

Attachment Styles, Dyadic Coping, and Relationship Satisfaction in Married Individuals

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The current research examined the relationship between Attachment styles, Dyadic Coping, and Relationship Satisfaction in married individuals. The study hypothesized a positive correlation between secure attachment and relationship satisfaction, and a negative correlation between anxious and avoidant attachment styles and relationship satisfaction. The research also predicted a role for dyadic coping in relationship satisfaction and assumed that females would report higher relationship satisfaction than males. The sample of the study consisted of N= 195 married individuals (n=92 males and n=103 females). Three measures, including the Adult Attachment Scale (AAS), Dyadic Coping Inventory (DCI), and Couple Satisfaction Index (CSI), were administered. The results showed that secure attachment style was positively correlated with relationship satisfaction, and anxious attachment style was negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction. Regression analysis indicated that dyadic coping was a positive predictor of relationship satisfaction. Moreover, the study highlighted that males are more satisfied in their relationships than females. New investigators will benefit from the current study by assessing the grounds and reasons behind attachment styles, dyadic coping, and relationship satisfaction.

Keywords: married individuals, attachment styles, dyadic coping, relationship satisfaction

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Introduction

Humans, by nature, are social creatures who need others for their survival. According to Maslow's theory of the hierarchy of needs, love and belonging are basic human needs, which must be fulfilled in order to attain social stability and tranquility. For the psychological and biological well-being, it is important to develop close relationships and attachments with

others (Ozturk & Mutlu, 2010). Mental representations about significant relationships predict how the person as an adult will deal with stressful situations using different coping strategies according to their attachment style. Evidence indicates that coping has an impact on marital satisfaction and reduces marital conflict because the significance of partner support is undeniably important in a relationship, and it leads to marital satisfaction.

According to Shaver and Mikulincer (2010), Attachment refers to the emotional bond people form with significant others, which provide a sense of security and support healthy development. Originally, Attachment theory was given by Bowlby, according to which early life experiences of children with their caregivers are responsible for attachment styles shown later in life. The interaction experiences in childhood, as adults (Firestone, 2013), impact how we engage in our relationships (particularly intimate and/or romantic relationships), because relationships made through attachments continue throughout life. On the basis of the manner in which adults portray their romantic relationships (married couples), three attachment styles can also be distinguished in adults, which were previously identified in children. Individuals who exhibit Secure Attachment Style feel comforted, protected, and satisfied with their relationships. According to Hazan and Shaver (1987), about 67% of adults show secure relationships with their partners. The securely attached individuals cope with stress by seeking help from their partners and by adopting constructive strategies like support-seeking, mutual collaboration, and problem-solving behaviors (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2006).

Adults with Anxious Attachment Style desire intimacy in a more demanding and compulsive way, but are also extremely fearful of rejection that their partner might leave them (Pietromonaco & Barrett, 2000). Around 19% of adults exhibit anxious-resistant behavior (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Individuals with anxious attachment show clingy, controlling, and attention-seeking behaviors while facing a stressful situation (Shaver et al., 2005). Individuals with Avoidant Attachment Style show a lack of trust in their partners in terms of support and security, and strive to be autonomous by isolating themselves from their partners. According to the research, 25% of the population showed avoidant behavior. People with an avoidant type of attachment style are expected to use negative coping strategies like drinking alcohol, smoking (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003).

Individual Attachment Styles have a great influence on the growth of relationships, maintenance, possibility of dispute, and overall relationship satisfaction in married adults (Siegel et al., 2018). A study

was conducted to investigate adult attachment and marital satisfaction as evidence for dyadic configuration on a sample of 333 married couples (Banse, 2004). The results indicated that three factors influence marital satisfaction, namely, the person's own attachment style, the attachment style possessed by his/her partner, and the relationship between them. Moreover, securely attached individuals show high marital satisfaction, and insecurely attached individuals (anxious and avoidant) show low marital satisfaction, but whether the positive or negative effects of secure and insecure attachments will be enhanced or depressed will be predicted by the type of attachment shown by the partner.

Having more awareness of coping with everyday problems is crucial because relationships are not only affected by chronic illness but also by the daily life stressful events. According to a nationwide European study, daily life worries or pressures were considered as one of the major causes behind divorce (Bodenmann et al., 2007). Internal stress, such as conflicts between partners, impacts the relational stability as well as the individuals' well-being, as empirical evidence proposes that stress of routine hassles results in an unfavorable impact on the growth, stability, and preservation of intimate relations (Karney et al., 2005). Although the experience of stress is definite, the important thing is that couples should learn to handle or cope with the stressful events as a defensive mechanism against relationship decline (Neff & Karney, 2004). In order to reduce marital stress, Dyadic coping is a substantial interpersonal practice in which stress signals of one spouse are perceived, interpreted, decoded, and responded to by the other spouse with some form of coping technique, either by ignoring the stress communication or by acting on it (Bodenmann, 2005).

Due to its association with relationship quality and well-being, dyadic coping has appeared as a shielding factor (Badr et al., 2010). Dyadic coping comprises general communication and joint problem-solving, giving and taking emotional support, and facing the adversities of life as a couple rather than as two separate individuals. Dyadic coping is considered a relationship maintenance mechanism, a process by which partners mutually cope with difficulties of life to retain long-term and well-functioning relationships. Sierau & Herzberg (2012) examined in a study how a person and their dyadic coping efforts are linked to fulfillment in relationships. The study's goal was to examine partners concurrently while taking the autonomous character of pair data into account. Furthermore, it was investigated whether dyadic coping modulates the impact of individual managing attempts and whether spouses' dyadic

coping has a reciprocal impact. The study's sample includes information from two hundred and forty German couples. According to the findings of the study, relationship satisfaction is strongly predicted by dyadic coping as compared to individual coping, and it also modulates the coping efforts of a person. The study also emphasized the significance of dyadic coping by concentrating on how couples deal together.

Interpersonal relationship analysis is becoming more important because it is found in all aspects of human life and has a huge impact on how people live their lives. Relationship satisfaction is one of the most central themes in everyday life, as well as one of the most comprehensive concepts for evaluating the degree of happiness and stability in a relationship (Rouhani & Manavipour, 2010). In any relationship, interacting people influence one another's experiences to cope with stressors. An indigenous study suggested that there was higher emotional intelligence in secure attachment style, and individuals with higher Emotional Intelligence stated significantly higher marital satisfaction (Najm, 2005). Although dyadic or mutual coping with stressors will take effort and compassion, it will also lead to healthy, long-term, and satisfying relationships in the future. Research on Emotional stability, intimacy, and dyadic coping and its relationship with marital satisfaction among love and arranged married couples revealed that individuals who use positive dyadic coping strategies experience high marital satisfaction, while those who use negative dyadic coping strategies face lower marital satisfaction (Iqbal & Safdar, 2014). People exhibit more optimism about life when they are satisfied with their relationship (Srivastava et al., 2006). Similarly, marriages that are strong and healthy are linked to better mental and physical well-being (Guerrero et al., 2011).

Rationale

The significance of partner support is undeniably important in a relationship because when people believe that their spouse understands them, they appear to enjoy greater relationship satisfaction. People exhibit more optimism about life when they are satisfied with their relationship (Srivastava et al., 2006). In a relationship, sometimes couples go through difficult times that leave them with excessive stress and anxiety. How partners behave in these situations depends upon the type of attachment styles they exhibit, and by using different coping strategies that either have positive or negative effects on the relationship. The poor coping with external stress gives rise to dissatisfaction and relationship decline, which in turn increases the chances of divorce (Tegegne et al., 2015) and has

negative impacts on children. To prevent the deleterious effects of stress on the relationship, it is important for both partners to cope mutually. The current study aims to explore which types of attachment styles and dyadic coping approaches can be used to achieve fulfillment and satisfaction in relations. Previous studies conducted on western samples have highlighted the impact of different variables (Trust, conflict resolution, and communication skills) on couple satisfaction (Canary et al., 2002; Makhdoom & Malik, 2019). A literature gap was found in the study of the simultaneous impact of attachment styles and dyadic coping on relationship satisfaction, specifically in Asian culture. Moreover, limited work has been done to find out gender differences in relationship satisfaction in terms of attachment styles and dyadic coping. This study will provide awareness to married adults regarding the impact of their attachment styles and dyadic coping techniques on relationship satisfaction. Furthermore, people will learn which attachment style and dyadic coping strategy is extremely helpful in achieving greater marital satisfaction.

Objectives

The objective of the study was to examine the influence of attachment styles and dyadic coping on satisfaction in a relationship. Moreover, it aimed to examine gender differences in relationship satisfaction.

Hypothesis

1. There is likely to be a relationship between attachment style and relationship satisfaction.
2. There is likely to be a predictive role of dyadic coping on relationship satisfaction.
3. Females are more likely to be satisfied in a relationship than males.

Method

Research Design

Correlational (Cross-sectional) research was carried out in this study.

Sample

To collect data, a total of N=195 married individuals were approached, of whom n=92 were male and n=103 were female. The age range of participants was 20-60 years, which included young adults and middle-aged adults. The sampling technique used to draw the sample from the population was non-probability convenience sampling.

Table 1*General Demographic Characteristics of the Participants (N=195)*

Variables	<i>f</i> (%)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
Age	195(100)	33.12(7.59)
Gender		
Male	92(47.20)	
Female	103(52.80)	
Education		
Matriculation	8(4.10)	
Undergraduate	53(27.20)	
Post-graduate	134(68.70)	
Living Status		
Rural	65(33.30)	
Urban	130(66.70)	
Socioeconomic Status		
Low	2(1.10)	
Middle	174(89.20)	
High	19(9.70)	
Family System		
Joint	124(63.60)	
Nuclear	71(36.40)	
Marriage Type		
Arrange	155(79.50)	
Love	40(20.50)	
Marriage Duration	195(100)	7.36(7.48)
Employment Status		
Unemployed	75(38.53)	
Part-time job	21(10.84)	
Full-time job	99(50.83)	

Note: *f*=frequency, %=percentage, *M*=Mean, *S.D*=Standard Deviation

Measures

Demographic Information

Participant's demographic information was obtained through online questionnaires. They were asked about their gender, age, education, living status, socioeconomic status, family system, marriage type, marriage duration, employment status, and number of children.

Adult Attachment Scale (AAS)

Collins and Read (1990) developed this instrument. The questionnaire comprises 18 items, and it was designed to measure adult attachment style. The degree of correspondence to each prototype is ranked from strongly disagree to strongly agree on a 5-point Likert scale. Item nos. 3, 4, 7, 13, 14, 17 represented secure attachment style; items of anxious attachment style were 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and items of avoidant attachment style were 1, 2, 5, 15, 16, 18.

Dyadic Coping Inventory (DCI)

This scale was created by Bodenmann in 2008. The designed measure was composed of 37 items that focused on perceived or hypothetical communication and coping between partners that occurs in a stressful situation. The 5-point Likert scale consisted of 1 (very rarely) to 5 (very often). Psychometric evaluation of this measure identified moderate to high level internal consistency of subscales of DCI (α range .71 and .92) (Bodenmann, 2008).

The Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI)

Funk and Rogge developed this scale in 2007. This 32-item scale was designed to measure a person's relationship satisfaction. A shorter 16-item or 4-item version of this scale can also be used. This study used the 16-item version to measure relationship satisfaction. The CSI-16 consists of different kinds of response scales, which include ordinal and Likert scales. Items like 'Overall, how repeatedly do you think that things between you and your spouse are going fine?' are included in this measure. The total score is obtained by adding all of the responses, with a range of 0 to 81. CSI-16 Cronbach's alpha coefficient value is 0.98 (Funk & Rogge, 2007).

Procedure

To collect the data, participants were informed shortly about the objective of the present research, and permission was obtained. It was guaranteed that the contribution of participants was on a voluntary basis, and their responses would be kept anonymous. They were given the right to remove themselves from the research at any stage. Data was collected via an online survey. A maximum of 20-25 minutes was required to fill the questionnaire. The survey form was composed of information about demographics as well as the standardized measures related to variables in research. APA guidelines were strictly followed, and all ethical considerations were also taken into consideration. Any queries or difficulties related to the questionnaire were resolved by providing them with proper directions.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using SPSS software. To calculate descriptive statistics and reliability (Cronbach's Alpha) of the measures, SPSS was used. In order to find the relationship among variables, a correlation analysis was carried out. Independent Samples t-test and Regression analysis were done to determine the gender differences and the predictive role of dyadic coping, respectively.

Results

The present research was conducted with the aim of examining the relationship between attachment styles, dyadic coping, and relationship satisfaction among married individuals. Another objective was to investigate the predictive role of dyadic coping on relationship satisfaction, and the gender differences in relationship satisfaction in terms of attachment styles and dyadic coping. For this purpose, Pearson product-moment correlation, Independent Sample t-test, and Multiple Regression were used for the analysis of data.

Table 2
Correlation between Attachment Styles, Dyadic Coping, and Relationship Satisfaction (N=195)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1 AS	—				
2 SEC	—	—			
3 ANX	—	.13	—		
4 AVO	—	.23**	.36**	—	
5 DC	.10	.16*	-.03	.18*	—
6 RS	-.05	.14*	-.14*	-.02	.63**

Note: p value <.05*, p value <.01**, AS=Attachment Styles, SEC= Secure Attachment Style, ANX=Anxious Attachment Style, AVO=Avoidant Attachment Style, DC=Dyadic Coping, RS=Relationship Satisfaction

Table 2 shows a correlation between attachment styles, dyadic coping, and relationship satisfaction. The results clearly indicated that secure attachment style was significantly and positively correlated with dyadic coping and relationship satisfaction. Additionally, it was discovered that relationship satisfaction and anxious attachment style were significantly (though weakly) and negatively linked. Dyadic coping and avoidant attachment type were revealed to be significantly and positively associated. Furthermore, a strong positive correlation between dyadic coping and relationship satisfaction was discovered. These results validate the first and second hypotheses.

Table 3

Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Relationship Satisfaction among Married Individuals through Dyadic Coping and Attachment Styles (N=195)

Predictors	Relationship Satisfaction		
	B	S.E	β
Constant	24.65	6.46	
Secure	.19	.25	.04
Dyadic Coping	.28	.02	.62***
R^2 (.39)			
F (2, 192) = 63.80***			

Note: p value, <.001***, B= Unstandardized Regression Coefficient, β = Standardized Regression Coefficient, S.E= Standard Error

Multiple regression analysis revealed that dyadic coping was a significant positive predictor of relationship satisfaction ($\beta = .62$, $p < .001$), as indicated in Table 3. The regression model was statistically significant, indicating that the predictors collectively contributed to explaining variance in relationship satisfaction. These findings support the study's second hypothesis.

Table 4

Independent Samples T-test Measuring Gender Differences in Relationship Satisfaction (N=195)

Variables	Male (N=92)	Female (N=103)	t(df)	p	95% CI	
	M(SD)	M(SD)			LL	UL
Relationship satisfaction	66.64(9.11)	63.85(8.37)	-2.06(193)	.04	-5.06	-.12

Note. M=mean, SD=standard deviation, CI=confidence interval, p =significance level, DF=degree of freedom, LL=lower limit, UL=upper limit.

Table 4 shows the significant difference between males and females on the Relationship satisfaction scale. These results indicate significant gender differences in terms of Relationship satisfaction. Males scored higher ($M=66.64$) on relationship satisfaction as compared to females ($M=63.85$). These results are contradictory to the fourth hypothesis of the research.

Discussion

The purpose of the current study was to explore the connections between married individuals' attachment styles, dyadic coping, and relationship satisfaction, and whether dyadic coping and attachment have an effect on the relationship satisfaction of married individuals.

The first hypothesis of the research investigated the positive relationship between secure attachment style and relationship satisfaction. Secure attachment style leads to an increase in relationship satisfaction, and individuals with secure attachment show higher satisfaction than individuals with other attachment styles. Consistent with this hypothesis, attachment styles have been shown to influence relationship functioning and satisfaction (Siegel et al., 2018), and Banse (2004) found that individuals with secure attachment reported greater marital satisfaction than those with insecure attachment styles.

The second hypothesis was about the negative role of anxious and avoidant attachment styles in relationship satisfaction. Anxious attachment style leads to a decrease in relationship satisfaction in married individuals. An anxious attachment style of a person negatively impacts the interpersonal relationships of a couple, which subsequently leads to marital dissatisfaction (Mohammadi et al., 2016). A significant correlation was found (Table 2) between anxious attachment style and a non-significant correlation between relationship satisfaction and avoidant attachment style. It was also studied that attachment anxiety predicted marital dissatisfaction in clinically depressed couples seeking therapy (Mondor et al., 2011). However, findings of this study indicated a non-significant relationship between avoidant attachment style and relationship satisfaction. In a cultural context, factors affecting relationship satisfaction are different for both males and females (such as in-laws relationship and sexual satisfaction is important for males, while, for females, understanding and communication are important) (Ayub, 2012). In accordance with this, a study conducted in Pakistani culture revealed that female avoidance does not have any impact on males' relationship satisfaction (Iqbal, 2013), which supports the findings of this research.

The third hypothesis of the present study was that dyadic coping is likely to have a predictive effect on married people's relationship satisfaction. Dyadic coping strongly predicts relationship satisfaction as opposed to personal coping, and it also acts as a mediator for personal coping efforts (Sierau & Herzberg, 2012). Additionally, marital satisfaction is higher for those who employ positive dyadic coping techniques than for those who use negative dyadic coping strategies (Iqbal

& Safdar, 2014). The results clearly indicated (Table 3) that relationship satisfaction was found to be strongly and favorably predicted by dyadic coping thus proving the hypothesis. According to the present study, dyadic coping or mutual coping of couples with marital stress has an immense impact on relationship satisfaction as compared to Attachment styles in married individuals. Whatever the attachment style is, the main thing that matters in relationship satisfaction is the mutual understanding or coping with the stressful events because empirical evidence proposed that stress of routine hassles has an unfavorable effect on the development, stability, and maintenance of close relationships (Karney et al., 2005).

The fourth hypothesis was that females are likely to have more relationship satisfaction than males. The results of the current study indicated (Table 4) a significant relation between gender and relationship satisfaction, but males reported more satisfaction in their relationships than females. Thus, rejecting the hypothesis. During this period of transition from a conventional to a contemporary society, women experience a more difficult situation and stress due to role conflicts (Rafatjah, 2011). Because of their hard and stressful jobs, women are more sensitive to the strain from role disparities. Previous research has shown that married males reported more marital satisfaction than married women (Mickelson et al., 2006). Husbands reject their wives' efforts to share child care and housework more evenly, while wives are typically dissatisfied with the division of labor in their marriages (Dempsey, 2000). This unequal division of labor is linked to decreased marital satisfaction (Grote & Clarke, 2001).

Conclusion

The present research established that secure attachment style is positively and anxious attachment style is negatively linked to relationship satisfaction. While avoidant attachment did not have any effect on relationship satisfaction. The study concluded that dyadic coping is a better predictor of relationship satisfaction as compared to attachment styles in married individuals. In addition, when it came to dyadic coping and attachment styles, men demonstrated greater relationship satisfaction than women. By emphasizing the impact of dyadic coping and attachment styles on relationship satisfaction, this study contributes to the body of literature.

Limitations

The limitations of the study were that the sample size was limited. Secondly, there are many other psychological (personal stress, mood) and environmental (marital conflicts, COVID-19, length of questionnaire) factors that could not be controlled and could have an impact on the results.

And lastly, due to COVID-19, online data was collected, which might have impacted the results.

Suggestions

Other factors such as personality, interpersonal communication, and temperament should also be considered in future studies, with respect to relationship satisfaction. Future studies can also focus on the importance of attachment styles throughout adulthood and how they may differ in different types of relationships. Moreover, the effectiveness of various dyadic coping strategies and their impact on relationships could be studied to help couples. Improved methods, such as qualitative data, interviews, and focus group discussions, could be used in order to understand the additional factors that impact relationship satisfaction. And a longitudinal study could be conducted to follow the attachment styles of an individual from childhood to adulthood.

Implications

The present study has drawn attention to the importance of mutual coping among partners and to improving the coping strategies used in relationship maintenance. Future workshops could be conducted to help couples find the dyadic coping strategies that work best for them. Conflict resolution and mutual coping training sessions can be conducted to help people deal with marital stress. Couple and family therapists can give better counselling to couples after understanding their attachment processes. New investigators will benefit from the current study in the future by assessing the grounds and reasons behind attachment styles, dyadic coping, and relationship satisfaction.

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