Research Article

Attachment Styles, Cognitive Distortion and Interpersonal Problems Among Emerging Adults

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Abstract

The beginning of adulthood is a stage of life that is marked by a persistent reliance on parents in the face of unpredictable changes in relationships, employment, education, and finances. The present article is an attempt to understand whether emerging adults' interpersonal problems, cognitive distortion, and attachment style are related in any way. A sample of 200 developing adults was chosen on purpose. Assessments were conducted on interpersonal problems, cognitive distortion, and attachment styles. We employed Spearman's correlation test. The findings indicate a positive correlation between cognitive distortion and the interpersonal problem subscales measuring dependence and difficulty in providing support. Hard to be supportive and fearful attachment styles are positively correlated. Interpersonal problems and attachment styles are positively correlated.

Keywords: Attachment styles, Cognitive Distortion, Interpersonal Problems and Emerging Adults.

Introduction

Emerging adulthood is defined as the age between eighteen and twenty-five, is a crucial developmental stage marked by significant transitions in roles and environments. This phase, situated between adolescence and full adulthood, encompasses substantial changes in educational, financial, and relational domains (Arnett, 2015). As individuals navigate this period, they engage in identity exploration, experience instability, and strive for self-sufficiency, while grappling with an intermediate sense of adulthood (Arnett, 2004, 2006).

The concept of emerging adulthood highlights the dynamic nature of this life stage, emphasizing cultural and socio-economic status in shaping individual experiences. In countries like India, emerging adults face unique challenges and opportunities influenced by economic disparities and cultural expectations (Mitra & Arnett, 2019). Such contextual factors can impact the timing and nature of transitions to adulthood, including financial independence and personal development.

Bowlby and Ainsworth originally developed attachment theory, which offers a framework for comprehending how early attachments affect social behavior and interpersonal functioning later in life. The four attachment styles have a significant impact on how people connect with one another and deal with emotions throughout their lives (Baron, 2016). In their investigation of the connection between adult attachment and social anxiety, Darryl, Gavin, Adam, and Coventry (2018) discovered that social anxiety symptoms were directly impacted by attachment anxiety as well as avoidance. Reappraisal, in particular, is an emotion control strategy that partially mediated this link. Chellan (2018) used information from 1,330 people to check the impact of attachment patterns on marital satisfaction. The findings showed that there were specific correlations between attachment types and satisfaction levels, and so that attachment styles had a substantial impact on marital satisfaction.

Deveci (2017) examined how 413 undergraduate students' interpersonal cognitive distortions were predicted by adult attachment patterns. The study discovered that misperceptions, irrational relationship expectations, and interpersonal rejection may all be explained by attachment factors. Amani, Majzoobi, and Fard (2016) looked at the connection between depression among Iranian female students and the attachment styles of their mothers and infants.

Anxious/ambivalent and avoidant attachment styles were strongly connected with depression, whereas secure attachment did not significantly correlate with depression.

These types of styles have been linked to a number of interpersonal issues and cognitive distortions that have an

effect on relationship satisfaction and mental health (Beck, 2002; Mikulincer, 1998).

Cognitive distortions, characterized by irrational thought patterns, contribute to emotional dysfunction and interpersonal difficulties (Beck, 1967; Burns, 1980). These distortions can exacerbate issues such as depression and anxiety, particularly when combined with maladaptive attachment styles (Katerina Rnica, Dozois, & Martin, 2016). The interplay between cognitive distortions and attachment styles highlights the importance of addressing these factors in understanding and mitigating interpersonal problems.

In adults with morbid obesity, Oliveira et al. (2017) looked at early maladaptive schemas and cognitive distortions. Findings indicated that although differences were not clinically significant, people with morbid obesity scored higher than people of normal weight in several maladaptive schemas and cognitive distortions. Calado, Alexandre, and Griffiths (2017) investigated the relationship between problem gambling in adolescents and young adults and coping methods, cognitive distortions, and attachment. Family factors had less of an impact on problem gambling than individual characteristics, such as cognitive distortions and coping methods, which exhibited strong predictive impacts. O'Brien (2016) examined the effects of age, gender, self-concept issues, and cognitive distortions on adult ADHD symptoms. The findings showed that the degree of ADHD symptoms was significantly influenced by issues with self-concept.

As emerging adults navigate this transitional period, their cognitive and emotional frameworks significantly influence their experiences and well-being. Investigating those aspects such as relationship between attachment styles, cognitive distortions, and interpersonal problems is essential for developing targeted interventions and supporting individuals during this pivotal stage of development.

Objectives

- To find out the relationship between the attachment styles and cognitive distortion among emerging adult.
- To find out the relationship between the cognitive distortion and interpersonal problems among emerging adult.
- To find out the relationship between the attachment styles and interpersonal problems among emerging adult.

Hypothesis

Ho1: There will be a significant relationship between attachment styles and cognitive distortion among emerging adult.

Ho2: There will be a significant relationship between cognitive distortion and interpersonal problems among emerging adult.

Ho3: There will be a significant relationship attachment styles and interpersonal problems among emerging adult.

Method

Sample and Sampling:

The study sample comprised 200 emerging adults, equally divided between males and females. Convenient sampling was used to select participants based on the following criteria:

Inclusion Criteria:

- Age between 18 and 25 years.
- Adequate knowledge of English to complete the questionnaire.
- Willingness to participate in the study.

Exclusion Criteria:

- Individuals with physical disabilities, transgender individuals, and those lacking proficiency in English.
- People with psychiatric disorders or neurological problems

Tools

Socio-Demographic Sheet: This tool, prepared by the investigator, collected participants' information such as age,

educational qualification, religion, domicile, and socio-economic status.

Attachment Styles Questionnaire: A 22-item Likert-type scale was mainly developed by Van Oudenhoven and Schrier in 2003 for assessing four attachment styles: dismissive, secure, fearful, and preoccupied. It rates how well people interact in close relationships.

The CDS-SDSD, or Cognitive Distortion Scale: This 25-item test, developed by Darmendra Sharma and Dr. Devindra Sisodia Singh, to measure cognitive distortions. Internal consistency is 0.79 and dependability is 0.65 for scores between 25 and 125.

Inventory of Interpersonal Problems (IIP-32): This is a 32-item scale, which was created by Barkham, Hardy, and Startup in 1996, uses to rate upsetting interpersonal interactions, with 0 representing "not at all" and 4 representing "extremely." Eight sub-scale scores are provided, along with a total score for overall interpersonal **distress:** difficult to be forceful, difficult to be gregarious, difficult to be supportive, too reliant, too caring, too aggressive, difficult to be involved, and too open.

Procedure

The investigator directly contacted the participants and provided them study's purpose and significance. Consent for participation was obtained, After obtaining consent and ensuring anonymity, Rapport was established with the participants, The selected research instruments were administered at a time convenient for the participants. Upon completion, participants were thanked for their cooperation. No financial incentives were provided for participation.

Data Analysis

After the data collection process was finished, the data was first examined in an Excel file. After then, it was moved to IBM SPSS version 21 for examination. Examining the data in order to exclude any cases that did not fit the inclusion criteria was the first step. We also looked at incomplete responses; if a person did not answer on more than one scale, their information was not included. Because of the characteristics of the data, analysis was done using non-parametric tests. To determine whether the data were normal, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (KS) test was employed. Descriptive statistics were used to provide to offer baseline information on the scaled variables. Spearman's correlation test was also conducted to examine the relationships between the variables.

Result

The data analysis findings that were utilized to characterize the sample, respond to related hypotheses, and address the research objectives.

Section 1: Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 Mean and standard deviation for the dimensions of Attachment Styles, Cognitive distortions, interpersonal problems:

Variable	Dimensions	Mean	SD	N
Attachment Style	Secure	25.910	5.2926	200
	Fearful	12.880	3.3648	200
	Dismissing	14.615	3.1839	200
	Preoccupied	19.325	4.0610	200
Cognitive distortion		10.7628	10.7628	200

	Hard to be assertive	7.600	3.1686	200
	Too aggressive	6.630	4.0254	200
Interpersonal Problems	Too open	7.025	3.3572	200
	Too caring	8.035	4.1582	200
	Hardtobe supportive	5.485	4.0050	200
	Hard to be involved	6.715	3.578	200
	Too dependent	6.570	4.0691	200

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviations of dimensions of attachment styles, cognitive distortion and interpersonal problems among emerging adults.

The mean and standard deviations for the secure attachment style were 25.91 and 5.29, indicating that emerging adults tend to have a higher level of secure attachment. The fearful attachment style had the lowest scores, with a mean of 12.88 and a standard deviation of 3.36. The dismissing attachment style showed a mean of 14.62 (SD = 3.18), and the preoccupied attachment style had a mean of 19.33 (SD = 4.06). The cognitive distortion scores were relatively high, with a mean of 77.11 and a standard deviation of 10.76.

Interpersonal problems, the highest scores were observed for the "too caring" dimension (M = 8.04, SD = 4.16), while the lowest scores were found in the "hard to be supportive" domain (M = 5.49, SD = 4.01). Other dimensions showed varying levels, including "hard to be sociable" (M = 6.32, SD = 4.18), "hard to be assertive" (M = 7.60, SD = 3.17), "too aggressive" (M = 6.63, SD = 4.03), "too open" (M = 7.03, SD = 3.36), "hard to be involved" (M = 6.72, SD = 3.58), and "too dependent" (M = 6.57, SD = 4.07).

Section 2: Correlational Analysis

Table 2 Spearman's Rank Correlation between attachment styles and cognitive distortion among emerging adults.

Attachment styles	Cognitive Distortion
Secure	.080
Fearful	.131
Dismissing	.066
Preoccupied	.000

Table 2 shows the Spearman's correlation between Attachment styles and Cognitive Distortion among emerging adults. The results show that there is no impact between cognitive distortion and any type of attachment styles among emerging adults. The correlations between cognitive distortion and secure, fearful, dismissing, and preoccupied attachment styles indicating weak or negligible associations. Thus, attachment styles do not significantly correlate with cognitive distortion in this population.

Table 3 Spearman's Rank Correlation between interpersonal problems and cognitive distortion among emerging adults.

Interpersonal problems	Cognitive Distortions
Hard to be sociable	.057
Hard to be assertive	.045
Too aggressive	.110

Too open	.078
Too caring	.127
Hard to be supportive	.182**
Hard to be involved	.018
Too dependent	.140*
Total Interpersonal Problems	.155*

**. Significant at the 0.01 level * Significant at the 0.05 level

Table 3 shows the Spearman's correlation between Interpersonal Problems and Cognitive Distortion among emerging adults. The results indicate that cognitive distortion does not have a significant relationship with most interpersonal problems among emerging adults. The correlations between cognitive distortion and subscales of interpersonal problems are generally low and mostly non-significant, except for "hard to be supportive and "too dependent". The overall correlation between cognitive distortion and total interpersonal problems is also significant at the 0.05 level. These findings suggest only weak and limited associations between cognitive distortion and specific interpersonal problems.

Table 4 Spearman's Rank Correlation between interpersonal problems and attachment styles among emerging adults.

Interpersonal Problems	Secure	Fearful	Dismissing	Preoccupied
Hard to be sociable	.059	.086	-.051	.045
Hard to be assertive	.041	.155*	-.092	.107
Too aggressive	.113	.141*	.048	.140*
Too open	.200*	.092	.155*	.081
Too caring	.158*	.145*	-.002	.068
Hard to be supportive	.023	.052	-.088	.003
Hard to be involved	.082	.098	-.070	.021
Too dependent	.215**	.132	.098	.308**

** Significant at the 0.01 level. *. Significant at the 0.05 level.

Results reveal several significant correlations between attachment styles and interpersonal problems among emerging adults. Fearful attachment style is significantly correlated with being "hard to be assertive" and "too aggressive", and it also shows a weak positive correlation with total interpersonal problems. Preoccupied attachment style is significantly correlated with being "too aggressive" and "too dependent", as well as with total interpersonal problems. Secure attachment style is positively correlated with being "too open", "too caring", and "too dependent". The dismissing attachment style shows impactful correlation with being "too open". In terms of overall attachment styles, there are significant correlations with being "too aggressive", "too open", "too caring", "too dependent and with total interpersonal problems.

However, the analysis also shows that several subscales of interpersonal problems have no significant relationships with certain attachment styles. For instance, there is no significant correlation between "hard to be sociable" and any of the attachment styles (fearful, secure, dismissing, and preoccupied). Similarly, "hard to be supportive" does not worthy correlate with attachment styles. Additionally, there are no noticeable relationships between being "too aggressive" and secure or dismissing attachment styles, nor between being "too open" and fearful or preoccupied attachment styles. "Too caring" also does not significantly correlate with dismissing or preoccupied attachment styles. Overall, while certain attachment styles are associated with specific interpersonal problems,

many combinations show no significant relationship, indicating a nuanced and varied interaction between these factors among emerging adults.

Discussion

Emerging adulthood is the period of significant individual exploration in areas. This stage is crucial for understanding social, cognitive, and psychological development. The study reveals that emerging adults have high levels of secure attachment. Research by Polek (2008) indicates that secure attachment is associated with social competence and trust in others, facilitating positive relationships across different cultural contexts. However, the findings show no significant impact between attachment styles and cognitive distortion among emerging adults. This contrasts with a study by Rozita Amani (2016), which found that insecure attachment was highly linked to levels of distress. Furthermore, family structure was not a significant predictor of youth problem behaviors, such as problem gambling (Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2004), although attachment has been shown to affect other risky behaviors (Bahr et al., 2005). There are significant correlations between specific interpersonal problems and cognitive distortions. For example, there is a positive connection between "hard to be supportive" and "too dependent" with cognitive distortion. This is supported by findings from Morteza (2016) and Rnic (2015), who noted significant relations between cognitive distortions and depression, as well as irrational beliefs in interpersonal and achievement-related contexts. However, there are no significant relationships between cognitive distortion and interpersonal problems like "hard to be sociable," "hard to be assertive," "too aggressive," "too open," "too caring," and "hard to be involved."

There is an impactful positive correlation between attachment styles and interpersonal problems. For instance, "hard to be supportive" is positively correlated with fearful attachment, while "too aggressive" is correlated with both fearful and preoccupied attachment styles.. Furthermore, interpersonal problems like "too open," "too caring," and "too dependent" are positively correlated with attachment styles such as secure, dismissing, and fearful. This aligns with research suggesting that successfully navigating developmental tasks during the transition to adulthood affects well-being in later life (Schulenberg et al., 2004).

The findings indicate no significant relationships between some interpersonal problems and attachment styles. For example, there is no correlation between "hard to be sociable" and attachment styles (secure, fearful, dismissing, preoccupied), "hard to be supportive" and secure attachment, or "too aggressive" and secure or dismissing attachment. Similarly, "too open" shows no significant relationship with fearful or preoccupied attachment styles, and "too caring" has no correlation with dismissing or preoccupied attachment styles. These results highlight the complexity of interpersonal challenges faced by emerging adults, which can have lasting effects on their lives.

Conclusion

This study explores the importance of attachment styles on cognitive distortion and interpersonal problems among emerging adults. The findings reveal a significant connection between attachment styles and subscales of interpersonal problems. While cognitive distortion and interpersonal problems show partial correlation, attachment style dimensions do not significantly relate to cognitive distortion. However, some dimensions of the variables demonstrate significant relationships in certain cases.

Implications

Understanding interpersonal problems is crucial for identifying underlying individual issues. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) could be applied to individuals in future experimental studies. Mental health practitioners can use these findings to better understand interpersonal issues among emerging adults.

Limitations

The study was restricted by time constraints, resulting in a small sample size that may not be able to generalizable to a larger population. No distinction was made between men and women. Additionally, constraints such as economic factors, time, and limited manpower posed challenges to the research.

Suggestions for Further Research

Future studies could explore the influence of parenting styles on interpersonal problems. Researchers may also consider qualitative approaches to expand on these findings. Further research should examine the relationship between interpersonal issues and different personality traits, providing a framework for more comprehensive studies in this area.

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