

The Analysis of Positive Effect Between Healthy Intimate Relationship and the Anxious Attachment Styles

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ABSTRACT

Psychologists have divided one's secure levels into three types of attachment: secure attachment style, anxious attachment style, and avoidant attachment style. These types of attachment are easily formed due to parental neglect and environmental anxiety during infant periods. Although the attachment styles took shape during the early age of life, they continue to largely influence ones in their other important stage of life, intimate relationships. Therefore, the purpose of this research paper is to examine whether a close and healthy intimate relationship later in life can play a positive effect on the attachment styles that people form during their infancy. This research article applies literature reviews to articulate that a good-quality relationship can help people relieve from anxious attachment.

It notes three indicators to determine a good-quality relationship, emotional stress, trustiness, and depression. The results of this study present that emotional stress and depression are highly negative correlation, while trustiness shows a close positive correlation with the anxious attachment style. In conclusion, based on the correlation, a good-quality relationship can play a positive role on anxiously attached individuals.

Keywords: Anxious attachment, intimate relationship, positive effect, depression, childhood neglect

1. INTRODUCTION

Psychology divides people's personalities in intimate relationships into three types of attachment: secure attachment style, anxious attachment style, and avoidant attachment style. These three attachment systems were crafted by natural selection and are activated when an individual experiences fear, anxiety, or related forms of distress, in which the proximity to others might help to reduce these negative emotions [1]. People who lack a sense of security in the relationship are often ranging into an anxious attachment style that their degree of dependence on the intimate relationship is far more than ordinary people. Following with feelings of fretful, their attitude toward the partner will become too persistent or even paranoid, expressing inexplicable worry about gains and losses. Instead of feeling loved and trusted by their partner, anxiously attached individuals always feel an "emotional hunger" state, hoping that the other person will save them or make them complete. Although they desperately want to be closed, they are always suspicious and fearful that the other doesn't want to have the same level of closeness.

According to Cassidy & Berlin, the parent's departure causes infants distress, and following with such attachment style when they grow up, they are reluctant to be in proximity to their romantic partners [2]. Apparently, this anxious attachment style is formed when people are infants, and is accompanied by them when they step into one of the most important stages in life, intimate relationships. there are often couples who break up due to the anxious attachment disorder, not because their love is not pertinacious enough, but because they do not know how to deal with such symptoms. Therefore, the primary purpose of this article is to examine whether a healthy close relationship can play a positive role on people with anxious personalities. Through collecting the conclusions and methods of various academic literature, this study found a deep relationship between healthy relationship indicators and the anxious attachment type. Further, the implication of this article is to make couples alter their pessimistic view of their anxious attached partner and help each other build a stable, robust, and healthy relationship.

2. THREE INDICATORS TO DETERMINE ATTACHMENT STYLES

Li, & Chan states that adult attachment styles predict the quality of romantic relationships, and different styles reflect the different overall satisfaction of the couples [3]. One romantic relationship quality indicator as Li et.al found is named connectedness, which shows the degree of mutual participation of couples and includes several indicators, emotional distress, trust, and depression [3]. This research paper would like to explore if these small indicators are highly correlated with anxious attachment in one's relationship, and whether people will eventually perceive positive effects from maintaining such negative styles.

2.1. Emotional distress

As stated in the article, the anxiously attached individuals usually hold negative views of themselves and are always worried if they fail to meet their partner's expectations and that their partner will leave them [4]. This is often a consequence of childhood neglect by their parents [4]. The concerns and needs that the anxiously attached person has for their partner in one relationship are analogous to what they had for their parents when they were young children. They want their partners to pay out as much or more as they do in the relationship, at the same time, they are afraid that their partners would behave the same as what their parents did, being neglected, which would contribute a great emotional distress within the relationship. However, Vollmann et al. presented that, as the partner's responsive behaviors appear to be care and approachable, these anxious people would result in feelings of gratitude and happiness [4]. In this case, this research article could interpret such a sense of contentment coming from the result of the attention from the partner, which is one great factor of a healthy relationship. If such a positive feeling sustains for a long time, people with an anxious attachment will begin to believe that the "pay and return" relationship is real. Over time, they will start to slowly forget the unresponsiveness from their parents that once gave them. Therefore, decreasing the emotional distress within the relationship has positive effects on helping anxiously attached individuals.

2.2. Trust

The other indicator that determines a good-quality relationship is trust, which is often a consequence of an unhealthy relationship. To maintain a good relationship, couples cannot underestimate the role of trust in each other. Different attachment styles provide each relationship with different degrees of confidence, in which the anxiously attached individuals are considered to have the lowest sense of trust in their partners. Rodriguez, L. M.et.al. investigate that upon experiencing

distrust in one's partner, anxiously attached individuals are more likely to become jealous and psychologically abusive [5]. Jealousy in a romantic relationship is considered to associate with low self-esteem, low self-confidence, low generalized trust, and depression [6]. When jealousy brings all these negative results, these negative results will further contribute to the formation of more jealousy in return, which constitutes a vicious cycle that never makes the relationship healthy. However, according to Attridge, M., when relationship quality and feelings are positively associated with relationship closeness, the degree of suspicious jealousy can be largely reduced [6]. If a romantic partner is able to provide enough security to the anxious partner, the possibility of being jealous can be decreased and gradually form more trustiness in the relationship. Thus, by eliminating jealousy of one romantic partner, the couples will be able to connect more trust between the two. Since trust is a positive indicator in a good-quality relationship, the anxiously attached individual will be more likely to gain positive effects from forming deep trust in the relationship.

2.3. Depression

A few studies have shown that anxious attachment is highly associated with dysfunctional attitudes, low self-esteem, and depression [8]. As the research shows that a partner high in anxious attachment is more likely to incur general conflict, people are more likely to present more distress and lower relationship closeness since they are less controllable to their own emotions and more pessimistic to their partner [7]. When they are accustomed to perceiving negative emotions of their partners, they are prone to cause more depression and anxiety themselves. According to Lee et.al, insecure attachment can cause cognitive vulnerability to depression and dysfunctional attitudes that follow with the depressive disorders are then contributed to low self-esteem (one great characteristic that constitutes anxiously attached individuals)[8]. Based on all these researches showing the close correlation between anxious attachment styles with depression, the research predicts that if a healthy relationship could have a positive effect on treating depression, then such a healthy relationship can also play a beneficial role in remedying the anxious attachment. The researchers investigate that the support of one intimate relationship may help to minimize or even prevent depression, suggesting that a close, confiding relationship can reduce depressive emotions. Additionally, they also found that improving the quality of a relationship can also help lessen depression [9]. While according to the conclusion aforementioned, since the anxious attachment is highly correlated with the depression, it can be predicted that healthy intimate relationships can also help to reduce the anxious attachment that one partner has.

3. DISCUSSION

This research paper aims to investigate the primary correlation between a healthy relationship and anxious attachment styles. To constitute a healthy relationship requires three indicators, including emotional distress, trust, and depression as Li & Chan found [2]. This article hypothesizes that if these three indicators are highly correlated with anxious attachment style, the positive outcomes can then predict a gradual recovery from being an anxiously attached individual. After exploring different literature research, the study tries to find evidence to demonstrate how these three indicators of a good-quality relationship are closely related to anxious attachment, whether reducing emotional distress predicts a higher quality of relationship while more trust can otherwise anticipate a healthier relationship and if depression presents a tight correlation with anxious attachment style as well. To combine this correlation between the factors, this study proposes to find whether these small factors can predict a good-quality relationship, and so play a positive role on anxiously attached people. The results demonstrate that anxiously attached people usually fall into a self-suspicious cycle that they always view themselves as negative while viewing their partners as positive.

As mentioned earlier, infants and young children who were not properly cared for and treated by their parents often form an anxious attachment style. Because their family and their life-time partners are considered to be one of the most intimate people in their life. These anxiously attached individuals often make the mistake of comparing their relationship with their partner to their previous relationship with their parents when they were infants. All the people with anxiety attachment type often then mistakenly believe that their partner's mind and behavior toward them now is the same as their parents used to be toward them, which eventually leads them to be insecure, vigilant, and cautious in the relationship.

The findings of Vollmann et al. present that when a partner starts to act more approachable and careful to the person who is anxiously attached, it enables the level of gratitude and happiness of an anxiously attached person largely increase, which properly control the emotional distress of the one and further play a positive role on these anxious people [4]. It is always necessary to be attentive to your partner in a relationship. Not only do normal, healthy people need plenty of attention from their partners, but people with anxious attachments need it even more. In addition to this indicator, Rodriguez et al. also found that forming connected trust in the relationship could largely reduce the possibility of jealousy [5]. Jealousy is not only associate with low generalized trust, but also has a deep connection with depression. Envy is regarded as associated with higher self-inferiority and lower self-esteem, suggesting that these two components play a crucial role in making

people depressed [10]. Such a situation demonstrates that creating a copious sense of trust is a way to reduce jealousy, but also an effort to prevent depressive emotions. The research is consistent with those of Burns et al., who concluded that a healthy relationship plays a positive role in depression that also predicts a benefit effect on anxiously attached individuals [9]. Overall, the indicator of a positive relationship, trust, is dispensable to decrease jealousy and depression, which can further rest an advantageous effect on the anxious attachment styles.

However, there are some limitations of this study existed. Theoretically, the three indicators can prove to have correlations with anxious attachment styles, but they cannot individually accurately determine to have a positive effect on the anxious types. Firstly, there is no evidence to testify that only one or two good qualities of a relationship can actually trigger a healthy relationship that there are more elements to determine a healthy relationship. They could be either external or internal, like money and personalities. The healthy relationship cannot be easily attributed to the above-mentioned indicators. Moreover, without scientific data, it cannot claim causation between a healthy relationship to the anxious attachment styles simply because there is a correlation between the small indicators. Vollmann, et al. also suggest that when the partner's responsive behaviors can always meet their anxiously attached partner's expectations, it can cause fear and anxiety to reciprocate [4]. This anxiety can interfere with their abilities to appreciate the positive aspects of their partners, therefore, stymie the overall happiness of the relationship.

4. CONCLUSION

In psychology, anxious attachment and avoidant attachment are two styles that usually bother people who are in an intimate relationship. This research article helps to examine whether a healthy and good-quality intimate relationship later in their important stage of life can play a positive effect on the anxiously attached individuals. In the research article, although without the supports of practical experiments, it collects several literature reviews to find the inside relationship between a good-quality relationship with the anxious attachment styles. It demonstrates that emotional distress and the depression in a relationship negatively affect the anxious attachment styles while the trustiness positively influences it. Based on the facts that three indicators of a good-quality relationship are closely related to anxious attachment style, it can be inferred that anxious attachment is affected by these three indicators. Overall, according to the inferences of the relationship between the three indicators and the anxious attachment styles, the results of this research support the hypothesis that a

healthy relationship can have a positive effect on anxiously attached individuals.

In the current study, the extrapolation of the close relationship between these factors and anxious attachment is only based on different literature. Although the causal link between them is clear and close as shown in this research paper, there is no specific experimental data to support this conclusion. In other words, the experimental conclusion still lacks both validity and reliability to present whether a healthy romantic relationship can play an optimistic role on anxiously attached people. In order to further improve this study, not only it should rely on the support of literature reviews, if possible, it should focus on more experimental methods to prove the results. To better find a reliable correlation in future studies between these two factors, the research would need to use the longitudinal research: Randomly find 100 couples that at least one of them is suffering from the anxious attachment as a sample and give out surveys to them on the first year, asking their satisfaction of their current relationship, their sense of three indicators, emotional stress, trust and depression, and their level of anxiousness. Then in the second year, asking these people again for these three questions. By conducting the experiment over a long period of time, this study is able to investigate whether the three indicators of a healthy relationship can actually play a positive effect on anxiously attached people overtime as my current conclusion demonstrates. Such longitudinal research might be more authoritarian and reliable compare to the current study that only depends on literature reviews.

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