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ATTACHMENT STYLES AND RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION

ESTILOS DE APEGO Y SATISFACCIÓN CON LA PAREJA

Sheila Pintado & Andrea Mendoza

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Andrea Mendoza. Licenciada en Psicología en la Universidad de las Américas Puebla (UDLAP) y su interés principal se enfoca en la terapia familiar, estilos de apego y bienestar, realizando en 2014 una tesis relacionada con este tema y obteniendo la calificación máxima. En 2015, se incorporó al Colegio Darlington de Puebla como encargada del Departamento Psicopedagógico de la escuela. Entre las actividades realizadas con este puesto se destaca la intervención en crisis, escuela para padres, taller de inteligencia emocional para niños, así como terapia individual. Actualmente, forma parte de la Dirección de Primaria del mismo colegio, estando a cargo de la coordinación académica y conductual de los alumnos, docentes y padres de familia de la escuela.

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Abstract: Satisfaction with relationship is related to many variables. One of these variables is the attachment style of people. The objective of this study was to evaluate the relation between relationship satisfaction and the different attachment styles. The sample consisted of 162 persons with age ranged between 18 and 72 years with an average of 37 years ($D. T = 13,214$). The instruments used were the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) and the Adult Attachment Scale (AAS). Each individual completed self-reported questionnaires anonymously. Results indicate that there is a significant relation between these two variables ($p < .001$), and we could observed that secure attachment was related to the highest levels of satisfaction.

Keywords: Attachment, Relationships, Satisfaction, Couple

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INTRODUCTION

For many years social psychologists have been questioned about romantic relationships and their functionality. Several research and hypotheses have emerged from these questions in order to be able to give some answers about the qualities to find a couple or to be able to establish a satisfactory relationship. However, there are only few theories that have been able to prove this topic empirically, one of them is the relationship between the romantic relationship and the attachment theory. Attachment theory refers to the universal human need to form close emotional ties and to turn to in times of stress or suffering. The research that later appeared, suggest that there is a correlation between the attachment style developed in childhood and certain important variables during adulthood.

The term "Attachment" was conceptualized as the affective connection between two individuals that provides them with a firm emotional foundation from which they can interact with the world. Characteristics of this type of relationship include supportiveness, trustworthiness, caring, and acceptance (Bowlby, 1969). Since the parents are the closest people a child has, they are the ones in charge of teaching them how a relationship has to be. The findings of Hazan and Shaver (1987) suggest that the opposite-sex parent may be used as a model for what heterosexual relationships are like or should be like, and what a person should expect from a romantic partner. Thus, although both parents may contribute to a person's beliefs about him- or herself and the social world in general, the opposite-sex parent may play a special role in shaping beliefs and

expectations central to heterosexual love relationships. Several studies have reported that the relative prevalence of the three attachment styles in adults is similar to that found in infancy (Feeney & Noller, 1990; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Mikulincer, Florian & Tolmacz, 1990).

Bowlby classifies attachment into three types; secure, anxious/ambivalent and avoidant. The typical securely attached infant was distressed when the mother left the room, was comforted by her return, and engaged in active exploration as long as she was present. Caregivers were judged to be consistently available and responsive to the needs of the child. In the Anxious/ambivalent attachment, the child manifest constant fear with the possible separation of the mother, giving behaviors of protest when she moves and holding her in an exaggerated manner. During the separation the infant does not support the consolation of the stranger.

The typical caregiver of an anxious/ambivalent attached infant, exhibited inconsistent responsiveness to the infant's signals, being sometimes unavailable or unresponsive and at other times intrusive. Anxious attached infants appeared both anxious and angry and were preoccupied with their caregivers to such a degree that it precluded exploration while playing. In the avoidant attachment, the child shows little resistance to the separation and avoids heavily any contact. When he or she is separated from the mother, easily admits the consolation of the strange. This defensive reaction and rejection is a way to protect them, because they no longer trust the object of attachment (Bowlby, 1989). These infants appeared not to be distressed by separations, avoided

contact with their caregivers, and kept their attention directed toward the toys. Caregivers of avoidant-attached infants consistently deflected their infants' bids for comfort, especially for close bodily contact.

Hazan and Shaver (1994) were the first to use attachment theory as a framework for understanding adult love relationships. They argued that not only early relationships had an impact on the romantic relationships in adulthood; they also claimed that romantic love was also a process of attachment that shares important similarities with the attachment between the child and the caregiver. The authors pointed out that if the couple of a relationship in the adult life began to give the same functions and were able to satisfy the needs of emotional support and security that parents, who are the main responsible during childhood, then at some point the attachment will be transformed from parents toward the couple.

The evidence that supports these approaches is vast: a large number of studies have demonstrated the association between adult attachment and satisfaction, both in marriage as in unmarried couples (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Banse, 2004; Collins & Read, 1990; Feeney & Noller, 1990; Guzmán & Contreras, 2012; Hammond & Fletcher, 1991; Hartup & Rubin, 1986; Hartfield & Raspon, 1993; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Hinde, 1979; Hinde & StevensonHinde, 1986; Hollist & Miller, 2005; Kirkpatrick & Hazan, 1994; Meyers & Landsberger, 2002; Ojeda, 2006; Ortiz, Gómez & Apodaca, 2002; Retana & Sánchez, 2008; Rivera, Cruz & Muñoz, 2011; Shaver & Rubenstein, 1980; Shaven

& Hazan, 1988; Shaver, Hazan & Bradshaw, 1988; Simpson, 1990; Weiss, 1982; Weiss, 1986).

Lopez (1993) notes that it is in the relationship with the attachment figures where the child learns to communicate with others, learns forms of intimate contact (touching and being touched, embrace and be embraced, kissing and being kissed, look and be looked at, etc.) and systems of communication, which subsequently will be influenced in emotional relationships and sex. Kobak and Hazen (1991) studied marital quality among 40 couples and found higher levels of marital satisfaction in securely attached couples. Secure attachment also is predictive of successful conflict resolution (Kobak & Hazen), relationship independence, commitment, trust (Simpson, 1990), and positive emotions in marriage (Collins, 1996).

Comparing the kind of attachment to romantic relationships it can be said that when a person is attached to the style "Secure," he does it freely, maintains its independence, can take their own decisions, knows that a relationship takes commitment, intimacy, and expression of feelings, so this person takes the time and effort (Bowlby, 1969). In the research of Hazan and Shaver (1987) the authors reported that people with a secure attachment described their love life as happier, friendly and full of trusted experiences. In addition they tended to have longer-term relationships. Studies on attachment patterns in adults have shown that people with secure attachment tend to live close relationships with joy and positive emotions, trust each other and generally accept their partner despite the flaws,

and have more ability to solve interpersonal conflicts. It also has been reported in these people the highest levels of satisfaction, confidence and lower levels of unmet expectations of their partners (Feeney & Noller, 2001). These kinds of people show an attitude of peace, joy, happiness and even good communication when the partner is absent. They are people who tend to value herself, that are able to behave independently, without their decisions depending on other member of the dyad. Generally, they perceived a good level of satisfaction with their partner and with the kind of relationship they have built (Ojeda, 2007).

People with an "Avoidant" attachment tend to feel little valued or recognized by their partner. They are very susceptible, cautious, and avoid giving all for fear of leaving emotionally hurt and are always on the defensive. People with high avoidance described their relationships characterized by fear of closeness and frequent emotional ups and downs (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). For this reason the people in the unsafe attachment enjoy less of their relationships. In another hand, Feeney and Noller (2001) found that people in the avoidant style were more likely to say they have never been in love, to not compromise and to have low ideals about love. In this kind of people, love is very often marked by the rejection of the intimacy, by the difficulty to depend on the other hand, a lack of confidence, emotional ups and downs and the difficulty in accepting the defects of the partner. When a person with this type of attachment gets involved in a relationship, unconsciously they try to get rid of it, and they look for real or imagined reasons that believe them

concern; in fact, the person finds their reasons and they want to be right on them, in order to breakup the relationship (Rony, 1992).

Finally, if the person has an "Anxious/ambivalent" attachment is characterized by being scary of intimacy, retracted and evasive (Bartholomew, 1990), the way they act when they are jealous is with feelings of misery and distress, in addition to thoughts of disillusionment and insecurity in the disloyalty and possible attack by the partner causing anger and irritation to the lack of control in the relationship (Díaz-Loving et al., 1986). People with greater anxiety in the attachment are more prone to jealousy, obsession or extreme sexual attraction (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Their relationships are characterized by an obsessive concern by abandonment, desire union end and reciprocity, mistrust, jealousy and a greater vulnerability to loneliness (Brennan & Shaver, 1995; Feeney & Noller, 1990; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Hendrick, Hendrick & Adler, 1988; Pistole, 1989). This type of people will show in the presence or absence of the other member of the relationship an attitude of restlessness, and even at times of despair because there is the uncertainty of abandonment, physical or psychological loss of the figure of love. In such a way that they look for up to know everything their partner does and where they are every time (Ojeda, 2007). When it has formed an attachment style with anxiously behaviors and insecurities the relationships tend to be unstable, apprehensive, jealousy, with higher levels of anxiety, and a dependent or addictive love.

According to data obtained by different research as we see before, people with a secure attachment shows the higher levels of satisfaction and involvement in a romantic relationship, while the subjects with anxious or avoidant attachment are recorded the lowest levels of satisfaction in couple relationships (Davila, Bradbury & Fincham, 1998; Jacob, 1999; Kirkpatrick & Davis, 1994; Kovac & Hazan, 1991; López et al., 1994; Myers, 2000; Rivera, 1999; Timm, 2000).

From the above, this research is aimed to study the relation between the levels of satisfaction in couple's relationship according to the attachment style.

METHOD

Participants

The sample for this research consisted of 162 participants, 67% women (N=109) and 33% men (N= 53). The average age was 37 years (D. T=13,214), in which the minimum age recorded was 18 years and the maximum 72 years. One of the requirements was that all the participants currently had a romantic relationship. Participants were selected randomly through availability.

Measures

For general data, we created a questionnaire for purposes of the research, where we collected the most relevant demographic data; gender and age.

To measure the relationship satisfaction, we used the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS), created by Spanier in 1976. It is a questionnaire of 32 items that measure

the degree of harmony or adjustment of a couple. The population for this questionnaire is for married and unmarried couples. This scale assesses one general grade from 0 to 150 that consists in 4 dimensions; consensus: degree of agreement between the couple, in important aspects of the relationship, cohesion: degree to which the couple is involved in joint activities, satisfaction: degree of satisfaction of the couple in relation to its present and its degree of commitment to continue with this relationship, expression of affection: degree to which the couple is satisfied with the expression of the affection within the relationship and with the satisfaction that is derived from the sexual relationship. Its format is of scale Liker, with score of 0 to 4 or 5, with the exception of two items that scored 0 to 1 and an item from 0 to 6.

José Moral de la Rubia currently validates the Dyadic Adjustment Scale in the Mexican population in 2009. Its internal consistency was high ($\alpha=.93$)

To evaluate the attachment style, we used the Adult Attachment Scale (AAS). This questionnaire was created by Collins and Read (1990) derived from the descriptions made by Hazan and Shaver (1990) and adapted and validated in Latin American population by (Tacon & Caldera, 2001). This scale consists of 18 items that the average of the results gets three different types of attachments; secure, avoidant and anxious/ambivalent. The scales range from 1 to 5, where 1 means "never" and 5 "always". The items are divided into three factors of six items each: dependency, anxiety, and intimacy. The Cronbach's alpha was 0.75, 0.72 and 0.69

respectively. The factor dependency is defined when the individual feels that she or he can depend on others and believe that they will be there when you need them. The anxiety factor is the degree of anxiety or fear about being abandoned or not wanted. Finally, the factor of intimacy refers to the comfort that an individual feels with closeness or intimacy.

Collins and Read (1990) reported that when the scores of the dimensions of dependence and intimacy are higher than the scores of the dimension of anxiety, there is talk of a secure attachment style; when the scores of the three dimensions are smaller, there is an attachment style of avoidance, and when the scores of the dimension of anxiety are bigger than the dimensions of dependency and intimacy, there is an anxious ambivalent attachment style.

Procedure

In first place, this investigation obtained the support of the ethical committee corresponded to investigate with human beings.

Then, the participants were randomly selected following the requirements (must be at least 18 years old and a current relationship). This research was carried out at a unique moment managing the instruments mentioned above on an individual basis. We emphasized to all the participants the anonymous and confidentiality of their responses, and after they signed the informed consent, we applied the questionnaires based on self-report measurements.

Finally, we created a database to make a statistical analysis using the program

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), and specific calculations in this regard: Chi-square and Pearson's correlation coefficient.

RESULTS

The total number of people who had a secure attachment style was 128. What we observed was that 113 participants gained a good satisfaction in their relationship and obtained a type of secure attachment. It should be noted that 44 of these 113 participants came out with an idealized relationship. Only 15 people obtained a type of secure attachment and marked a conflictive relationship with their partner. The total number of people with an anxious attachment style was 9, which 4 of them had a conflictive relationship and 5 of them harmonious. In total there were 7 people that had an avoidant attachment style, of which 4 have a conflictive relationship and 3 harmonious (Table 1).

Table 1. Attachment styles and relationship styles

		EATOTAL				Total
		Secure	Anxious/amb	Avoidant	Undifferentiated	
DASLIM	Conflict	15	4	4	7	30
	Harmonious	69	5	3	8	85
	Idealized	44	0	0	3	47
Total		128	9	7	18	162

For purposes of this study, and given the results obtained we wanted to add a section on attachment style called "undifferentiated" in which there are specific participants whose results fell into a pattern of dependence on the couple, considerable anxiety, and a good percentage of intimacy to the couple, 18 people formed this group; 7 of them of

them had a conflictive relationship, 8 harmonious, and 3 idealized.

About relation between relationship satisfaction and the attachment style, we could observe that there was significant, $p < .001$ (Table 2). In this sense, our results show that relationship satisfaction with partners depends on the people's attachment style.

Table 2. Relation between attachment styles and couples satisfaction

	Value	df	Sig. (bilateral)
Chi-square of Pearson	23.402 ^a	6	.001
Reason	24.708	6	.000
Lineal association	13.564	1	.000
N	162		

On another part, we assessed the total of Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) with the scores obtained in the different aspects to measure the attachment style, with a Pearson correlation (see Table 3). It was noted that the total DAS maintained a statistically significant relationship with the aspect of dependence and anxiety ($r = .257$ and $r = -.245$, respectively; both with a bilateral significance of .01). However, no relations were observed with the aspect of intimacy. Therefore, a greater satisfaction of couple relates to less emotional dependency and with less anxiety.

Table 3. Correlations between couples satisfaction and dependence, anxiety and intimacy

		DASTOTAL	EAD	EAA	EAI
DASTOTAL	Pearson's correlation	1	.257**	-.245**	.073
	Sig. (bilateral)		.001	.002	.357
	N	162	162	162	162
EAD	Pearson's correlation	.257**	1	-.276**	.224**
	Sig. (bilateral)	.001		.000	.004
	N	162	162	162	162
EAA	Pearson's correlation	-.245**	-.276**	1	-.291**
	Sig. (bilateral)	.002	.000		.000
	N	162	162	162	162
EAI	Pearson's correlation	.073	.224**	-.291**	1
	Sig. (bilateral)	.357	.004	.000	
	N	162	162	162	162

As for the aspects that measure the type of attachment, we found a significant relation between dependence and anxiety and intimacy ($r = -.276$ and $r = .224$, respectively, both with a bilateral significance of .01). We also observed that anxiety was related to the intimacy factor ($r = -.291$; with a bilateral significance of .01). That means that people who obtained higher levels of dependence have less intimacy and higher levels of anxiety. These results show that when there are higher levels of anxiety there is lower intimacy (see Table 4).

Table 4. Correlations between dependence, anxiety and intimacy

		EAD	EAA	EAI
EAD	Pearson's correlation	1	-.276**	.224**
	Sig. (bilateral)		.000	.004
	N	162	162	162
EAA	Pearson's correlation	-.276**	1	-.291**
	Sig. (bilateral)	.000		.000
	N	162	162	162
EAI	Pearson's correlation	.224**	-.291**	1
	Sig. (bilateral)	.004	.000	
	N	162	162	162

** Significant correlation level 0,01 (bilateral).

DISCUSSION

The results obtained in this study allow us to confirm that the objective was reached, which we can prove that the participants of this study, which had a

secure attachment style, have indicated higher levels of satisfaction with their partner. This finding is consistent with prior findings (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Collins & Read, 1990; Feeney & Noller, 1990; Guzmán & Contreras, 2012; Hammond & Fletcher, 1991; Hartup & Rubin, 1986; Hartfield & Raspon, 1993; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Hinde, 1979; Hollist & Miller, 2005; Kirkpatrick & Hazan, 1994; Meyers & Landsberger, 2002; Ojeda, 2006; Ortiz, Gómez & Apodaca, 2002; Rivera, Cruz & Muñoz, 2011; Shaver, Hazan & Bradshaw, 1988; Simpson, 1990; Weiss, 1986).

At the beginning of this research we make an emphasis that we were going to asked our participants about their age and their gender so that we could discover if there was a factor that influences our results. However, it was discovered that there was no significant relation with age and sex. This means that it doesn't matter the age of a person or if they are women or men, what it really relates with higher levels of satisfaction is the type of attachment.

One of the main limitations we found in this study was the amount of male participants, as our sample was by availability the amount of men was lower than the women. We believe that it was a limitation since there is a lot of research that have shown that there is differences of gender speaking specifically of couple relationship, such as communication (Tannen, 1990), the tendency to engage in one night stand relationships (Skolnick, 1978), and their abilities to read the non-verbal language (Hall, 1978).

In this study we observed that of all the participants whose relationship was

conflictive, 76.6 % were women. However, in this case you cannot say that there is a difference between men and women because the number of the total participants was not equitable. Hazan and Shaver (1994) indicate that without doubt human beings are born with a need to feel secure. However, in their article they say that mainly the domain of care and sexuality forms the differences between sexes. In general, women are more oriented to the caregiving and men toward sexuality.

Our recommendations for future research would be to give emphasis on the equitable number of participants by gender; it would be very interesting to discover if there are differences. We also recommend to do the research with the two members of the couple in order to be able to see if there are other factors. It has been found that no matter who of the two members of the couple manifest himself as the predominant Secure Attachment, their features to engage, intimidating in the relationship, permeate each other and interact with the other, favors a satisfactory relationship, because it is associated with more positive features that feeds an interpersonal relationship (Ojeda, 2006).

We can conclude in this study that the attachment styles have a relation with the levels of satisfaction in a romantic relationship.

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