

## ATTACHMENT STYLE IN FAMILIES: A META-ANALYSIS

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### Abstract

Previous studies have shown that attachment style in the family affects the relationship satisfaction in couples. Nevertheless, the correlation between attachment style and relationship satisfaction showed varying results. The meta-analysis aims to see how the consistency of the correlation between avoidance attachment style, anxiety attachment style, and relationship satisfaction. The study used were 22 studies with 5796 subjects. The results of the meta-analysis showed that avoidance attachment style and anxiety attachment styles negatively correlated with the satisfaction of relationships in a couple. Avoidance attachment style had negative correlations were moderate ( $r = -0.402$ ) refers to a 95% confidence interval, limits of acceptance are between  $-0.663 < r < -0.141$ , so the correlation coefficient of  $-0.402$  is within the limits of acceptance. That is, a significant negative correlation between avoidance attachment style and relationship satisfaction is acceptable. In the style of anxiety attachment, a negative correlation is a low level ( $r = -0.278$ ). Referring to the 95% confidence interval, limits of acceptance are between  $-0.591 < r < 0.035$ , so the correlation coefficient of  $-0.278$  is within the limits of acceptance. That is, a significant negative correlation between anxiety attachment style and relationship satisfaction is acceptable. The difference correlation values between avoidance attachment style and anxiety attachment styles as predictors of relationship satisfaction because of differences in regulatory strategy in establishing a relationship with a partner.

**Keywords:** Psychology, Attachment Style, Relationship Satisfaction

### INTRODUCTION

The term attachment was originally proposed by John Bowlby, a psychologist from Britain in 1958. The first to write a term Bowlby attachment of the relationship between the child and the infant and primary caregiver emphasized separation anxiety. Stickiness is described as a strong emotional bond between caregivers and babies. Before coming up with a theory about stickiness, the first person to point out about mother-baby relations was Melanie Klein with the object relations theory in 1932. Klein focused on revealing the lives of infants and children and their relationships with mothers. He stressed that in the first 4-6 months after birth as a very important time in life. He emphasizes his theory on the baby's mental life and believes the way the baby to overcome his environment form a pattern in adulthood. The process also affects his ability to love others (Feist, 2006). After Bowlby, Mary Ainsworth and her colleagues, through research, also developed attachments (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). Ainsworth research results about the child's behavior during the absence of the mother and son reunited shows that there are three types of attachment identified: secure or safe, anxiety and avoidant (Ainsworth et al., 1978).

Ainsworth research was later developed by Hazan and Shaver (1987) who suggested that the attachment model can be applied to adult relationships. The three dimensions of attachment can also be applied to relationships in adulthood, so that there is a transfer from parents to peers and romantic partners as adults (Fraley & Davis, 1997). On the other hand, Bartholomew (1990) also put forward his views on two dimensions of adult attachment (adherence to adulthood). He argues that there are two independent dimensions of attachment, namely, the image of self (self-image) and the image of the other (another image). He then developed four styles namely: secure, dismissing, preoccupied, and fear. Various measures of adulthood adherence have been developed following one of two theoretical frameworks (for example, Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Collins & Read, 1990; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Simpson, 1990). In order to integrate various different approaches, Brennan, Clark, and Shaver (1998) performed a factor analysis on attachment measurement that had been used previously. Their findings support two dimensions of adult attachment. Anxiety and coherency to the avoidance are two common factors underlying all item attachments.

Previous studies identified that adult attachments as strong predictors of the quality of romantic relationships (eg, Butzer & Campbell, 2008; Cann, Norman, Welbourne, & Calhoun, 2008; Collins & Read, 1990; Feeney, 1999; Simpson, 1990 in Li & Chan, 2012). Collins and Read (1990) state that in general, individuals with avoidant attachment styles or anxiety in romantic partners are characterized by low relationship satisfaction and high average to separate; contrary to this, individuals who have low scores in both attachment styles are characterized by individuals who have secure or secure attachments and are more successful in their relationships. This shows that the attachment force is insecure (anxiety and avoidance attachment style) associated with negative manner to the satisfaction of the relation.

The satisfaction of relationships is basically the key to measuring the quality of romantic relationships. Most of the early research on adulthood attachment styles and the quality of relationships focused on satisfaction in romantic relationships. Specifically, the study Hazan and Shaver (1987) found that individuals who have an insecure attachment on his partner would fail to develop positive relationships because they were too anxious or avoidance. Individuals with an anxious attachment tend to feel too dependent on the romantic relationship and tend to be too sensitive, and afraid that their partner will not be present when they need it. Meanwhile, individual with a high avoidance attachment styles tend to have a low relationship satisfaction because they are not bound by the relation that exists and rejects the intimacy and immediacy (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003; 2005). Similar to attachment in childhood, adulthood is the basis of individual understanding and expectations about relationships and directs their social interactions (Fraley & Shaver, 2000; Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Thus, adulthood adherence is believed to have a strong impact on relationship satisfaction.

This study aimed to examine the correlation between avoidance and anxiety attachment style with relationship satisfaction. Most studies indicate a negative correlation, but in fact, there are also studies that show a positive correlation. The results of Chung and Choi's study (2014) show that avoidance style has a negative correlation to relationship satisfaction compared

to anxiety attachment style. Another study, Crespo, Davide, Costa, & Fletcher (2008) found that anxiety attachment style has a positive correlation to the relationship quality, while avoidance attachment style has a negative correlation.

In addition, several publications also show different levels and strengths of negative correlation. Therefore, it is necessary to synthesize various studies to see the consistency of the relationship between avoidance attachment style and anxiety attachment style with relationship satisfaction. Rubin (in Hunter & Schmit, 2004) suggests that the purpose of the meta-analysis is to estimate the level of relationships of the studies that have been done. Meta-analysis can also convince researchers more accurate and credible conclusions that can be used as a reference for other primary research (Roshental & Di Matteo, 2001).

## **METHOD**

This study was carried out with the following procedure:

1. Problem formulation: there are variations in the results of primary studies regarding the correlation of the relationship between avoidance and anxiety attachment styles with relationship satisfaction.
2. Collecting data from primary studies: Data collection in this study is done by tracing journal manuscripts on the internet. The search for various journals is accessed using several journal providers such as EBSCO, SAGE Publication, ProQuest, Springer link, Science Direct, JSTOR, research gate, and Google Scholar. The keywords used are attachment, attachment style, adult attachment, adult attachment style, romantic relationships, relationship quality, relationship satisfaction, marital satisfaction, relationship satisfaction. Based on the search results using the keywords above, 104 journal papers were published which were published through scientific journals, between 2000 and 2016, having information on the number of subjects (N) and correlation values (r) of avoidance attachment styles and attachment forces anxiety. Based on the criteria, 17 journal manuscripts containing 22 studies examined the relationship between attachment style and relationship satisfaction to be used for this meta-analysis.
3. Data analysis and interpretation: According to Hunter-Schmidt (2004), there are eleven artifacts that can be tested in a meta-analysis, but only two artifacts will be corrected in this meta-analysis. There are artifacts examined are a.) sampling error correction, and b.) measurement error correction.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Characteristics of the Research Sample**

The research samples studied in the meta-analysis study have characteristics as listed in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Research sample characteristic

<b>No.</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Region</b>
1	Mohamad Aminpour, Mohamad Mamsharifi, Saadi Bayazidi, Mamand Ahmadzadeh	2016	96	Community (young married couples)	Iran
2	Mohamad Aminpour,	2016	96	Community (	Iran

	Mohamad Mamsharifi, Saadi Bayazidi, Mamand Ahmadzadeh			young married women)	
3	Farideh Dokaneheei Fard and Sima Sehhat	2015	250	Student (married women)	Iran
4	Mohammad Ali Besharat, Nader Naghshineh, Pooyesh Ganji & Fahime Tahalaeyan	2014	688	Student (married couples)	Iran
5	M.Graca Pereira, Ebru Taysi, Fatih Orcan, Frank Fincham	2014	345	Student	Southeastern United States
6	Kaisook Chung and Eunsil Choi	2014	208	Young mother	South Korea
7	Myung-Sun Chung	2014	208	Community (young married couples)	South Korea
8	Shanhong Luo	2014	395	Community (married couples)	USA
9	Man Yee Ho, Sylvia Xiaohua Chen, Michael Harris Bond, Chin Ming Hui, Clare Chan, Michael Friedman	2012	143	Student (in a relationship)	Hong Kong
10	Man Yee Ho, Sylvia Xiaohua Chen, Michael Harris Bond, Chin Ming Hui, Clare Chan, Michael Friedman	2012	202	Student (in a relationship)	USA
11	Benoit Fournier, Audrey Brassard, and Phillip R. Shaver	2011	55	Male counseling client	Canada
12	Onur Ozmen dan Gokhan Atik	2010	204	Community (married couples)	Turkey
13	Sharon G. Horne and Wendy J. Biss	2009	150	Lesbians (cohabiting couples)	USA and Canada
14	Bethany Butzer and Lorne Campbell (Study 1)	2008	58	Community (a married man)	Canada
15	Bethany Butzer and Lorne Campbell (Study 2)	2008	58	Community (married women)	Canada
16	Carla Crespo, Isabel N. Davide, M.Emilia Costa, and Garth J.O Fletcher	2008	150	Student (a married man)	Portugal
17	Carla Crespo, Isabel N. Davide, M.Emilia Costa, and Garth J.O Fletcher	2008	150	Student (married women)	Portugal
18	Gurit E. Birnbaum	2007	96	Women (in a relationship)	Israel
19	Deborah Davis, Phillip R. Shaver, Keith F.Widaman., Michael L.Vernon., William C. Follete., and Kendra Beitz	2006	1989	Community (heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual,	Online community

uncategorized)					
20	Steven A. Meyers and Sarah A. Landsberger	2002	73	Married women	USA
21	Regina L. Scott and James V. Cordova	2002	91	Community(a married man)	Illinois, USA
22	Rogina L.Scott and James V. Cordova	2002	91	Community (married women)	Illinois, USA

## Data Analysis

### *Correction of Sampling Errors (Bare Bone Meta-Analysis)*

According to Hunter and Schmidt (2004), if population correlation is assumed to be constant among several studies, the best estimate of correlation is not a simple average of the correlation of several studies but the weighted average for each correlation which is divided by the number of samples in the study. The summary of the results of the *bare bone meta-analysis* for the two stickiness styles can be seen in Table 2. The calculations presented below to use the *avoidance* attachment force data.

**Table 2.** Bare Bone Meta-Analysis results summary

		<b>Avoidant</b>	<b>Anxiety</b>
Average correlation	population	-0,402	-0,278
Population variance	correlation	0,021	0,029
Sampling error variance		0,003	0,003
Actual correlation variance	population	0,018	0,026
Standard deviation of population correlation		0,134	0,161
Trust interval		-0,664 < r < -0,139	-0,593 < r < 0,037
Impact of sampling errors		12,97 %	11,17 %

### *Measurement of Correction*

Correction of artifacts other than sampling errors is measurement error correction. The error of measurement in avoidance and anxiety attachment style with relationship satisfaction is done in this study. The summary results compute the measurement material for the stickiness style avoidance and anxiety can be seen in table 3. The calculations presented below only use avoidance attachment style data.

**Table 3.** Summary of measurement error results

	<b>Avoidance</b>	<b>Anxiety</b>
Combined mean	0, 0,878692	0,87649
Population correlation	- 0,457072	-0,316934
Amount of variance coefficient	0,003133	0,002683
Varian by mistake measurement	0, 000505	0,000207

Varian the real correlation	0,022638	0,033317
Trust interval	-0,751969< $\rho$ <0,162174	-
measurement impact	2,445%	0,674693< $\rho$ <0,040825 0,71 %

In this meta-analysis, the correction of two artifacts that sampling error and measurement error in the variable *avoidance* attachment style and attachment style relationship *anxiety* with satisfaction. On sampling error, it was found that population correlation with *avoidance* attachment style satisfaction of relations after correction with a sample size of -0.402; correlation variance is 0.021, with a standard deviation of 0.134. Refers to 95% confidence intervals with acceptance limits (-0,664 <  $\check{r}$  < -0,139). Thus, the calculation result of  $\check{r}$  is -0.402 at the acceptance limit. Based on Davis criteria (in Cortices, et al., 2011), the correlation value of -0.402 indicates a moderate *effect size*. That is, there is a negative relationship in the moderate level between *avoidance* attachment style and relationship satisfaction.

The impact of sample picking error of 12.97% indicates that the bias is an error because the sampling error is small. This could happen because of the heterogeneity of the sample used by the study. As can be seen in the sample characteristics table, this study involved research subjects ranging from students, counseling clients to the general public from various countries and various sexual orientations such as heterosexuals, lesbians, bisexuals, and others.

In the variable attachment style *anxiety* with relationship satisfaction, population correlation after correction with the number of samples shows a value of -- 0.278; correlation variance of 0.029, with a standard deviation of 0.161. Referring to the 95% confidence interval with the acceptance limit of -0.593 <  $\check{r}$  < 0.037, the result of the calculation of -0.278 shows low *effect size*. (Davis in Kortlik, et al., 2011). That is, there is a negative relationship in the low level between *anxiety* attachment style and relationship satisfaction. The impact of sample picking errors was 11.17 % in *anxiety* attachment style smaller compared to *avoidance* attachment style with relationship satisfaction.

At *anxiety* attachment style and relationship satisfaction, the true population correlation after correction by the measurement in Alahan case of -0.3169, real correlation variance of 0.031 with a standard deviation of 0.182. Referring to acceptance between -0.67 <  $\rho$  < 0.04; and the value of  $\rho$  is -0,3169, then this value is included in the interval area for acceptance. The impact of measurement error is 0.712 %. This result is smaller than the sampling error in the attachment force *avoidance*. The small percentage at this suggests the possibility of bias due to errors in measurement error is very small. This shows that in general the researcher's use of measuring instruments with the same construct.

In addition to the results above, the meta-analysis in this study also showed real population correlation after being corrected by measurement errors in *avoidance* attachment force of -0.45707, the actual correlation variance was 0.022638 with a standard deviation of 0.150. Referring to the acceptance limit between -0.751969 <  $\rho$  < 0.162174; and the value of  $\rho$  is -0.45707, then this value is included in the interval boundary area to be received and the impact of measurement error is 2.445%. This

small percentage indicates the possibility of error bias because the measurement error is small.

The results of this meta-analysis also support previous researchers who found that *avoidance* attachment style had a higher correlation than the attachment style of *anxiety* to the satisfaction of heterosexual partner relationships (Li & Chan, 2012). This is also in accordance with the research of Shaver and Mikulincer (2003) about the differences in individual regulatory strategies related to differences in attachment style. Although both *avoidance* attachment and *anxiety* styles will harm the satisfaction of the relation, *avoidance* attachment styles have a greater effect than *anxiety* attachment styles.

Someone with *anxiety* attachment style to show fear to be abandoned and filled with doubt about the ability of himself in love with someone else. Fear and doubt cause the individual to be alert to signs of dislike or betrayal of his partner. He will be easily panicked and angry if he does not feel any attraction, commitment or real support from his partner (Fournier, Brassard & Shaver, 2011). Although individuals with *anxiety* attachment styles are too sensitive to signs of rejection, they respect relationships and can feel inner happiness relations when they are convinced of the existence of their partners (Mikulincer et al., 2003). In contrast to individuals who have *anxiety* attachment styles, individuals with *avoidance* attachment styles are afraid to get too close to their partners and always try to maintain romantic relationships and not make romantic relations an important part of their lives. Individuals with *avoidance* attachment styles feel more about discontent in romantic relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

In the integrative model of the adherence system dynamics in adulthood, proposed by Shaver and Mikulincer (2003), it appears that the anxiety attachment style adopts a hyperactivation strategy. Hyperactivation strategy associated with its coping stress, and in individuals with anxiety attachment style, they will try hard, forcing himself to attract the attention of his sticky figure in order to gain a sense of security. Impact, the strategy by individuals with anxiety attachment style will impact the conflict is high, whereas, in individuals with the avoidance attachment style adopting a deactivation strategy, the individual restrains himself from approaching his sticky figure, he strives to overcome his own stress. The impact, there is a greater and detrimental effect on relations because the strategy used decreases the support of the couple. In other words, individuals who have an avoidance attachment style would be difficult to understand and solve a problem with their partner because many people avoid and ignore the problem. This thing certainly makes dissatisfaction in relations becomes more elevated compared to individuals with anxiety attachment styles, who are open even though they are aggressive in expressing problems.

## CONCLUSION

The results of the meta-analysis provide support for previous studies regarding the existence of a significant negative relationship between avoidance attachment style and anxiety attachment style with relationship satisfaction. The avoidance attachment style has a moderate negative correlation level ( $r = -0.402$ ) while the anxiety attachment style is negatively correlated at a low level ( $r = -0,278$ ). The difference in the value of avoidance attachment style correlation and anxiety attachment style as predictors of

relationship satisfaction is due to differences in regulatory strategies in establishing relationships with partners.

The studies analyzed in this meta were conducted on various subjects with different sexual orientations and various cultures in both Eastern and Western countries. Since child care in the East and West countries has distinctiveness and differences, especially in the independence of children, research on attachment style anxiety and avoidance can be done by comparing subjects from heterosexual and homosexual sexual orientation and from Eastern and Western countries.

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