

Attachment-Related Orientations and Relationship Satisfaction Among Young Adults

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Abstract: Romantic relationships are shaped not only by the circumstances partners share but also by how they experience closeness, trust, dependence, and the possibility of rejection. This study examined associations between attachment-related dimensions and relationship satisfaction among young adults. A quantitative, cross-sectional correlational design was used. The source dataset contained 110 submitted survey rows; after excluding non-consenting responses and applying relationship eligibility and completeness criteria, 77 responses were included in the analysis. Participants completed demographic questions, 18 attachment-related items, and seven relationship-satisfaction items. Descriptive statistics, Shapiro–Wilk tests, Pearson correlations, and Spearman rank correlations were examined. Mean scores on the five-point scale were 3.30 for closeness, 2.93 for dependence, 2.73 for attachment anxiety, and 3.80 for relationship satisfaction. Satisfaction was positively associated with closeness ($r = .395, p < .001$) and dependence ($r = .443, p < .001$), and negatively associated with attachment anxiety ($r = -.475, p < .001$). Spearman analyses showed the same direction of associations. The findings indicate that, in this sample, comfort with emotional closeness and relying on a partner tended to accompany greater satisfaction, whereas greater attachment-related worry tended to accompany lower satisfaction. The results are correlational and should not be interpreted as evidence of causation. The instrument versions and scoring rules require confirmation against the original survey documentation before submission.

Keywords: adult attachment, relationship satisfaction, young adults, closeness, attachment anxiety

1. Introduction

Young adulthood often brings important changes in intimacy, commitment, and expectations about romantic partnership. For many people, a relationship can offer companionship and emotional support; it can also bring uncertainty about trust, independence, and whether a partner will remain available during difficult moments. People differ in how comfortable they feel with emotional closeness and in how they respond when a relationship feels uncertain. These differences provide a useful starting point for examining relationship satisfaction.

Attachment theory proposes that experiences in close relationships contribute to expectations about the availability of others and the safety of depending on them (Bowlby, 1982). Ainsworth et al. (1978) established foundational work on attachment in infancy, while later researchers applied attachment concepts to adult romantic relationships. Hazan and Shaver (1987) described romantic love through an attachment framework, and Collins and Read (1990) examined adult attachment dimensions including closeness, dependence, and anxiety. These dimensions offer a way to describe individual differences without assuming that a person's relationship behaviour is fixed or that one pattern determines the outcome of a relationship.

Relationship satisfaction is a person's overall evaluation of how fulfilling and positive a relationship feels. It may reflect whether needs are met, whether expectations have been fulfilled, the perceived quality of the relationship, and the balance of positive and difficult experiences. Hendrick (1988) developed a brief measure of global relationship satisfaction, illustrating the value of assessing an overall evaluation rather than relying on a single aspect of a relationship. Satisfaction, however, is unlikely to depend on attachment alone; communication, conflict, stress, compatibility, and each partner's behaviour may also matter.

The present study examined whether closeness, dependence, and attachment anxiety were associated with relationship satisfaction in the available survey sample. Three hypotheses were considered: closeness would be significantly associated with satisfaction; dependence would be significantly associated with satisfaction; and attachment anxiety would be significantly associated with satisfaction. Given the correlational design, the aim was to identify associations rather than establish causal effects.

2. Literature Survey

Attachment theory began with Bowlby's account of the importance of enduring relationships with caregivers and the expectations that develop around availability and support (Bowlby, 1982). Ainsworth and colleagues' observational work further described differences in attachment behaviour, providing a foundation for later research on close relationships (Ainsworth et al., 1978).

Researchers subsequently applied attachment concepts to adult romantic relationships. Hazan and Shaver (1987) proposed that romantic love can be understood partly through attachment processes. Collins and Read (1990) examined adult attachment dimensions, including comfort with closeness, dependence, and anxiety, and considered their relationship with relationship quality. These dimensions are relevant to the present study because they describe how people experience intimacy, reliance on a partner, and uncertainty in close relationships.

Relationship satisfaction is a broad evaluation of how positively a person experiences a relationship. Hendrick (1988) developed a brief measure intended to assess global relationship satisfaction. Later reviews of adult romantic attachment have discussed how attachment-related expectations and emotion-regulation patterns may be relevant to relationship experiences (Fraley & Shaver, 2000;

Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016). The literature provides a theoretical basis for expecting attachment-related dimensions to be associated with satisfaction, while also recognising that relationship outcomes are influenced by multiple personal and contextual factors.

3. Problem Definition

The research problem addressed in this study is whether attachment-related dimensions—comfort with closeness, comfort with dependence, and attachment anxiety—are associated with relationship satisfaction among young adults currently in a romantic relationship. The study examines the direction and strength of these associations in the available survey sample; it does not test causal effects.

A quantitative, cross-sectional correlational survey design was used. The dataset contained 110 submitted rows. Four responses were excluded because consent was not provided. Among consenting respondents, 84 indicated that they were currently in a romantic relationship. After applying the requirement that the relationship had lasted at least one month and retaining only records complete on the study items, 77 responses were included in the main analysis. Sampling was based on voluntary online responses and is therefore best described as non-probability convenience/voluntary-response sampling.

The eligible sample included 76 women (98.7%) and one man (1.3%). Seventy-two participants reported being married (93.5%), three reported dating (3.9%), and two reported being engaged (2.6%). For 75 participants with plausible age entries, the mean age was 28.61 years ($SD = 3.85$; recorded range 20–40). The sample also included participants with different educational, occupational, and residential backgrounds. Because the sample was overwhelmingly female and mostly married, the results should not be assumed to represent young adults generally.

4. Methodology / Approach

The questionnaire included demographic and relationship-background questions, 18 attachment-related statements, and seven relationship-satisfaction items. The attachment items addressed comfort with closeness, willingness to depend on others, and worries about a partner's affection or availability. The satisfaction items concerned need fulfilment, overall satisfaction, comparative relationship quality, regret, expectations, love, and relationship problems. Items used a five-point response format.

Dimension scores were calculated for closeness, dependence, and attachment anxiety. Relationship satisfaction was calculated as the average of seven items, with the negatively worded items about regret and relationship problems reverse-scored. The working scoring procedure also reverse-scored negatively worded attachment items where indicated by the analysis notes. However, the source dataset did not identify the exact formal instrument versions or provide an official scoring manual. Accordingly, the measures are described here by their item content and analysed dimensions; the instrument names, item assignments, and reverse-scoring key must be checked

against the original survey documentation before journal submission.

4.1 Procedure and Ethical Considerations

The online survey included a participation statement, demographic questions, attachment-related items, relationship-satisfaction items, and an optional open-ended comment field. Responses were screened for consent, current relationship status, relationship duration, and completeness. Non-consenting entries and responses that did not meet the eligibility criteria were excluded. The supplied dataset did not contain names. The survey stated that participation was voluntary and responses would be used for academic research and kept confidential. No formal ethics approval is claimed in this manuscript because documentation of such approval was not included in the material supplied.

4.2 Statistical Analysis

Frequencies and percentages were used to describe categorical variables. Means, standard deviations, and observed ranges summarised the main scores. Shapiro–Wilk tests were used to assess univariate normality. Pearson product–moment correlations were calculated to examine the associations between each attachment dimension and relationship satisfaction. Because the satisfaction score departed from normality, Spearman rank correlations were also examined as a sensitivity analysis. All tests were two-tailed, with $p < .05$ treated as the conventional threshold for statistical significance. The numerical results below are those reported in the supplied dissertation and should be verified against the original data and scoring key before submission.

5. Results & Discussion

5.1 Descriptive Statistics

The mean relationship-satisfaction score was 3.80 on the five-point scale ($SD = 0.87$). Mean closeness was 3.30 ($SD = 0.68$), mean dependence was 2.93 ($SD = 0.83$), and mean attachment anxiety was 2.73 ($SD = 0.96$). These values describe the responses under the working scoring approach and are not clinical categories.

Variable	n	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Closeness	77	3.30	0.68	1.83	5.00
Dependence	77	2.93	0.83	1.17	5.00
Attachment anxiety	77	2.73	0.96	1.00	5.00
Relationship satisfaction	77	3.80	0.87	1.57	5.00

5.2 Normality and Correlation Analyses

Shapiro–Wilk tests did not indicate significant departures from normality for closeness, $W = .976$, $p = .147$; dependence, $W = .977$, $p = .177$; or attachment anxiety, $W = .973$, $p = .103$. Relationship satisfaction showed evidence of departure from normality, $W = .949$, $p = .004$. Rank-based correlations were therefore considered alongside Pearson correlations.

Attachment dimension	Pearson r	p	Spearman ρ	p
Closeness	.395	< .001	.380	< .001
Dependence	.443	< .001	.401	< .001
Attachment anxiety	-.475	< .001	-.425	< .001

Closeness was positively associated with relationship satisfaction, $r = .395$, $p < .001$. Participants reporting greater comfort with closeness tended to report higher satisfaction. Dependence was also positively associated with satisfaction, $r = .443$, $p < .001$, indicating that greater comfort with relying on a partner accompanied higher satisfaction scores in this sample. Attachment anxiety was negatively associated with satisfaction, $r = -.475$, $p < .001$; greater worry about a partner's affection or availability accompanied lower satisfaction scores.

The Spearman results showed the same directions: closeness, $\rho = .380$; dependence, $\rho = .401$; and attachment anxiety, $\rho = -.425$ (all $p < .001$). The consistency across the two correlation methods supports the stability of the observed pattern within this dataset. All three hypotheses concerning associations were supported by statistically significant results, although the design does not establish causal direction.

5.3 Discussion

The study examined whether attachment-related orientations were associated with relationship satisfaction among young adults. The main pattern was consistent across Pearson and Spearman analyses: closeness and dependence were positively associated with satisfaction, whereas attachment anxiety was negatively associated with satisfaction. In practical terms, participants who felt more comfortable with emotional closeness and relying on a partner tended to evaluate their relationship more positively. Participants reporting more worry about being loved or about a partner's continued availability tended to report lower satisfaction.

The positive association between closeness and satisfaction fits the broad attachment perspective that emotional intimacy and the ability to seek support can contribute to a sense of security. When closeness feels manageable, a person may find it easier to share concerns and accept support. This interpretation remains tentative because communication and support-seeking were not directly tested in the present analysis. The results show an association, not the process through which it might occur.

The dependence finding requires careful interpretation. In this context, the dimension concerns comfort with relying on others; it should not be equated with excessive dependence or the loss of autonomy. Healthy relationships can allow both partners to maintain independence while also asking one another for help. The observed positive association may reflect the value of feeling that support is available when needed, but the present data cannot distinguish among possible explanations.

The negative association between attachment anxiety and satisfaction is broadly consistent with attachment theory and the literature on adult close relationships (Collins & Read, 1990; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016). Persistent concerns

about rejection or a partner's feelings may make ambiguous interactions more difficult to interpret and may increase the need for reassurance. Still, an anxiety score should not be used to label a person or predict the fate of a relationship. Relationship experiences are reciprocal and shaped by context, partner behaviour, stress, and communication.

Several limitations constrain interpretation. The sample was small, obtained through voluntary online participation, overwhelmingly female, and predominantly married. It cannot represent all young adults or all forms of romantic relationships. The cross-sectional design does not show whether attachment-related orientations influence satisfaction, satisfaction influences how attachment concerns are experienced, or both are related to other factors. Self-report responses may also reflect current mood, differing interpretations of items, recall, or social desirability. Finally, the exact versions of the attachment and satisfaction measures and their official scoring rules were not documented in the dataset. This is a material limitation and should be resolved before publication by checking the original questionnaire and scoring manual.

Future research could use a larger and more diverse sample, document validated instruments and scoring procedures in full, and examine variables such as communication quality, conflict resolution, perceived support, relationship duration, and external stress. Longitudinal designs would help establish whether changes in attachment-related security accompany changes in satisfaction over time. Analysis of open-ended responses may also add participants' own descriptions of trust, closeness, and relationship difficulties.

6. Conclusion

In this sample of 77 eligible responses, closeness and dependence were positively associated with relationship satisfaction, while attachment anxiety was negatively associated with satisfaction. The findings suggest that comfort with emotional intimacy and partner support, together with fewer worries about a partner's availability, may accompany a more positive evaluation of a romantic relationship. These findings are consistent with an attachment-based understanding of close relationships but do not demonstrate causation. Before submission, the author should verify the instrument versions, item groupings, reverse-scoring rules, demographic coding, and ethical documentation against the original study records.

7. Future Scope

Future studies should recruit larger and more diverse samples and document the exact instrument names, versions, item assignments, response anchors, and scoring rules. Longitudinal designs could clarify whether attachment-related orientations and relationship satisfaction change together over time. Further work could examine communication quality, conflict resolution, perceived social support, relationship duration, and external stress. Qualitative analysis of open-ended responses may also help explain how participants understand trust, closeness, and relationship difficulties.

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