

Adult Attachment and Self Esteem

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Abstract

This study identifies the relationship between adult attachment, and specifically between attachment avoidance, attachment anxiety and self-esteem among married couples residing in the north-east of Peninsular Malaysia. A correlational research design was adopted to address the research objectives established for this study involving a representative sample of seventy married couples from the north-east of Peninsular Malaysia. Two sets of questionnaires were developed and reviewed by two expert panels before piloting and finalising. The structure and content of the questionnaires were specific to main two areas; Experience in a Close Relationship (ECR) scale and Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (RSE). The questionnaires were then distributed to the participants. The data were collected and analysed using descriptive statistical analysis and Pearson Correlation. The findings indicated the existence of a meaningful relationship between adult attachment and self-esteem. Furthermore, it was recommended based on the work performed, limitations and findings that further research is conducted in a similar program, but a with broader and a more substantial population size covering multiple communities, again with a specific focus on married couples and improving their attachment and self-esteem in a relationship.

Keywords: Attachment avoidance; attachment anxiety; self-esteem.

1. Introduction

The theory of attachment is the collaborative work of John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth [1]. Attachment theory can be described as the nature of emotional attachment in humans [2]. It was described as the bond that develops between a child and a caretaker, that aids in the child's development and consequently, in the child's emerging self-concept and prospects in the social world [3]. Attachment can also refer to the means by which you (as a person) are attached to other people. Moreover, connecting one person to another person due to the enduring and everlasting emotional bond across both time and space [6].

The theory of attachment and the theory of object relations both describe similar relational phenomena during human adulthood with each describing the different angle of interpersonal relationships [7]. Also, one person may have an attachment even though the feeling of attachment is not physically shared. [8] These two dimensions of attachment are divided into four prototypes of adult attachment styles. The first relates to feeling secure, (view positive - self-positive others), consisting of three insecure subtypes which include anxious-preoccupied (view negative - self-positive others) and dismissive-avoidance (view positive - self-negative others), and fearful-avoidance (view negative - self-negative others), [9]. Therefore, this study aims to determine the relationship that exists between adult attachment and self-esteem among married couples. The Experience in Close Relationship (ECR) and Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) are both used to measure adult attach-

ment, which in this case is avoidance attachment and anxiety attachment with self-esteem. As mentioned, the experimental population used in this study was from among the spouses presently living in North-east of Peninsular Malaysia, Kelantan.

There is limited research available that adequately addresses adult attachment and self-esteem. The most consistent and relevant research found was that of [9] a research examining the relationship between adult attachment styles, self-esteem, jealousy and life satisfaction. The analyses showed that individuals with a secure attachment style appear to rate higher on their levels of self-esteem and satisfaction with life within a positive relationship. In a separate study, [10] indicated that individuals with secure attachment styles are engaged in healthier preventive health behaviour, with higher self-esteem compared to individuals with insecure styles. Indeed, self-esteem aids in determining the relationship between attachment styles and health behaviour. Also, the previous study from Huntsinger & Luecken that [10] evaluated how attachment styles are related towards health behaviour in young adults, and the potential mediational role of self-esteem. Indeed, the results of the research demonstrated that those individuals with secure attachment styles were engaged in better preventive health behaviour with higher self-esteem compared to those individuals with insecure styles [10]. Notwithstanding, it showed that both research types demonstrate that self-esteem influences the behaviour of individuals.

It was reported that [11] the relationship between low self-esteem, loneliness, and social connectedness. The purpose of his study was