



An Analysis of the Influencing Factors of College Students' Attachment Avoidance and Strategies for Library Reading Therapy Services

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Abstract. Attachment avoidance among college students is becoming an increasingly prevalent issue, and it is hypothesized to be associated with parental and familial relationships. This research takes 364 college students from a certain university in Anhui Province as the sample. Through methods such as descriptive statistical analysis, correlation analysis, and mediation effect analysis, an in-depth study is conducted on the influencing factors of college students' attachment avoidance. The results indicate that parental conflicts trigger college students' attachment avoidance by influencing their self-esteem, and self-esteem has a significant mediating effect between parental conflicts and attachment avoidance. Based on the research findings, service suggestions are proposed for college libraries from three aspects: constructing digital resources for reading therapy, establishing professional teams for reading therapy, and building intelligent platforms for reading therapy, so as to provide references for colleges to enhance mental health education.

Keywords: College students; parental conflict; self-esteem; attachment avoidance; reading therapy.

1 Introduction

A recent survey has revealed that contemporary college students exhibit a generally diminished willingness to engage in romantic relationships, with approximately 20% expressing concerns regarding marriage[19]. In addition to the existing pressures of academic and personal development, the data clearly indicate that the influence of family dynamics and parental relationships contributes to their diminished trust in romantic relationships and marriage. According to the research perspective of A. Henry and others, this group of college students is highly likely to exhibit a tendency toward avoidant attachment [8].

Avoidant attachment refers to an individual's reluctance or psychological rejection when forming close relationships with others, which is a type of insecure attachment.

Modern psychological research suggests that avoidant attachment is generally closely related to one's family of origin [9]. According to family systems theory, prolonged parental conflict tends to induce anxiety and depression in children, subsequently undermining their trust in romantic relationships and marriage. Especially, parental conflict may also impact the development of children's self-efficacy and self-esteem. Research by Jennifer and others indicates that children might mistakenly attribute parental conflict to themselves[4], leading to feelings of self-blame and guilt, which in turn affect their levels of self-esteem. Meanwhile, studies have found a significant correlation between individual self-esteem levels and avoidant attachment, although the specific mechanism of this relationship remains unclear.

Reading therapy, as a simple and effective method of psychological adjustment, has been proven to hold significant practical value in improving parent-child relationships and family cohesion, as well as enhancing individual self-esteem and social interaction skills[3]. Against the background of increasingly prominent marriage anxiety and profound changes in population pattern, university libraries conduct in-depth research on the psychological characteristics, influencing factors and mechanism of attachment avoidance of college students, and actively carry out targeted reading healing services with the help of digital and artificial intelligence technology, which is an effective way to strengthen the mental health education of college students in the new era. It is also an inevitable choice to guide the new generation of young people to form a positive and healthy outlook on marriage and life.

2 An Investigation into the Factors Influencing Attachment Avoidance Among College Students

2.1 Research Participants

This study selected 800 college students from a university in Anhui Province as subjects, with 200 participants from each grade and an equal gender ratio of 1:1. The subjects were fully informed about the requirements and confidentiality principles of the survey. After quality testing and screening, valid data were obtained from 758 participants, including 371 males and 387 females, maintaining a nearly 1:1 gender ratio. Among these participants, 335 had experienced romantic relationships, while 423 had not.

2.2 Research Tools

Children's Perception of Interparental Conflict Scale (CPIC). The revised Chinese version of the Parental Conflict Perception Scale, developed by Liping Chi et al., was utilized to assess college students' perceptions of parental conflict. The revised scale comprises three subscales: conflict characteristics, threat cognition, and self-attribution, consisting of a total of 38 items. For the purpose of this study, three dimensions—conflict frequency, conflict intensity, and conflict resolution—were selected from the scale to evaluate conflict characteristics. These dimensions are assessed through 17 items,

employing a 4-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1 point) to "strongly agree" (4 points). Higher scores in each dimension indicate a higher level of perceived parental conflict by the child. In this study, the Cronbach's α coefficient for the scale is 0.937, demonstrating excellent internal consistency [5].

Self-Esteem Scale (SES). The revised Chinese version of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale by Mengcheng Wang and others (2010) was used to assess the self-esteem levels of college students. The scale contains 10 items, with a 4-point rating system ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree," corresponding to scores of 1 to 4. This scale is currently the most authoritative and widely used measurement tool. In this study, the Cronbach's α for the scale is 0.846, indicating that the scale has good reliability[17].

Experiences in Close Relationships Inventory (ECR). The scale was developed by Brennan et al. (1998), and its Chinese version was revised by Tonggui Li and Kato Kazuo (2006). The scale contains a total of 36 items, used to measure an individual's level of insecure attachment in romantic relationships, including two subscales: anxiety and avoidance. This study uses only the avoidance subscale to measure avoidant attachment. In this study, the Cronbach's α for the scale is 0.878, indicating that the scale has good reliability[12].

2.3 Research Process

Common Method Bias Test. Since the data were self-reported by the participants, a Harman single-factor test was used to check for common method bias. The results showed that there were eight factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, with the first factor explaining 23.86% of the variance, which is below the 40% threshold, indicating no significant common method bias in this study.

Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis. Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis were performed on parental conflict, self-esteem, and attachment avoidance, with the results presented in Table 1. The correlation analysis revealed that the correlation coefficients between parental conflict and self-esteem, and between parental conflict and attachment avoidance, were 0.366 and 0.108, respectively. Both values are positive, indicating a significant positive correlation. Furthermore, the correlation coefficient between self-esteem and attachment avoidance was found to be 0.270, also suggesting a significant positive relationship between these two variables.

After conducting a multivariate analysis of variance with gender and grade as independent variables and parental conflict, self-esteem, and avoidant attachment as dependent variables, it was found that the main effects of both gender and grade did not reach a significant level ($P > 0.05$). At the same time, the interaction between gender and grade also did not show significance ($P > 0.05$), indicating that the levels of parental

conflict, self-esteem, and avoidant attachment traits are comparable across different grades and genders among college students.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis Results (N=758).

Variable	M	SD	Parental Conflict	Self-Esteem	Avoidant Attachment
Parental Conflict	2.2891	0.57629	1		
Self-Esteem	2.1096	0.44905	0.366	1	
Avoidant Attachment	3.4347	0.91597	0.108	0.270	1

Analysis of Self-Esteem as a Mediator. Based on the previous correlation analysis results, this study sets parental conflict as the independent variable, avoidant attachment as the dependent variable, and self-esteem as the mediating variable. The PROCESS plugin in SPSS was used, employing the Bootstrap procedure to test the mediating role of college students' self-esteem levels between parental conflict and avoidant attachment.

First, regression analysis was conducted to examine the predictive effects of college students' parental conflict and self-esteem on avoidant attachment, with the results shown in Table 2. The results indicate that parental conflict significantly predicts self-esteem ($\beta = 0.2854$, $t = 7.4905$, $p < 0.01$) and significantly predicts avoidant attachment ($\beta = 0.1716$, $t = 2.0660$, $p < 0.05$). After adding the mediating variable, the direct predictive effect of parental conflict on avoidant attachment became non-significant ($\beta = 0.0164$, $t = 0.1898$, $p > 0.05$), but the predictive effect of self-esteem on avoidant attachment was significant ($\beta = 0.5435$, $t = 4.8933$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 2. Regression Analysis of Parental Conflict, Self-Esteem, and Attachment Avoidance in College Students.

Outcome		Fitting parameters		Regression coefficient		
DV	IV	R	R ²	F	β	t
Self-Esteem	Parental Conflict	0.3663	0.1342	56.1081	0.2854	7.4905
Avoidant At- tachment	Parental Conflict	0.1080	0.0117	4.2682	0.1716	2.0660
Avoidant At- tachment	Parental Conflict	0.2704	0.0731	14.2415	0.0164	0.1898
	Self-Esteem				0.5435	4.8933

Next, the mediating effect of self-esteem in the relationship between parental conflict and avoidant attachment in college students was analyzed. The results shown in Table 3. The direct effect of parental conflict on avoidant attachment in college students is 0.0164, with a 95% confidence interval that includes 0 [-0.1538, 0.1866], suggesting that the direct effect of parental conflict on avoidant attachment is not significant; The

mediating effect of self-esteem is 0.1552, with a 95% confidence interval that does not include 0 [0.0789, 0.2572]. This indicates that self-esteem has a significant mediating effect between parental conflict and avoidant attachment, with a relative effect of 90.44%.

Table 3. Mediating Effect of Self-Esteem on Parental Conflict and Avoidant Attachment in College Students.

<i>Effect Type</i>	<i>Effect Value</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>95% Confidence Interval</i>		<i>Relative Effect</i>
			<i>Lower Limit</i>	<i>Upper Limit</i>	
Total Effect	0.1716	0.0831	0.0083	0.0395	100%
Direct Effect	0.0164	0.0866	-0.1538	0.1866	9.56%
Mediating Effect	0.1552	0.0461	0.0789	0.2572	90.44%

2.4 Research Results

This study identified a significant positive correlation between parental conflict and college students' attachment avoidance, aligning with prior research. Previous studies have demonstrated that an individual's performance in romantic relationships is influenced by family environment and adolescent developmental experiences, with parental conflict impacting adolescents' perception of love. Social learning theory offers an explanation: children raised in environments characterized by parental conflict, including cold wars, arguments, and even physical altercations, are likely to emulate these negative coping mechanisms and replicate them in intimate relationships[10]. In family therapy, this phenomenon is referred to as intergenerational transmission, meaning that higher levels of parental conflict increase the likelihood of children experiencing relationship conflicts and adopting negative conflict resolution strategies. Consequently, they may develop fear of repeating their parents' mistakes and exhibit avoidance or anxiety towards attachment figures[16].

This study elucidates the precise mechanisms through which parental conflict and attachment avoidance operate among college students. More specifically, parental discord tends to engender an inclination towards attachment avoidance in offspring by undermining their self-esteem, which acts as a critical mediator in the relationship between parental conflict and avoidant attachment[6]. These findings robustly corroborate Borton et al.'s perspective that parental strife hinders college students from experiencing familial affection and warmth during their developmental stages, often resulting in the internalization of feelings of inadequacy and heightened sensitivity. Consequently, this negatively impacts the cultivation of their communication and social competencies, impeding their ability to acquire effective methods and skills for interacting with the opposite sex.

Moreover, a discordant family environment predisposes college students to experience depression and anxiety throughout their maturation, potentially casting them as scapegoats or outlets for parental disputes, leading them to erroneously attribute parental conflicts to their own shortcomings. Within such a milieu, children might develop an exaggerated sense of self-worth to counterbalance the erosion of their intrinsic self-

esteem. Despite its superficial robustness, this elevated self-esteem conceals a negative self-assessment at a subconscious level [1]. As a result, these individuals may resort to various defensive mechanisms to preserve their self-esteem, manifesting in adverse attachment behaviors and a reluctance to engage in profound communication and intimacy with others. Individuals with this level of self-esteem tend to exercise greater caution in selecting a partner. When confronted with conflict, their elevated self-esteem may lead them to adopt less constructive approaches to problem-solving, which can further complicate the establishment of close relationships [7].

The findings of this study offer theoretical guidance and direction for university libraries to effectively support the mental health education of college students with attachment avoidance through the integration of reading therapy.

3 Strategies for College Libraries to Provide Reading Therapy Services for College Students with Attachment Avoidance

In recent years, the intensity of social competition has increased, and the pace of family life and work has gradually accelerated. This has led to a significant rise in marital and family conflicts, which undoubtedly makes it easier for the next generation to develop collective avoidant attachment. Erikson's theory of psychosocial development suggests that college students, as they transition into young adulthood, are at a critical stage of psychological and emotional development[18]. Therefore, an individual's avoidant attachment is likely to manifest during the college years. As the main organization to carry out the reading healing of college students' mental health problems, college libraries should grasp this new phenomenon, take the adjustment of college students' self-esteem as the key entry point, make full use of their own resources and space advantages, and use digital and artificial intelligence technology to actively carry out reading healing services for college students' attachment avoidance groups.

3.1 Enhance the Digital Resources for Reading Therapy Targeting College Students with Attachment Avoidance

Currently, several university libraries have established specialized therapeutic bookshelves to meet the growing demand for reading therapy. These bookshelves primarily focus on addressing common psychological health issues[15]. However, due to the limited physical space available in library collections, it is impractical to dedicate a separate therapeutic bookshelf exclusively for individuals with avoidant attachment. Furthermore, college students with avoidant attachment often experience feelings of inadequacy and heightened sensitivity, which can make it particularly challenging for them to proactively seek out and borrow relevant therapeutic materials.

In this context, the development of specialized digital resources for college students exhibiting an avoidant attachment style can effectively address this issue. In practice, we can set up a separate digital reading healing resource library according to the theme

of "attachment avoidance", and build a resource library covering such books as "Attachment: Why We Love so uneasily", "The Power of Self-confidence", "Non-violent communication" and "The Art of Love", which can help attachment avoidance college students quickly access healing resources of interest. Digital retrieval and paperless reading can reduce the shyness of these college students, effectively protect their personal privacy, and enable them to better solve emotional problems.[14].

3.2 Construct a Professional Reading Healing Team for Attachment Avoidance College Students

University library staff typically have professional backgrounds in library and archival management, information management, and related fields, making it difficult for them to independently organize a high-quality reading therapy service team, especially one specifically focused on addressing avoidant attachment issues. In light of the growing prevalence of attachment avoidance among college students, university libraries should fully leverage the resources of the university's mental health education center, psychology faculty, network information center, student affairs staff, and other relevant units and personnel. They should proactively collaborate with external professional mental health institutions and non-profit organizations, and establish an online virtual reading and healing laboratory[11]. This initiative aims to provide tailored, systematic, and scientifically grounded healing programs for college students in need, striving to develop a specialized reading therapy service team characterized by "information exchange, complementary strengths, and synergistic effectiveness" to address attachment avoidance issues. Relying on the professional team, the library can also organize online and offline reading healing themed activities around attachment avoidant college students, such as "Correct understanding of attachment avoidant personality", "How to maintain self-esteem in love relationship", and "how to get out of the trauma of the original family". This can provide more opportunities and channels for attachment avoidance college students to "support, share and communicate with each other".

3.3 Developing an Intelligent Reading Therapy Platform for Attachment Avoidance College Students

University libraries should actively adapt to the trend of technological development, fully utilize modern information technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data analysis, and cloud computing, and actively explore the construction of an intelligent reading therapy service platform. Through intelligent Q&A, virtual therapists, case matching, and other methods, personalized reading advice and therapy plans should be provided for college students with attachment avoidance tendencies [2].

The construction of intelligent platforms can provide reading therapy services for various psychological health problems such as attachment avoidance among college students, which can effectively save human resource costs and solve the problem of insufficient professional teams. In addition, relying on intelligent platforms to build anonymous communication communities for healing readers can provide a friendly and relaxed reading and healing experience interactive sharing platform for attachment

avoidant college students, which is conducive to creating a healing environment and atmosphere of mutual assistance and encouragement[13]. In addition, relying on the intelligent platform to accumulate cases and data of reading therapy for college students can further support relevant scholars to carry out research on reading therapy for attachment avoidant college students, which helps to form a virtuous cycle between research theory and practice.

4 Conclusion

This study focuses on the current state of attachment avoidance among college students, employing descriptive statistical analysis, correlation analysis, regression analysis, and mediation effect analysis to quantitatively investigate the relationships between parental conflict, self-esteem, and attachment avoidance. The results indicate that parental conflicts trigger college students' attachment avoidance by influencing their self-esteem, and self-esteem has a significant mediating effect between parental conflicts and attachment avoidance. College libraries should recognize this phenomenon and leverage their collection resources and service capabilities. By integrating digital and artificial intelligence technologies, they should proactively offer targeted reading therapy services for students with attachment avoidance issues. This approach is crucial for universities to innovate and enhance mental health education for college students.

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