Achieving Happiness: The Role of Adulthood Attachment and Self-Esteem

Jan A. Swierczynski

The University of North Carolina at Charlotte

**Abstract**

At present, psychological research on happiness is extensive and vast. Throughout history, scholars have argued overt the definition of happiness and how to achieve it, however, the recent field of evolutionary psychology argues that the human species, along with other primates and much of the animal kingdom, is ‘hard-wired’ to draw happiness from close contact with others. Humans are social creatures. The interpersonal dynamics of close relationships have been empirically studied within the field of social and personality psychology since the beginning of the 20th century. However, minimal research has been done on the role of attachment styles on happiness. The purpose of the present research was to investigate whether adulthood attachment style is related to overall, global levels of happiness. This study proposed that both a secure attachment style and dismissive attachment style will lead to higher levels of happiness; and that both a preoccupied attachment style and fearful attachment style will lead to lower levels of happiness; and that these relationships will be mediated by self-esteem. Sixty two students from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte participated in an online survey assessing adulthood attachment, self-esteem, and happiness. Results were consistent with three of the four proposed hypotheses. Those who scored higher on secure attachment also scored higher on self-esteem and happiness. Those who scored higher on preoccupied and fearful attachment also scored lower on self-esteem and happiness. Dismissive attachment was not related to either self-esteem or happiness. Implications and future research are provided.

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What is happiness and how does one attain it? This has long been a question studied by humans, from ancient philosophers to modern psychologists. Aristippus, a Greek philosopher from the fourth century B.C., believed that the goal of life is to experience the maximum amount of pleasure, and that happiness is the totality of one’s pleasurable moments (Ryan & Deci, 2001). This hedonic approach defines happiness in terms of pleasure seeking and pain avoidance. Aristotle, on the other hand, was one of the first intellectuals to argue against this view. Aristotle claimed that hedonism enslaved humans into foolish followers of desires (Kenny, 1992). Instead, he taught that true happiness is attained through the expression of virtue, or that which is morally worth doing (Kenny, 1992). Aristotle’s philosophy is one of history’s first examples of the eudaimonic approach. This view states that happiness is not derived from that which maximizes pleasures and minimizes pain, but instead from becoming a fully-functioning person or achieving one’s full potential (Carr, 2011). In recent history, there has been an increase in interest and appreciation of the importance of warm and trusting interpersonal relationships for well-being and happiness.

**Historical Background**

Freud saw the importance of interpersonal contact for psychological health, although his theory suggested that sexual desires and tensions are the fundamental driving force behind the human concern for social support (Freud, 1930). Maslow’s hierarchy of needs theorized that human motives can be reduced to five fundamental needs, which are each achieved in a sequential pattern. “Love and belongingness” needs are characteristic of the third level, Affiliation, in which one is driven by the need for close affective relationships (Maslow, 1968). However, this level is only reached after more basic needs such as hunger and safety have been satisfied and before the more advanced needs of esteem and self-actualization can be attained. This suggests that affiliation needs play a central role in the development of the fully-functioning or self-actualized individual. Baumeister and Leary (1995) proposed the need to belong as a fundamental human motivation, defined as the pervasive drive to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships. Baumeister and Leary (1995) suggest that this need to belong can be almost as compelling a need as food and that throughout history, human culture has been conditioned by the pressure to provide belongingness. Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) explains the conditions that foster intrinsic motivation and lead to enhanced mental health. The theory predicts that when our needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (i.e., need for belongingness) are met, intrinsic motivation is likely to occur. Intrinsic motivation is that which leads us to engage in activities for the sake of enjoyment and with no external goal in mind (Carr, 2011). For example, children whose needs for relatedness are satisfied in infancy and childhood display more intrinsic motivation such as spontaneous curiosity for the world around them (Carr, 2011). In adulthood, relatedness is consistently at the top of the list of the factors that influence happiness (Argyle, 2001; Myers, 1999). Perhaps by satisfying the fundamental need for relatedness, we subsequently increase our capacity for intrinsic motivation, which ultimately leads us to tap into our innermost desires and find happiness in their fulfillment.

**Social Support and Happiness**

The practical application of the psychological theory on happiness suggests that close, socially supportive interpersonal relationships have far reaching benefits. Higher levels of social integration are associated with healthier biological profiles, such as a better functioning immune system and lower levels of neuroendocrine activity (Dickerson & Zoccola, 2009). People who spend more time with others are happier than those who spend much of their time alone; and people who have many friends are happier than those who have only a few (Lucas & Dyrenforth, 2006). Evolutionary psychology argues that humans are ‘hard-wired’ to draw happiness from close contact with our family and kinship networks (Buss, 2007). Social networks can be a protective factor against certain mental health problems. For example, baseline measures of social integration, including reporting more contacts with children and with close friends, were associated with declines in depressive symptomatology (Radloff, 1977).

Why do some people maintain very close contact with a few significant others, while other people seem to be distant and spend much of their time alone? The answer might lie in the relationships we develop in our early childhood years.

**Infant Attachment**

“Intimate attachments to other human beings are the hub around which a person’s life revolves, not only when he is an infant or a toddler or a schoolchild but throughout his adolescence and his years of maturity as well, and on into old age. From these intimate attachments a person draws his strength and enjoyment of life” (Bowlby, 1980). Attachment is a lasting psychological connectedness between human beings (Bowlby, 1969). The first and most important attachment human beings develop is during infancy, between the baby and the mother. Human infants, like other mammalian species, are born vulnerable and dependent on the care and protection from older adults. Bowlby suggested that over the course of evolutionary history, those infants who were able to engage in certain attachment behaviors (e.g., crying, clinging, and frantically searching) were able to maintain close proximity to an attachment figure (usually the mother) and thus were more likely to survive and later reproduce (Fraley, 2010). This attachment behavioral system was incrementally and systematically “designed” through natural selection to regulate proximity to an attachment figure (Bowlby, 1969). However, there are individual differences in the degree to which infants display these behaviors. Mary Ainsworth documented three classifications according to the patterns of behavior displayed by infants in her “strange situation” laboratory studies, in which 12-month-old infants and their mothers were brought into the laboratory and systematically separated from and reunited with one another. Group B babies used their mother as a secure base from which to explore in the pre-separation stage; attachment behavior (e.g., crying, frantically searching) was greatly intensified while separated; and when reunited, infants sought out contact with and proximity to their mothers. These were the secure infants. Group C babies tended to show some signs of anxiety even in the pre-separation stage; they were intensely distressed by separation; and when reunited, they were ambivalent towards the mother, seeking close contact with her but also resisting contact and interaction. These were the anxious-avoidant infants. Group A babies rarely cried when separated and when reunited, generally avoided the mother completely. These were the avoidant infants (Ainsworth, 1979).

The attachment behavioral system that develops in an infant, according to Bowlby (1969), continues on into adulthood. A child forms a basic “inner working model” of how all relationships should work based on his or her experiences with the first attachment figure. Thus, the secure child grows up believing that others will be there for him and that people are generally trustworthy and approachable. The anxious-avoidant child grows up believing that his relationships with others are mostly unpredictable; he is unsure if he should trust others. The avoidant child grows up believing that, in general, people are untrustworthy and that close relationships should be avoided at all costs. These general approaches to attachment have been investigated in adults and results indicate a similar pattern as the infant-mother attachment relationship studied by Ainsworth (Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

**Adulthood Attachment**

A widely used model of adulthood attachment has been conceptualized according to two dimensions: model of self and model of other (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Every individual has an abstract image of the self, which can be dichotomized as positive or negative (worthy of love and support or not) and an abstract image of the other, which can be dichotomized as positive or negative (other people are trustworthy and available vs. unreliable and rejecting). Thus, four combinations are possible. A *secure* individual has a high sense of worthiness (lovability) and generally sees people as trustworthy and available. A *preoccupied* individual has a low sense of worthiness (unlovability) and sees people as trustworthy and available. A *fearful-avoidant* individual scores low on both dimensions: he or she indicates a low sense of worthiness (unlovability) combined with an expectation that others will be untrustworthy and unavailable to his or her needs. A *dismissing-avoidant* individual indicates a high sense of worthiness (lovability) but sees other people as untrustworthy and unavailable.

These four attachment patterns can be conceptualized in terms of two other dimensions: dependency and avoidance. Dependency refers to the way in which a positive self-regard is established. This can be either internally, without requiring external validation from others or externally (i.e., maintained by others’ ongoing acceptance). Avoidance (of intimacy) reflects the degree to which people avoid close contact with others as a result of their expectations of aversive consequences. This can be conceptualized as either high avoidance of others, or low avoidance of others (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Therefore, a securely attached individual is low on both dependency and avoidance; a preoccupied attachment entails high dependency but low avoidance; a fearful attachment is characterized by high dependence and high avoidance; and a dismissive attachment is defined as low dependence and high avoidance. Figure 1 shows these four adulthood attachment patterns.

The purpose of the present study is to investigate whether adulthood attachment style is related to overall, global levels of happiness. People with a secure adult attachment style tend to develop better quality peer relationships which hold up under stress better than those with anxious attachment styles (Lopez, 2009). Insecure attachment appears to lead to depressive symptoms in adulthood through its impact on self-worth contingencies and self-esteem (Roberts et al., 1996). Happiness and depression have been shown to be understood as opposite ends of a bipolar valence dimension (Russell & Feldman, 1999). Therefore, the association between attachment style and happiness may be accounted for by self-esteem. I hypothesize that a secure attachment style will be positively related to happiness and this relationship will be mediated by self-esteem; that a preoccupied attachment style will be negatively related to happiness and this relationship will be mediated by self-esteem; that a fearful attachment style will be negatively related to happiness and this relationship will be mediated by self-esteem; and that a dismissive attachment style will be positively related to happiness and this relationship will be mediated by self-esteem.

**Method**

**Participants**

Sixty-two students at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, a large public university, volunteered to participate in a cross-sectional study on attachment style and happiness during the fall 2016 semester. Fifty were females (80.6%) and 12 were males (19.4%). Participants ranged in age from 18 to 58 (*M* = 21.2, *SD* = 5.97). One participant did not report age. Of the total number of participants, 77.4% reported their race as White/Caucasian, 11.3% as African-American, 9.7% as Hispanic-American, and 1.6% as other. Year in college was distributed as follows: 25.8% freshman, 24.2% sophomore, 21.0% junior, 22.6% senior, and 1.6% graduate/professional school. Participants were required to be at least 18 years old. There were no other exclusion criteria. Participants were compensated by receiving 0.5 SONA research participation credit which was applied to a psychology course they were enrolled in.

**Design**

This study was a cross-sectional design. Using the four category model proposed by Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991), there were four independent variables: IV1 = secure attachment, IV2 = preoccupied attachment, IV3 = dismissive attachment, and IV4 = fearful attachment. The study proposed one mediator variable: M1 = self-esteem. Each IV was tested independently as a predictor of the dependent variable: DV = happiness, followed by three mediation path analyses (Baron & Kenny, 1986) for each of the independent variables, except dismissive attachment, which is discussed later. In total, seven regression models were analyzed.

**Procedure**

A Research Methods II class at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte put together an electronic survey using qualtrics software. This survey was made available online to students enrolled in psychology courses at the university. The survey examined some of the psychological underpinnings of a variety of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. For the purposes of the research question, only the questions related to attachment, self-esteem, and happiness were examined. Participants were instructed that information collected during the study is confidential and that risk to emotional, physical, social, professional, and financial well-being is considered to be less than minimal.

**Measures**

Participants completed measures of attachment style, self-esteem, and happiness and provided demographic information. All of these were completed online. Participants also completed other measures not relevant to the current study.

**Attachment Style.** Attachment style was assessed using the Relationship Scales Questionnaire (Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994). Items began with the stem: “Please read each of the following statements and rate the extent to which you believe each statement best describes your feelings about close relationships:” followed by 30 statements rated on a scale from 1 (*not at all like me*) to 5 (*very much like me*). Sample items include: “I find it difficult to depend on other people”, “It is very important to me to feel independent”, “I find it easy to get emotionally close to others” and “I worry that I will be hurt if I allow myself to become too close to others.” The secure subscale consisted of 5 items (α = .45), the preoccupied subscale consisted of 4 items (α = .71), the dismissive subscale consisted of 5 items (α = .40), and the fearful subscale consisted of 4 items (α = .72). See Table 1 for means and standard deviations.

**Happiness.** Happiness was assessed using the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire—Short Scale (Hills & Argyle, 2002). Items began with the stem: “Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement by entering a number alongside it according to the following code:” followed by 8 statements rated on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). Sample items include: “I don’t feel particularly pleased with the way I am” (reverse), “I feel that life is very rewarding”, “I am well satisfied about everything in my life”, and “I don’t think I look attractive” (reverse). The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire—Short Scale was found to be moderately reliable (α = .80). See Table 1 for the mean and standard deviation.

**Self-esteem.** Self-esteem was assessed using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). Items began with the stem: “Rate the items using the following scale:” followed by 10 statements rated on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). Sample items include: “I take a positive attitude toward myself”, “I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others”, “I certainly feel useless at times” (reverse), and “All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure” (reverse). The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was found to be highly reliable (α = .93). See Table 1 for the mean and standard deviation.

**Results**

**Overview of Analyses**

Three separate mediation analyses (Baron & Kenny, 1986) were conducted to test the hypotheses, that self-esteem mediates the relationship between each of the attachment styles (except for dismissive attachment) and happiness. Phase 1 examined the associations between each attachment style (secure, preoccupied, dismissive, and fearful) and happiness. Phase 2 examined whether self-esteem mediate the association between a secure attachment style and happiness. Phase 3 examined whether self-esteem mediated the association between a preoccupied attachment style and happiness. Phase 4 examined whether self-esteem mediated the association between a fearful attachment style and happiness. Because dismissive attachment style was not related to self-esteem (*r =* .13, *p >* .05) and happiness (*r =* .14, *p* > .05) at the bivariate level, mediation analysis was not necessary.

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, and zero-order correlations for primary study variables. Secure attachment had a moderate negative correlation with both preoccupied and dismissive attachment, and a strong negative correlation with fearful attachment. Preoccupied attachment had no significant correlation with dismissive attachment, and a moderate positive correlation with fearful attachment. Dismissive attachment was strongly positively correlated with fearful attachment. Secure attachment was strongly positively correlated with both self-esteem and happiness. Preoccupied attachment was strongly negatively correlated with self-esteem and happiness, whereas fearful attachment was moderately negatively correlated with self-esteem and happiness. The only attachment style not significantly correlated with both self-esteem and happiness was dismissive attachment. Self-esteem and happiness were strongly positively correlated. Again, because dismissive attachment style was not related to self-esteem and happiness and the bivariate level, mediation analysis was not necessary. The dismissive attachment style hypothesis was not supported.

**Phase 1.1: The Association between a Secure Attachment Style and Happiness**

I tested whether a secure attachment style predicted happiness. When I regressed happiness on secure attachment, results suggested there was a significant association between the two, *t*(52) = 5.06,  *b* = 0.80, *p* < 0.001.

**Phase 1.2: The Association between a Preoccupied Attachment Style and Happiness**

I tested whether a preoccupied attachment style predicted happiness. When I regressed happiness on preoccupied attachment, results suggested there was a significant association between the two, *t*(52) = -5.23,  *b* = -.69, *p* < 0.001.

**Phase 1.3: The Association between a Dismissive Attachment Style and Happiness**

I tested whether a dismissive attachment style predicted happiness. When I regressed happiness on dismissive attachment, results suggested there was not a significant association between the two, *t*(52) = 1.05,  *b* = .25, *p* > .05.

**Phase 1.4: The Association between a Fearful Attachment Style and Happiness**

I tested whether a fearful attachment style predicted happiness. When I regressed happiness on fearful attachment, results suggested there was a significant association between the two, *t*(52) = -3.30,  *b* = -.47, *p* < 0.01.

**Phase 2: Self-Esteem as a Mediator between a Secure Attachment Style and Happiness**

Regression analysis was used to investigate the hypothesis that self-esteem mediates the effect of a secure attachment style on happiness. Results indicated that a secure attachment style was a significant predictor of self-esteem, *b* = .67, *SE* = .10, *p* < .001, and that self-esteem was a significant predictor of happiness, *b* = 1.21, *SE* = .13, *p* < .001. These results support the mediational hypothesis. A secure attachment style was no longer a significant predictor of happiness after controlling for the mediator, self-esteem, *b* = -.01, *SE* = .13, *p* > .05, consistent with full mediation. Approximately 76% of the variance in happiness was accounted for by the predictors (*R*2 = .76). The indirect effect was tested using a bootstrap estimation approach with 5000 samples (Hayes, 2012). These results indicated the indirect coefficient was significant, *b* = .81, *SE* = .15, 95% CI = .57, 1.17. A secure attachment style was associated with approximately .81 points higher happiness scores as mediated by self-esteem. The hypothesis was supported.

**Phase 3: Self-Esteem as a Mediator between a Preoccupied Attachment Style and Happiness**

Regression analysis was used to investigate the hypothesis that self-esteem mediates the effect of a preoccupied attachment style on happiness. Results indicated that a preoccupied attachment style was a significant predictor of self-esteem, *b* = -.55, *SE* = .09, *p* < .001, and that self-esteem was a significant predictor of happiness, *b* = 1.16, *SE* = .12, *p* < .001. These results support the mediational hypothesis. A preoccupied attachment style was no longer a significant predictor of happiness after controlling for the mediator, self-esteem, *b* = -.05, *SE* = .11, *p* > .05, consistent with full mediation. Approximately 76% of the variance in happiness was accounted for by the predictors (*R*2 = .76). The indirect effect was tested using a bootstrap estimation approach with 5000 samples (Hayes, 2012). These results indicated the indirect coefficient was significant, *b* = -.64, *SE* = .11, 95% CI = -.87, -.44. A preoccupied attachment style was associated with approximately .64 points lower happiness scores as mediated by self-esteem. The hypothesis was supported.

**Phase 4: Self-Esteem as a Mediator between a Fearful Attachment Style and Happiness**

Regression analysis was used to investigate the hypothesis that self-esteem mediates the effect of a fearful attachment style on happiness. Results indicated that a fearful attachment style was a significant predictor of self-esteem, *b* = -.37, *SE* = .10, *p* < .001, and that self-esteem was a significant predictor of happiness, *b* = 1.18, *SE* = .11, *p* < .001. These results support the mediational hypothesis. A fearful attachment style was no longer a significant predictor of happiness after controlling for the mediator, self-esteem, *b* = -.04, *SE* = .09, *p* > .05, consistent with full mediation. Approximately 76% of the variance in happiness was accounted for by the predictors (*R*2 = .76). The indirect effect was tested using a bootstrap estimation approach with 5000 samples (Hayes, 2012). These results indicated the indirect coefficient was significant, *b* = -.43, *SE* = .12, 95% CI = -.66, -.19. A fearful attachment style was associated with approximately .43 points lower happiness scores as mediated by self-esteem. The hypothesis was supported.

**Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to find if there was an association between adulthood attachment style and happiness, and if this relationship was mediated by self-esteem. The study’s main finding suggests that, of the four adulthood attachment styles conceptualized by Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991), secure attachment style positively predicted happiness; preoccupied attachment style negatively predicted happiness; and fearful attachment style negatively predicted happiness. These relationships were all mediated by self-esteem. In other words, the reason why securely attached individuals are happier is because they have a higher sense of self-worth, and the reason why preoccupied and fearfully attached adults are less happy is because they have a lower sense of self-worth. This is consistent with past research that found insecure adulthood attachment styles to be associated with dysfunctional attitudes, which in turn predispose one to a low self-esteem (Roberts et al., 1996). Low self-esteem has repeatedly been found to be inversely correlated with happiness (Cheng & Furnham, 2003; Roberts et al., 1996). The mediation path models proposed in this study reflect the nature of these associations found in past literature.

**Secure Attachment**

A securely attached individual’s source of self-worth is internal. That is, maintaining a high self-esteem does not require constant validation from others or others’ ongoing acceptance (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). In addition, a securely attached individual does not avoid intimacy (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991), and is therefore able to self-disclose and maintain an intimate relationship with close others (Mikulincer & Nachshon, 1991). Marital happiness has been shown to be correlated positively with all aspects of one's own self disclosure (Antill & Cotton, 1987). Blogging has been shown to increase subjective well-being reports by increasing participants’ self-disclosure (Ko & Kuo, 2009). Therefore, securely attached individuals, because of their higher self-esteem, may be engaging in cognitive processes and behaviors that allow for self-disclosure, which ultimately lead to better relationships and happiness. The present study’s findings lend partial support to this hypothesis.

**Preoccupied & Fearful Attachment**

An individual with a preoccupied attachment style, unlike the secured person, is high on dependency. The source of his or her self-worth is external. In order to maintain a high self-esteem, the preoccupied individual requires constant approval and acceptance from others, which explains why these people are low on avoidance. They have no problem becoming intimate with others. In fact, their self-worth is partially determined by how close they are able to become with the people in their relationships (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). However, this can be particularly anxiety inducing, because they are constantly seeking for others’ approval. Fearfully attached individuals also exhibit a strong dependency on others to maintain a positive self-regard. However, this group does not seek others out for approval; on the contrary, they avoid closeness to minimize eventual disappointment (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). By not engaging with others, they are in a sense protecting their self-worth from being harmed. Results suggest that both approaches are detrimental to one’s happiness.

Öztürk & Mutlu (2010) found that preoccupied, fearful, and dismissive students’ social anxiety levels were higher than their securely attached counterparts. Socially anxious people fear rejection and are more likely to not participate in social situations (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Social support and relatedness to others has been consistently found to positively predict happiness (Argyle, 2001; Myers, 1999). Therefore, it may be that preoccupied and fearfully attached individuals worry about others’ perceptions of them, and while one group seeks out positive approval (preoccupied), and the other group avoids any sort of contact (fearful), both approaches ultimately lead to unhappiness.

**Dismissive Attachment**

Results suggested that dismissive attachment was unrelated to both self-esteem and happiness. This is inconsistent with past literature, which has found negative relationships between dismissive attachment and self-esteem (Huntsinger & Luecken, 2004; Foster et al., 2007). And since low self-esteem has repeatedly been found to be inversely correlated with happiness (Cheng & Furnham, 2003; Roberts et al., 1996), the mediation path model in the present study was not supported. One reason for this might lie in measurement error. The Cronbach’s alpha score for the dismissive subscale was particularly low, compared with the other subscales (α = .40). It may be that this subscale was capturing a different construct. Additionally, there may be some conceptual overlap between a dismissive attachment style and either a secure or fearful attachment style. Dismissive attachment overlaps with the ‘model of self’ dimension of secure attachment, and it overlaps with the ‘model of others’ dimension of fearful attachment. Therefore, the little variance in happiness as explained by dismissive attachment might really be due to either secure or fearful attachment style.

**Limitations and Future Directions**

Sample size and demographics were a potential weakness in the present study. An overwhelming majority of participants were white females, and only sixty two people took part in the survey. Sample size affects statistical validity, whereas a lack of diversity in the sample as a whole affects generalizability. It is difficult to predict whether the results in this study will be found in the population in general. Future research needs to be done with a more heterogeneous sample in order to make more definitive statements about the importance of attachment style on happiness in adults.

Another potential weakness of this study could be the way in which attachment style was operationalized and measured. Only 18 of the 30 items from the Relationship Scales Questionnaire were used in data analysis. The additional items that were not included can be used to create subscales to assess the attachment dimensions identified by Simpson, Rholes, & Nelligan (1992) and Collins & Read (1990). Future research that would include these subscales is necessary in order to draw out and separate the specific conceptual overlaps in certain attachment styles. Additionally, the RSQ is a relatively outdated measurement of attachment. A replication study should be considered in the future in which a different scale is used. A newer, continuous measure of adulthood attachment is the Experiences in Close Relationships measure (Fraley et al., 2000). This measure is widely used in attachment research today.

In conclusion, the role of attachment on happiness is important for research. The findings of the present study highlight the need for further understanding of the interpersonal dynamics that are at play between two socially connected people. If there are certain attachment styles that lead to happiness and some that do not, it is imperative for researchers to clearly distinguish the differences and use that knowledge to implement interventions that teach people the skills necessary to succeed in relationships. Humans are social animals. We seek out contact with others and feel comfortable and safe when we are surrounded by people who care and understand us. Research on attachment is therefore extremely relevant in order to increase the well-being of our population.

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Table 1.

*Means, standard deviations, and correlations for all variables.*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1. | 2. | 3. | 4. | 5. | *M* (*SD*) |
| 1. Secure Attachment |  |  |  |  |  | 2.97(.70) |
| 2. Preoccupied Attachment | -.49\*\* |  |  |  |  | 3.16(.83) |
| 3. Dismissive Attachment | -.30\* | -.25 |  |  |  | 3.11(.57) |
| 4. Fearful Attachment | -.62\*\* | .40\*\* | .54\*\* |  |  | 2.96(.87) |
| 5. Self-esteem | .67\*\* | -.64\*\* | .13 | -.45\*\* |  | 2.85(.70) |
| 6. Happiness | .58\*\* | -.59\*\* | .14 | -.42\*\* | .87\*\* | 4.05(.96) |

Note: \*\* *p* < .01, \* *p* < .05. *N* = 54. Each attachment style was measured on a scale from 1 (*not at all like me)* to 5 (*very much like me)*. Self-esteem was measured on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree)* to 4 (*strongly agree).* Happiness was measured on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree)* to 6 (*strongly agree)*.

*Figure 1.* Model of adult attachment. Adapted from “Attachment styles among young adults: A test of a four-category model,” by K. Bartholomew & L.M. Horowitz, 1991, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *61*(2), 226.

Cell III.

Fearful

Fearful of intimacy

Socially avoidant

Cell IV.

Dismissing

Dismissing of intimacy

Counter-dependent

Cell II.

Preoccupied

Preoccupied with relationships

Cell I.

Secure

Comfortable with intimacy and autonomy

Positive

(Low)

Model of Other

(Avoidance)

Negative

(High)

Model of Self

(Dependence)

Positive

(Low)

Negative

(High)