



New Trends
in Psychology

The Relationship Between the Type of Attachment and the Satisfaction within The Romantic Relationship

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The need for interpersonal connection is a fundamental human need, to feel connected, closed and related with others. This need is one of the most powerful and important reasons which stand for human behaviour, relationships and interactions. The interpersonal connection has numerous aspects and influences upon all our aspects of life. All people feel the need to connect with those around them, this need being a universal one, that still appears from the first moments of life (Choi & Marks, 2008; Calancea, 2021). Hence, each person needs emotional support, emotional regulation, privacy, long-term relationships, collaboration, to be part of a community, psychological well-being, understanding and acceptance.

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All this is due to the fact that individuals must know and feel that they can rely on those around them for emotional support, empathy, encouragement, essential elements in times of sadness, difficulties or stress. Connecting with those around you can help yourself regulate your emotions by sharing feelings of joy or sadness, which leads to an emotional detachment. Through interpersonal connection, the individuals have the opportunity to open themselves from the emotional point of view, while sharing their feelings, emotions, thoughts and experiences, developing their intimate relationships through authenticity, sincerity, vulnerability; by creating long-term relationships, individuals feel stability and continuity in life; people tend to look for groups or social gatherings to experience the feeling of belonging and they know that they can contribute to a common goal, whilst healthy and satisfying relationships lead to a feelings of happiness, which result in a good mental health; and in that moment when the individuals feel accepted, the feeling of security and appreciation comes to surface (Ainsworth, 1978; Bowlby, 1979).

A relevant theory for the attachment concept is “The Theory of attachment”, proposed and developed by Hazan and Shaver (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Shaver & Hazan, 1988; Shaver, et al., 1988, apud Shaver, et al., 2021). This theory assumes that the social life of every individual is influenced by each person’s life experience, by the attachment developed during infancy, in connection to the relationship with the mother, that produces differences of opinion in the couple relationship, these types manifesting themselves in the romantic relationship, in adulthood

Tennov (1979, apud Tennov 1998) argued that the approach to romantic love is marked by the presence of an intense emotion, such as the feeling of pronounced longing mutually experienced and the fear of rejection. We consider that “The Theory of Passionate Love”, proposed by Tennov (1979) is relevant for the concept of romantic love. This theory explored the aspects of romantic love and analysed the concept of “limerence”, a term introduced by the author, in order to describe the intense, obsessive and passionate feelings experienced by some people in a love or a romantic relationship. Limerence is characterised by the following features: obsession, euphoria and anxiety. The first feature referred to individuals who live the limerence, while being obsessed with their loved one, constantly thinking of that person and finding it difficult to distract from this thought. The following feature, that was mentioned before, it refers to that fact that limerence is accompanied, in this case, by intense euphoria and joy when the partner responds in a similar manner to the actions of the individual or simply just shows support. The last feature concerns the individuals that are in love, those who find themselves experiencing limerence,

who tend to come into contact with a powerful episode of anxiety and a general state of unease, respectively, attitudes manifested towards their current situation or relationship status with their loved ones, as their most powerful fear is that of rejection from the part of their half or it is related to the uncertainty concerning the reciprocity of their feelings. Regarding the duration and the state of evolution, according to this theory, limerence is defined as a temporary experience, which may take place within a period of two years, in the majority of cases. Thus, this state may evolve while following two different paths: either by taking the form of another love or fading away as time passes. Tennov also underlined a distinction between limerence and other phenomena, as the former may be characterised by passion, obsession and high intensity love or amicable love, while being rational, stable, focused on friendship and mutual understanding. In addition, from this perspective, there was highlighted the fact that the individuals, which experience the state of limerence, tend to prove to be resistant towards criticism and warnings concerning their romantic relationship. Furthermore, these people may diminish the negative aspects of their loved ones or they may just ignore them, which can trigger a series of difficulties that occur in their manner of considering the relationship from an objective perspective.

Mary Ainsworth (1978) proposed, developed and classified the styles of attachment in four large categories, that are: the secure style, the ambivalent style, the avoidant style and the disorganised one. These attachment styles are models of behaviour in which a person interacts with others within their own relationship, throughout their lives. The first style mentioned refers to the individuals who already have learnt during their childhood to trust their parents and to consider them as stable sources of support and security, the former feeling comfortable when expressing their emotions and needs and feeling safe within different relationships and interactions, while trusting others. The adults manifesting this style of attachment tend to establish long-lasting healthy relationships, while having the capacity of efficiently managing conflicts. The second attachment style concerns the individuals that were raised and formed within an environment in which their parents were inconstant and ignored the needs and the feelings of their children, the latter developing a tendency for being anxious and unstable in their relationships, thus, developing a constant need for approval and confirmation from the part of the people surrounding them or from their partners. The third style of attachment, the avoidant one, concerns the individuals who were raised in environments in which their emotions and needs were not satisfied, thus, they tend to adopt independent attitudes, while avoiding to express

their feelings, their requests for help and support, as they are distant in relationships and they experience difficulties in involving themselves profoundly in romantic relations or in trusting the people around them. The last style of attachment is the disorganised one, which refers to the people who grew up in traumatising environments, full of abuse and rejection, thus, developing a confuse behaviour, which oscillates between the need for closeness and its rejection, while having difficulties in managing their relationships, the latter being characterised by conflicts, confusion and emotional instability.

These attachment styles may have a significant impact upon romantic relationships, as they can influence the behaviour, together with the reason, of the two parts of the couple. Thus, the two partners, who have a secure attachment style, usually have a high level of satisfaction within their relationship, as well as a healthy connection, while feeling safe and being capable of trusting their loved one, being comfortable and open towards their better half and being capable of expressing their emotions, feelings and thoughts and, of course, they are capable of communicating efficiently, hence their established relationships are more durable, based on intimacy, mutual trust, empathy etc. The attachment controlled by anxiety within romantic relationships manifests itself by unease and worries, as the two partners need constant reassurance, while being occupied with the fear of being rejected, thus, gradually developing a sort of emotional dependence on their partner, excessively clinging onto the relationship and experiencing strong difficulties when trying to control their emotions and managing their conflicts. As for the avoidant style of attachment, we may mention that it describes the people who seek autonomy and independence, while avoiding emotional openness and feelings' expression, manifesting a hostile awkward attitude within intimate situations, as they create an emotional distance between themselves and their partner, which diminishes the possibility of fully and profoundly involving themselves into the relationship. The disorganised style of attachment in romantic relationships concerns individuals who are capable of experiencing internal conflicts, that have a direct impact upon the relationship, as these people oscillate between desire and need of closeness, in contrast with their constant attitude of rejecting the others, while constantly stumbling in their way of developing a constant positive behaviour, which is capable of managing emotions (Ainsworth, 1978; Shaver, & Mikulincer, 2009).

Very few researchers studied and examined the factors that may mediate or moderate the relationship between the attachment style and the conjugal satisfaction. However, the focus was placed upon proximal elements, such as automatic thoughts, the

subjective state of spouses, the feelings involved in the interaction between the two partners, which are proved to have a influence in this respect (Davila, et al., 1998; Bradbury, & Fincham, 1988). Previous research underlined the fact that the factors which are connected to the process of communication mediated the association relating to the marital satisfaction and the specific style of attachment (Feeney, 1994). In another research, that was performed on students, there was revealed the presence of self-disclosure within the romantic relationship, an element which mediated this relation (Keelan, Dion și Dion, 1998). Also, other features that contribute in the process of moderation and mediation of attachment styles and conjugal satisfaction are: the preferences concerning the coping strategies, in relation to the marital conflict (Lussier, et al., 1997); the interactions of control from within the romantic relationships (Morrison, et al., 1997); the capacity of expressing one's emotions towards the romantic partner (Feeney, 1999). The factors previously mentioned are specific to romantic relationships (Meyers, & Landsberger, 2002).

All in all, it is important to affirm and to draw the attention upon the fact that these attachment styles are not some rigid categories, but units that may evolve and that can be influenced by the previous experiences of each individual, by their personal manner of interpreting the former, as well as the degree of individual effort. In addition, individuals have the possibility of acting and working with themselves, in order to develop a type of attachment that is more secure, that may improve the quality of their relationship throughout their life, thus, couples' or even individual therapy may be at use in this respect.

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