001$ ). The results for self-esteem showed no significant difference between males ( $M = 22.49, SD = 2.85$ ) and females ( $M = 23.29, SD = 3.09$ );  $t(178) = -1.78, p = .076$ . Although females reported slightly higher self-esteem on average, this difference did not reach statistical significance. In contrast, academic performance was found to be significantly higher in females ( $M = 27.84, SD = 5.12$ ) than in males ( $M = 26.19, SD = 5.80$ ).

**Keywords:** Attachment Styles, Academic Performance, Self-Esteem

**Attachment:** It refers to an intimate bond between two individuals, or an emotional bond between an infant and his/her primary caregiver.

- This bond provides sense of closeness and security.
- It also refers to the tendency to develop deep intimate relations with others in infancy and the tendency to seek and form emotional supportive social relationships in adulthood.
- Reciprocal interactions strengthen emotional bond between an infant and his/her caregiver.
- Type of attachment an individual has with his/her primary caregivers affects the way he/she perceives himself/herself and the world around.
- Early relationships with caregivers can affect the manner in which people perceive themselves, their abilities, and their relations with other individuals.
- Early attachment also has a deep influence on future relationships and individual's emotional well-being (Thompson, 2000). Studies showed that securely attached

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children develop into adults who are more capable of establishing healthy and trusting relationships. They are more likely to have high self-esteem and good emotional regulation (Cooke et al 2013).

- Conversely, children with insecure attachment can have difficulty in relationships or have difficulty with regulating emotions.

### ATTACHMENT STYLES

There are different attachment styles: -

- 1. Secure Style:** Such individuals are comfortable in forming intimate connections with other individuals. They often feel comfortable in expressing their feelings and needs. They have high self-esteem.
  - They feel content in presence of others, openly seek support and comfort from their partner, but do not get overly anxious when their partner is apart.
  - Securely attached individuals generally have better academic performance compared to insecure attachment styles, as individuals with secure attachment have positive self-esteem, better focus, and higher motivation to learn.
  - Securely attached individuals are more likely to have primary caregivers who were responsive to the child's needs and made the child feel safe and secure and communicated effectively.
- 2. Anxious Style:** Such individuals experience a fear of abandonment and show clinginess in their relationships. They often seek for re-assurance in their relationships. They have low self-esteem. Individuals having this attachment style often have a high need to be loved and feel secure in their relationships.
  - They are very sensitive and are often there to meet their partner's needs. They often seek attention, love and support from their partner. If their partner/loved ones do not meet their needs, they might show clinginess in their behaviour or might also blame themselves of not being worthy of love. They often need constant reassurance that they are loved and worthy.
- 3. Avoidant Attachment Style:** Such individuals often do not feel comfortable being vulnerable in their relationships. They often avoid emotional intimacy in relationships. They often do not express their emotions with their loved ones/partner. Such individuals often do not depend on anyone and may often seem as self-confident individuals. They often have low self-esteem. They have fear of getting hurt. They may often think that if they will show their vulnerable side, others might not understand and they will get hurt.

### Self-Esteem

- It is overall sense of person's worth or his/her value.
- It is also referred to as personalised evaluation of person's own value.
- It can also be affected by one's experiences/bond in his/her romantic relationships. Academic achievements and workplace experiences can also affect one's self-esteem.

### ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

- Grade point average, test scores and educational aspirations and achievement.
- Studies done by Jha, K. et al (2024), Sechi, C. et al (2020), Arnett, J.J. (2016), Vahedi, S. & Sis-Yari, M. (2016) & Doinita, E., N. (2015) showed that individuals

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with secure attachment style have high level of self-esteem. It also showed that individuals with insecure attachment style have low levels of self-esteem.

- Study done by VD, V. & Sekhar, A. (2024) showed a positive relationship between resilience and academic performance.
- A study done by Kurland, & Seigel (2020) showed that individuals with secure attachment perform well academically.
- Majimbo, E. (2017) showed a weak positive relationship between secure attachment style and academic performance.

**Aim:** To study the impact of adult attachment style on academic performance and self-esteem.

### *Objectives*

- To explore impact of secure attachment style on academic performance and self-esteem in young adults.
- To explore impact of insecure attachment styles on academic performance and self-esteem in young adults.

### *Hypothesis*

- **H1:** Secure attachment style will have significant impact on academic performance and self-esteem among young adults.
- **H2:** Anxious attachment style will have significant impact on academic performance and self-esteem among young adults.
- **H3:** Avoidant attachment style will have significant impact on academic performance and self-esteem among young adults.
- **H4:** There will be a significant impact of attachment styles on academic performance and self-esteem in males and females.

**Research Design:** The current study employed quantitative research design to investigate impact of attachment styles on academic performance and self-esteem among young adults. For this study, random sampling was used to collect data from 200 individuals between 18-25 years. Data was collected through both, google forms and questionnaires.

**Sample:** A total number of 200 participants, including both males and females.

### **DESCRIPTION OF THE TOOLS USED**

**1. Adult Attachment Scale:** This scale was built upon previous work by A. Hazen and Shaver (1987) and Levy & Davis (1988). The developers utilized the original three primary descriptions (Hazen and Shaver 1987) and divided into 18 items to create the scale. This 18-item scale includes items scored on 5-point Likert scale. The three attachment styles referred to as “Secure,” “Anxious” & “Avoidant” are what this scale measures. They are:

- Secure- Depend and Close high subscale scores and low Anxiety subscale score.
- Anxious- This subscale high score and moderate score on Close and Depend subscale.
- Avoidant- Close, Depend and Anxiety subscales low scores.
- Reliability and Validity: Collins and Read (1990) obtained Cronbach’s alpha coefficients for Close of .69, Depend of .75 and for Anxiety of .72. The test-

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retest correlations were .68 for Close, for Depend .71 and for Anxiety .52 for period of 2 months.

2. **Academic Performance Scale:** This scale was formed by Carson Birchmeier, Emily Grattan, Sarah Hornbacher, and Christopher Gregory. It includes 8 questions scored on 5-point Likert scale. Minimum score is “0” and maximum is “40”. Higher the score indicates better academic performance. This scale has an internal consistency of .89 and a test-retest reliability of .85.
3. **Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale:** It is a 10-item scale that has been widely used to measure self-esteem. It includes a total of 10-items, scored on 4-point Likert scale, in which “1” denotes “Strongly Agree”, “2” denotes "Agree", “3” denotes "Disagree”, “4” denotes "Strongly Disagree”.
  - This scale has an internal consistency of .92. Test-retest reliability shows correlations of .85 and .88 over a period of 2 weeks. This scale shows concurrent, predictive and construct validity.

### Procedure

The data was collected using Adult Attachment Scale, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and Academic Performance Scale. The total sample size was 200. The age group was between 18-25 years. The questionnaires were distributed to 200 young adults, both males and females. The data was collected both, online by google forms and offline.

### Statistical Analysis

T-test and correlational analysis.

## RESULTS

*Table 1: Descriptive Statistics*

| Variable       | Mean  | SD    | Min | Max | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|----------------|-------|-------|-----|-----|----------|----------|
| Self-Esteem    | 22.89 | 2.994 | 16  | 40  | 0.993    | 5.810    |
| Avoidant Style | 17.83 | 3.729 | 10  | 29  | 0.253    | -0.011   |
| Secure Style   | 19.46 | 3.346 | 12  | 28  | 0.170    | -0.391   |
| Anxious Style  | 17.19 | 4.613 | 6   | 28  | 0.095    | -0.579   |
| Academic Perf  | 27.02 | 5.514 | 12  | 39  | -0.250   | -0.223   |

*Note.* Academic Perf, Academic Performance.

### Pearson Correlation Analysis

#### CORRELATION

| Variable      | 1    | 2      | 3      | 4    | 5 |
|---------------|------|--------|--------|------|---|
| AcademicPerf  | -    |        |        |      |   |
| SelfEsteem    | -.07 | -      |        |      |   |
| AvoidantStyle | -.08 | .235** | -      |      |   |
| SecureStyle   | .07  | .07    | -.37** | -    |   |
| AnxiousStyle  | -.04 | -.09   | -.34** | -.15 | - |

\*\**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

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### Independent Sample T-tests

| Variable                      | t     | df      | p (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% CI Lower | 95% CI Upper |
|-------------------------------|-------|---------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------------|--------------|--------------|
| <b>Self-Esteem</b>            | -1.78 | 178     | .076         | -0.791          | 0.444                 | -1.667       | 0.084        |
| (Equal variances not assumed) | -1.79 | 177.401 | .076         | -0.791          | 0.443                 | -1.666       | 0.084        |
| <b>Academic Performance</b>   | -2.02 | 178     | .045         | -1.644          | 0.815                 | -3.253       | -0.036       |
| (Equal variances not assumed) | -2.01 | 174.216 | .046         | -1.644          | 0.816                 | -3.255       | -0.033       |

### DISCUSSION

This study aimed to explore the impact of attachment styles- secure, anxious, and avoidant attachment styles on academic performance and self-esteem among young adults. In addition, the study examined gender-based differences across these variables. Drawing on quantitative methods, including Pearson correlation and independent sample t-tests, the analysis yielded given findings. Notably, the study did not find statistically significant associations between attachment styles and either academic performance or self-esteem. However, a significant gender difference was identified in academic performance, with female participants outperforming their male counterparts. In academic contexts, secure attachment has been associated with enhanced cognitive engagement, persistence, and coping mechanisms.

Contrary to established literature, this study did not find significant associations between insecure attachment styles (avoidant or anxious) and maladaptive academic behaviours. Although prior research links avoidant attachment to emotional detachment and poor collaboration, and anxious attachment to fear of failure and low self-efficacy, these patterns were not replicated. This discrepancy may be due to contextual or cultural factors, such as educational systems, parental expectations, or peer norms, which can buffer or alter attachment manifestations. Similarly, no significant relationship was observed between attachment style and self-esteem. While securely attached individuals typically report higher self-esteem due to positive internal working models, insecurely attached individuals often struggle with self-worth.

### CONCLUSION

While the current study did not find significant relationships between attachment styles and either academic performance or self-esteem, it nonetheless contributes to the growing discourse on the psychosocial development of young adults. The significant gender difference in academic performance reiterates the need to consider gender as a moderating variable. The divergence from established findings suggests that cultural and contextual nuances must be taken into account when applying attachment theory across populations. Future research should seek to deepen and diversify the analytical lens through longitudinal, qualitative, and cross-cultural methodologies, thereby enhancing our understanding of the complex interplay between attachment and life outcomes in young adulthood.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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