

Effects of Attachment and Emotional Feedback on Intimate Relationships

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Abstract:

Using information from recent psychology studies, the review examines how attachment types and emotional feedback affect interpersonal relationships, particularly in intimate relationships with adults. Attachment theory, which is deeply rooted in the foundational studies conducted by the renowned psychologist John Bowlby, posits that individuals' behaviors and emotions in their interactions with others within the context of relationships are significantly influenced and molded by the initial interactions they have with their primary caregivers during the early stages of their lives. This study looks at how happiness in relationships, emotional control, and conflict resolution are affected by secure, anxious, and avoidant attachment styles. Furthermore, partners' spoken and nonverbal emotional input greatly influences the character of the relationship. While negative reactions may foster insecurity, positive replies often reinforce good attachment practices. Several research outcomes are included in this article to shed light on how attachment and emotional feedback interact. In closing, the study indicates directions for further investigation, particularly with regard to digital communication and diversity.

Keywords: Attachment styles; emotional feedback; intimate relationships.

1. Introduction

An important factor in improving mental health and life pleasure is developing a thorough awareness of the dynamics of intimate connection. Introduced by Bowlby [1], attachment theory lays the groundwork for examining the impact of early experiences on adult relationships. Bowlby notes that the relationship with the main caregiver shapes a pattern. This pattern as an indicator for an individual's actions and anticipations in subsequent relationships. Various attachment styles exist, encompassing avoidant, anxious, and secure types. Such styles of attachment impact a person's responses to closeness, trust, and possible relationship issues.

Receiving emotional responses plays a major role in influencing relationships, just like attachment behaviors do. The resolution of relationship disputes frequently relies on emotional responses. Studies show that positive emotional support, like exhibiting empathy and proactive attentiveness, can mitigate the negative effects of attachment-related worries [2]. This accomplishment is realized by encouraging collaborative and interactive endeavors among partners. Emotional feedback involves exchanging non-verbal cues like body language, facial expressions, and verbal affirmations among partners in their interac-

tions. Experiencing negative emotions can escalate in feelings of insecurity, particularly among those inclined towards anxiety or avoidance. Studies indicate that individuals exhibiting anxious attachment traits generally encounter heightened insecurity after receiving negative emotional critiques. The feelings of uncertainty exacerbate their anxious condition and lead to a heightened reliance on interpersonal connections [3]. Likewise, individuals exhibiting avoidant attachment and negative feelings might opt for solitude or dismissive behaviors. These actions heighten their insecurity and lead them to shun intimacy [4]. However, affirmative emotional reactions lead to the secure attachment behaviors. Such strategies encompass cultivating trust, maintaining an open mind, and adjusting emotions. This specifically relates to individuals who oscillate between insecure and secure attachment behaviors [5]. This review aims to consolidate the latest research discoveries. The study focuses on how attachment methods and emotional responses influence the nature of close relationships. By analyzing these elements' interplay, the paper aims to shed light on their combined impact on relationship contentment and steadiness. Additionally, the analysis will pinpoint existing literature deficiencies and suggest future research trajectories, especially within the realm of digital communication and intercultural varian-

es.

2. Method

The results of empirical investigations published from the year 1985 to the year 2024 are compiled in this article. Utilizing sources like Google Scholar, PsycINFO, APA PsycNet, JSTOR, PubMed and CNKI. Papers were found by utilizing keywords, for example, “intimate relationships,” “emotional feedback,” “conflict resolution,” “relationship satisfaction,” and “attachment styles.” This article also considered some Chinese articles, studies and books. Including studies that concentrated on adult intimate relationships instead of parent-child or friendship interactions. The selection of studies was based on three criteria: methodological rigor, relevance, and contribution to the knowledge of the relationship between emotional feedback and attachment.

The primary research subjects selected in this article were attachment style’s impact on relationship outcomes and the function of emotional feedback in these effects. These subjects have subtopics on communication styles, emotional control, and the impact of attachment on conflict resolution. The study explores the effects of gender and culture differences as well as variations in relationship phases, including dating, cohabitation, and marriage.

3. Literature review

3.1 The Effect of Attachment patterns on interpersonal relationship

The theory of attachment provides a thorough theoretical framework explaining how early interactions with primary caregivers influence and maintain a person’s capacity to develop intimate relationships with partners is provided by the theory of attachment. According to Bowlby, the strong emotional ties that develop between newborns and their carers result in internal working models that shape how they see themselves and their interactions with others as they grow older [1]. Three attachment types may be distinguished from this basic functioning pattern: secure, anxious, and avoidant. The impact of various attachment styles on relationships with others varies, particularly when it comes to emotional control, handling conflict, and general happiness in a relationship.

People with secure attachments seek to have good opinions of themselves and other people. In the setting of Chinese society, this trait of children is particularly apparent. They prefer to want closeness and independence and wish to develop a healthy and solid connection. Based on the widespread application of secure attachment theory to describe how individuals view themselves, others, and their intimate relationships, a new personality type known

as secure personality emerges. Numerous research findings indicate a link between stable attachment bonds and enhanced relationship contentment, improved communication, and superior conflict resolution techniques. Simpson and his colleagues, for instance, found that people in stable dependent relationships were more likely to believe that their partners were offering encouragement and constructive criticism, which bolstered their emotional bond and mutual trust [6].

Anxious attachment is primarily characterized by a high sensitivity to rejection and an excessive need for a partner’s reassurance. Individuals with anxious attachment often experience intense fears of abandonment, which can lead to clinginess, jealousy, and emotional fluctuations. This attachment style can lead to a decline in relationship satisfaction, as both partners need constant validation, which can be extremely stressful for both. Mikulincer and Shaver emphasize that anxious individuals tend to interpret ambiguous or neutral partner behaviors as a sign of rejection, leading to more tension and conflict in relationships. In addition, focusing too much on maintaining intimacy can lead to over-dependence on partners, which can lead to relationship tension [3].

Conversely, avoidant attachment is characterized by a preference for staying emotionally detached and independent. People with this attachment style usually have a negative view of life. They also have a strong need to keep their independence. Such people typically shun intimate relationships and might struggle with expressing emotions. Such a situation may lead to losing emotional ties with the partner. Feeney and Noller’s studies reveal that avoidant individuals who are prone to retreat at the onset of a conflict. Such conduct often hinders efficient problem-solving and results in discontent within relationship dynamics. Moreover, eschewing close emotional connections can result in a separation, where one partner’s efforts to form intimacy are declined, potentially exacerbating the emotional separation [7].

The intricate interplay of various attachment styles and the evolution of relationships greatly influence the nature of a relationship. Individuals with secure emotional bonds tend to favor communication and effective problem-solving methods. Employing these tactics boosts the contentment found in relationships. Conversely, detrimental interaction behaviors like incessant pursuit of confirmation or retreat are associated with tendencies towards anxiety and avoidance in attachment. Such trends can jeopardize the steadiness of a relationship. People with a secure attachment tend to be more sensitive to their partner’s emotional demands. Collins and Feeney discovered that they also excel in delivering support promptly [8]. The way couples bond also affects their comprehension and reaction to each

other's requirements.

Variations in gender and culture can impact attachment styles and their subsequent relationship consequences. Collective societies, for instance, tend to prioritize family and community values more. Such concentration can influence how people attachment and their anticipations in relationships. Moreover, distinct variations in the attachment styles between males and females have been noted. Women generally exhibit a higher tendency of anxiety in attachment, whereas men typically display an avoidant style of attachment [9]. Such variances may intensify the intricacies of relational interactions, notably within cross-cultural or gender-varied environments.

In general, the patterns of attachment are critical in fostering interpersonal connections and influencing one's perception, interpretation, and reaction to their partner's actions. Variations in social interactions are influenced by the types of attachments. Generally, a stable bond enhances the quality of relationship results. Conversely, issues with anxious and avoidant attachment could adversely affect the satisfaction and stability in relationships. Moreover, numerous research works have proposed a range of theoretical frameworks to elucidate the distinct impact of attachment styles on the quality of relationships. Instances comprise theories like support-defense and self-determination theory. It is crucial to comprehend the patterns of insecure attachment patterns in people. This can aid in formulating approaches to enhance the quality of relationships.

3.2 The Effect of emotional feedback on interpersonal relationship

Emotional input significantly impacts both the sustenance and the quality of close relationships. This encompasses the use of both spoken and unspoken means in interactions. Providing emotional input acts as a method for partners to articulate their requirements and anticipations. This factor additionally molds the emotional climate within the relationship. Receiving positive or negative feedback can profoundly influence the interaction's dynamics. This factor can either promote or deter behaviors linked to attachment, impacting a person's general satisfaction with their partner.

Emotional expressions such as showing affection, providing support, and acknowledging others are vital for fostering emotional bonds and intensifying connections within a relationship. Such a method promotes stable attachment tendencies through offering support and recognizing the emotions of the partner. Both Johnson and Greenberg stress the role of positive feedback in nurturing a feeling of security and trust in a relationship. Experiencing a sense of security is vital for sustaining enduring joy

in relationships [10]. Studies indicate that couples who consistently respond positively, such as by demonstrating gratitude and warmth, typically find enhanced joy and steadiness in their romantic involvements [11]. Receiving positive replies contributes to fostering dialogue and resolving conflicts. Such an environment cultivates care and empathy, easing the process for partners to express their feelings and concerns.

Insufficient emotional responses, including sarcasm, blame, or indifference, may hinder the development of beneficial relationships and possibly weaken current ones. Receiving such feedback often triggers increased emotional and defensive reactions, viewing it as a threat. This is clearly evident in individuals prone to anxiety or disinterest in forming attachments. For instance, those grappling with anxious attachment may interpret negative comments as signs of their rejection. These situations might lead to increased dependence and anxiety. Conversely, those prone to avoidant attachment may show increased detachment when given negative feedback. These situations escalate emotional disconnection and create additional obstacles in relational communication [12].

Non-verbal, in addition to spoken cues such as voice and facial expressions, are crucial in emotional responses, significantly shaping the comprehension and reception of close relationships, whether positive or negative, usually reflect emotions that surpass simple spoken interactions. For instance, diminishing or ignoring eye contact could lead to a decrease in positive comments from a partner. This situation could result in mistrust and unforeseeable outcomes. On the flip side, nonverbal gestures such as showing empathy and care can strengthen emotional links between partners. Burgoon and her team's research underscores the importance of nonverbal interaction in disagreements. In such situations, partners often demonstrate increased consciousness of each other's emotional states [13]. Interpreting nonverbal cues might escalate tensions, especially among individuals with fluctuating emotional ties who frequently perceive ambiguous or impartial signals in a negative light. In contrast, positive nonverbal actions such as warm smiles or motions may lessen disagreements and foster consensus.

Gradually, the evolving emotional responses between partners creates a cumulative effect. These effects can either amplify or lessen the dynamics of the relationship. Steady positive responses foster a sense of security and mutual trust, crucial for maintaining a productive relationship. Engaging in these beneficial cycles can enhance relational contentment and elevate mental health. Conversely, persistent negative responses might lead to a series of discontent and distress, potentially culminating in the end of the relationship. The rise of emotional contagion

reveals the methods of emotional exchanges between partners. Generally, partners who respond positively tend to create a supportive emotional environment. This specified environment steadily enhances satisfaction within the relationship. On the flip side, partners who consistently offer negative feedback could create an environment conducive to developing negative viewpoints or attitudes, events such as these can lead to a consistent deterioration of the relationship.

Emotional feedback's function in personal interactions differs at each phase of the relationship. In the initial stages of a relationship, addressing positive emotions is crucial for building trust and closeness. Partners often focus more on each other's requirements and proactively provide additional support. However, as relationships develop, particularly during changes like living together, getting married, or becoming parents, the essence of emotional response transforms. Life's stressful events elevate the likelihood of receiving adverse feedback.

Variations in gender and culture have a considerable impact on individuals' perceptions and reactions to emotional critiques in relationships. Research indicates that, typically, women exhibit greater expressiveness and emotional responses when compared to men. This difference can affect communication in various relationships [14]. Cultural norms about expressing emotions also play a role in how feedback is given and received. In some cultures, direct verbal feedback is less common. Instead, there is a greater focus on nonverbal cues and indirect communication. Understanding these differences is very important for improving relationships.

In addition to the influence and effect of emotional feedback and attachment type on intimate relationships, the interaction of these two factors will also directly or indirectly affect the state of intimate relationships. For example, emotional feedback will produce different effects and coping styles on different levels of attachment type. Thus, the partner's attachment type affects the effect of emotional feedback on relationship dynamics [15]. Those with secure attachments generally show higher resilience in the face of negative feedback and are more inclined to see it as constructive rather than threatening. They are more likely to respond to positive feedback in a mutually beneficial manner, thus forming a positive feedback cycle that enhances mutual satisfaction. In the face of negative emotions, groups with more secure attachment types tended to adopt a more cautious attitude. In contrast, those with insecure attachment patterns may have difficulty processing and responding to emotional feedback, resulting in maladaptive interactions. Furthermore, people who have a strong sense of attachment typically look for assistance upon receiving either negative or neutral feedback

[16]. Contemplate individuals with anxious attachments, who frequently derive solace from affirmative replies. Conversely, individuals who usually avoid forming attachments might perceive the effect of positive feedback as minimal. Consequently, their emotional engagement in the relationship diminishes.

Briefly, the role of the emotional feedback model in intimate relationships must not be overlooked. Positive feedback cultivates favorable emotions, collaborative spirit, and confidence. Conversely, negative reactions can ignite conflicts and resentment, especially in those inclined to form insecure ties. Over time, the cumulative influence of non-verbal cues and responses remains a key factor in forming relationships. Understanding these components is crucial for developing effective strategies to improve aspects such as the stability and depth of relationships.

4. Future directions

The current research uncovers essential insights into the impact of attachment methods and emotional responses on intimate relationships, but numerous relative factors remain require further investigation. Focus is being placed on the impact of digital communications on these emerging trends. It is now crucial to examine how digital communication tools impact relation dynamics. Tracking present happenings necessitates assessing how current communications influence forming connections and emotional responses. Electronic channels such as messaging and social networking are rapidly becoming the preferred channels. This technique could modify the expression of specific emotional signals, especially considering that direct communication often excludes non-verbal cues. Subsequent studies may investigate the impact of emotional triggers on major alterations in relationships, encompassing encounters, dating, weddings, or childbirth. These alterations often lead to distinct changes in the relationship. Investigating and researching the ways in which attachment types and emotional feedback interact at various phases can yield further insight.

The field of cross-cultural research also warrants increased focus. The majority of research on attachment and emotional response takes place in Western societies that prioritize individual autonomy and emotional articulation. Nevertheless, within collectivist societies, where the roles of family and community are more pivotal, the nature of attachment and emotional response can vary. Exploring the manifestation of these elements across diverse cultural settings might enhance our overall comprehension of close relationships.

In conclusion, more longitudinal research is needed to observe how attachment types and emotional feedback

impact the development of relationships. Most current research is cross-sectional, giving only a brief view of these processes. Studies that track couples over time could reveal how attachment-related behaviors and emotional feedback patterns change. This would provide a clearer understanding of what factors contribute to the success or failure of long-term relationships.

5. Conclusion

Two primary elements significantly influence the longevity and quality of personal relationships: the kinds of attachment and emotional responses. Establishing stable connections boosts the contentment in relationships through fostering trust, emotional control, and efficient conflict resolution. Conversely, attachment styles that are anxious or avoidant and insecure can lead to issues and degrade the quality of relationships. Emotional responses, either affirmative or adverse, influence attachment types in manners that either reinforce stable behaviors or amplify insecure ones.

Enhancing relationships requires grasping the interplay between attachment and emotional responses. Partners can forge more profound and protected bonds by concentrating on improving emotional responses and methods of tackling fears. Subsequent studies ought to examine these dynamics across different scenarios. Encompasses digital interaction, alterations in interpersonal dynamics, and variances in culture. Conducting these researches will enhance our comprehension of these interplays.

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