



Review Article

A review of attachment styles, relationship satisfaction, and conflict resolution styles in adult individuals

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Abstract

This study is a conceptual review that aims to examine the relationships between attachment styles, relationship satisfaction, and conflict resolution styles in adults by synthesizing the existing theoretical and empirical literature, and to reveal the conceptual links among these variables. The starting point of this review is the observation that although romantic relationships often begin with expectations of continuity and happiness, the ability to maintain a relationship in a healthy manner largely depends on the level of satisfaction derived from the relationship. This article discusses the fundamental concepts of attachment theory, including Bowlby's notion of attachment figures and Ainsworth's classification of secure, anxious-ambivalent, and avoidant attachment styles. In addition, it addresses the adaptation of adult attachment theory to romantic relationships through the models proposed by Hazan and Shaver, as well as the four-category model developed by Bartholomew and Horowitz, and examines how these models influence relationship satisfaction and conflict processes. Furthermore, the theoretical foundations of relationship satisfaction, such as Social Exchange Theory, the Investment Model, and responses to dissatisfaction, are reviewed alongside the potential costs of conflict avoidance for relationship functioning. The conclusion of this study suggests that secure attachment is associated with higher levels of trust, more constructive coping strategies, and greater relationship satisfaction, whereas anxious and avoidant attachment patterns tend to be linked to more fragile satisfaction and more problematic communication and conflict dynamics.

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Introduction

Couples generally enter romantic relationships with the expectation of continuity and happiness. However, this expectation does not always result in the desired outcome, as the ability to maintain a romantic relationship in a healthy manner, to sustain continuity, and for partners to experience happiness is influenced by the level of satisfaction derived from the relationship (Hendrick, Hendrick, & Adler, 1988). As the level of relational satisfaction increases for both partners, relationship happiness and longevity tend to increase; conversely, when relationship satisfaction is insufficient, problems may begin to emerge, potentially leading to relationship dissolution. In some cases, relationship satisfaction is also thought to play a significant role in the resolution of emerging problems, as couples who experience higher levels of relational satisfaction are more likely to approach difficulties constructively and attempt to resolve problems using adaptive strategies.

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The considerable importance of relationship satisfaction in romantic relationships has led to the need for analyses aimed at clarifying the variables that interact with relational satisfaction. One such influential factor that may affect romantic relationships and relational satisfaction is romantic jealousy, which has been associated with the emergence of relationship problems and marital divorce (Amato & Rogers, 1997).

Human beings are not structured to live in isolation but rather to exist within social groups and interpersonal relationships. Similar to other interpersonal relationships, individuals also have needs within relationships with the opposite sex (Çaplı, 1992). Differences in life experiences, worldviews, beliefs, values, and perceptions may lead to disagreements, which can manifest as conflict across various areas of life. How individuals manage and regulate conflict directly influences its outcomes. Based on interviews conducted with married individuals, Mackey, Diemer, and O'Brien (2000) defined marital conflict as disagreements arising from differences between partners. It is also suggested that individuals' consistent use of similar conflict resolution styles across comparable situations may be related to an underlying general orientation toward close relationships (Corcoran & Mallinckrodt, 2000). In this context, conflicts that arise in romantic relationships should be addressed not only through situational factors but also in relation to individuals' fundamental attachment patterns toward relationships and their ways of evaluating the relationship. This approach necessitates a conceptual examination of the relationships between attachment styles, relationship satisfaction, and conflict resolution styles together. In this study, the research problem focuses on identifying the types of relationship satisfaction and conflict resolution styles observed in adult individuals, and determining how many types of reciprocal relationships exist among these variables.

Attachment Theory

The concept of attachment was first introduced through Bowlby's (1944) analyses of maladjusted children at the London Child Guidance Clinic. Initially used to analyze the attachment behavior developed by a child toward the mother (Bowlby, 1958), attachment refers to behaviors aimed at maintaining proximity and communication with an attachment figure (Bowlby, 1980). Attachment represents a process that begins in early childhood and continues throughout the lifespan (Bowlby, 1977, 1980), and is defined as an emotional bond that connects an infant or young child to the mother or primary caregiver (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970). Accordingly, the attachment figure is not limited to the mother but may also include another individual who provides care and security to the child (Bowlby, 1969).

Since the initial development of attachment theory, numerous studies have been conducted, leading to the formulation of various models. These models have conceptualized attachment styles based on childhood, adulthood, or romantic relationships. One of the most influential studies focusing on childhood attachment was conducted with infants and conceptualized attachment within a three-dimensional model consisting of secure, anxious-ambivalent, and avoidant attachment styles (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978).

Infants with a secure attachment style are those who are able to learn trust. By developing trust, they enhance their functional capacities and are better able to approach others with empathy (Mallon, 2008). Securely attached infants are also capable of forming warm and intimate relationships with their mothers. Analyses have shown that the narratives constructed in the play of securely attached infants tend to be clear, supportive, open, and positive in content (Cassidy, 1988).

In contrast, children with anxious-ambivalent attachment styles have been shown to derive less pleasure from physical closeness (Bell & Ainsworth, 1972). Research indicates that these children may exhibit protest behaviors in response to separation from their attachment figures, and that such protest may persist even upon reunion (Stayton & Ainsworth, 1973). Children with avoidant attachment styles may also display protest behaviors in response to separation from the attachment figure. This protest behavior functions as a defensive mechanism that helps reduce experienced anger while also allowing the child to maintain an appropriate distance from the caregiver (Ainsworth, 1979). The emotional imprints left on the child by these early childhood experiences do not remain merely as a developmental phase; rather, they provide a fundamental theoretical foundation that determines the quality of romantic bonds the individual will establish in later years. In this context, understanding how mental models formed in childhood are reflected in relationship dynamics during adulthood is critical for recognizing the lifelong effects of attachment theory.

Adult Attachment Styles

Ainsworth's (1978) experimental study, which conceptualized attachment within a model-based framework, attracted the attention of many researchers and created a new and accessible field of study. Subsequent research following Ainsworth consistently focused on the assumption that attachment continues to be shaped across later stages of life in line with the Ainsworth model. Within this context, the first model development study was conducted by Hazan and Shaver (1987). Their research involved a large-scale study of individuals aged between 14 and 82 years. This study contributed to the literature by demonstrating that attachment styles, based on the Ainsworth model, represent a lifelong process (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). Similar to Ainsworth's original framework, this model consists of three dimensions with identical labels and can therefore be regarded as an adaptation of the Ainsworth model to a different stage of life (Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

The view that attachment continues to exert its influence in later stages of life and possesses measurable characteristics has paved the way for further research in this field. Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) proposed that adults' attachment styles are shaped by individuals' perceptions of both themselves and others. Based on this assumption, the researchers defined a matrix consisting of four possible combinations derived from positive or negative evaluations of the self and others, and identified four distinct attachment styles. These styles include secure attachment, based on positive perceptions of both self and others; dismissing attachment, characterized by positive self-perception and negative perceptions of others; preoccupied attachment, defined by negative self-perception and positive perceptions of others; and fearful attachment, based on negative perceptions of both self and others. The measurement of this model became possible through a scale developed as a result of another survey study, namely the Adult Attachment Styles Scale (Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994). These models provide a theoretical foundation for the relationships between attachment and relationship satisfaction by demonstrating that adult individuals' expectations, intimacy needs, and ways of evaluating romantic relationships differ in accordance with their attachment styles.

Effects of Attachment Styles on Relationships

During adulthood, expectations regarding attachment figures become more complex and undergo significant changes. While the needs associated with attachment are primarily met through caregivers during infancy and childhood, these needs and expectations may also be fulfilled by individuals other than parents during adolescence and adulthood. The mental representations and structures formed in relation to attachment figures from infancy onward may lead individuals to adopt avoidant attitudes toward certain situations or people (Cindy, 1987).

Research has shown that adults who experienced secure attachment in early life tend to have high self-confidence, strong social adjustment and functioning, the ability to form relationships with ease, consistency in interpersonal interactions, and the capacity to maintain long-term relationships. In contrast, adults with insecure attachment patterns tend to have lower self-esteem, experience intense fears of rejection and abandonment, display a greater tendency toward jealousy and anger outbursts in relationships, and show a strong desire for emotional relationships that are often characterized by repeated breakups and reconciliations. Adults with dismissing attachment styles may or may not be willing to form relationships; however, they generally feel discomfort with excessive closeness, struggle to sustain long-term relationships, display limited social skills, and tend to exhibit withdrawn personality traits (Şipit, 2019). These findings indicate that attachment styles play a determining role in the continuity of romantic relationships, emotional regulation, and the quality of relationship experiences.

Attachment and Relationship Satisfaction

Relationship satisfaction is commonly associated with concepts such as harmony, continuity, and quality (Sabatelli, 1988). According to Lin and Rusbult (1995), relationship satisfaction is shaped by the positive emotions individuals experience toward their relationships. When a romantic relationship fulfills fundamental needs such as intimacy and togetherness, the level of satisfaction derived from the relationship tends to be high. In its simplest form, relationship satisfaction may also be defined as the absence of dissatisfaction within the relationship (Renaud et al., 1997).

The literature indicates that relationship satisfaction has frequently been examined in relation to variables such as attachment (Feeney, 2002), shyness (Arroyo & Harwood, 2011), forgiveness (Waldron & Kelley, 2005), health (Evans

& Wertheim, 1998), sexuality (Mikulincer & Goodman, 2006), coping with stress (Greeff & Malherbe, 2001), conflict resolution (Kurdek, 1994), depression (Cowden, 2005), and personality traits (Heller et al., 2004).

According to Thibaut and Kelley (1961), the theoretical foundation of relationship satisfaction is Social Exchange Theory. This theory provides explanations regarding the formation, maintenance, and dissolution of relationships. It posits that individuals rely on subjective criteria when evaluating their level of relationship satisfaction. These criteria are referred to as the comparison level and the comparison level for alternatives (Thibaut & Kelley, 1961). The comparison level represents a midpoint between satisfaction and dissatisfaction, derived from individuals' subjective evaluations and observations of their relationships. When relationship evaluations exceed this level, the relationship is perceived as satisfying; when they fall below it, relationship satisfaction is considered low.

Dissatisfaction in romantic relationships has been conceptualized through the Investment Model developed by Rusbult (1980). According to Rusbult, Zembrot, and Gunn (1982), when individuals experience dissatisfaction in their relationships, they tend to respond in four distinct ways: exit, voice, loyalty, and neglect. Exit refers to ending the relationship or deliberately engaging in behaviors that are harmful to the relationship. Voice involves active and constructive efforts aimed at improving the current situation. Loyalty refers to passively but optimistically waiting and hoping for the situation to improve. Neglect, on the other hand, involves passively allowing the relationship to deteriorate.

Numerous studies have demonstrated the association between relationship satisfaction and various psychological constructs. Campbell (1976) conceptualized relationship satisfaction in terms of overall well-being and happiness. According to the analyses conducted by Davis and Oathout (1987), individuals' empathic tendencies contribute to higher levels of relationship satisfaction. Metts and Cupach (1990) emphasized that individuals with well-developed problem-solving skills tend to derive greater satisfaction from their relationships. In contrast, Cramer (2004) reported that depressive symptoms reduce individuals' levels of relationship satisfaction.

Relationship Satisfaction

Relationship satisfaction is defined as the correspondence between an individual's expectations within a romantic relationship and the behaviors of their partner (Sabatelli, 1988). The term relationship encompasses nearly all forms of interpersonal connections, including friendships, family relationships between children and parents, and romantic relationships. Variations in intimacy interactions based on the functionality of relationships allow these relationship types to be distinguished from one another (Eryilmaz, 2004). These intimacy interactions consist of the integration of intimacy experiences and intimacy behaviors.

Observable behaviors exhibited by individuals within close relationships are referred to as intimacy behaviors. The emotions and perceptions experienced throughout intimacy interactions, such as pleasure, warmth, affection, and attraction, are collectively described as intimacy experiences (Prager, 1995).

Close relationships may be established with many different individuals throughout life. The intimacy exhibited by married couples or romantic partners is referred to as a romantic relationship (Berscheid & Peplau, 1983). Branden (1988) suggested that romantic love fulfills a number of individual needs, including sharing emotions with others, expressing emotional capacity, feeling valued in the eyes of others, achieving sexual satisfaction, and maintaining excitement within the relationship. The fulfillment of these needs enables individuals to evaluate their lives more positively and highlights the importance of romantic love in human life (Branden, 1988).

The development and formation of romantic relationships involve a series of stages. The initial stage is characterized by mutual arousal and attraction, which are often primarily influenced by physical characteristics. As individuals progress to subsequent stages, shared thoughts, emotions, and values beyond physical attributes strengthen communication between partners. Although the duration of these stages may vary, each stage has the potential to evolve into a romantic relationship. However, the presence of these stages does not always result in the formation of a romantic relationship (Ömürüş, 2007). These models demonstrate that adult individuals' self-perceptions in close relationships, expectations toward others, and ways of establishing emotional intimacy systematically differ in accordance with attachment styles, and they emphasize the fundamental determining role of adult attachment in romantic relationships.

Factors affecting relationship satisfaction

The quality of love within a close relationship is a significant component of a happy relationship. According to Maslow (1968), healthy love allows individuals to be emotionally well, non-possessive, natural, aesthetic, and self-actualizing. In contrast, unhealthy love hinders personal growth and is characterized by selfishness. Accordingly, healthy love relationships are long-term relationships that involve mutual commitment and intimacy, in which love and care are shared reciprocally and partners allow each other opportunities for personal development (Doğan, 2012). Johnson, White, Edward, and Booth (1986) define marital happiness as an individual's sense of satisfaction with their marriage.

Marital happiness generally encompasses overall feelings about the marriage, such as general happiness, comparisons of the current marriage with its state three years earlier, and the strength of love between spouses. It also includes specific aspects such as agreement between partners, levels of love and affection, similarity of opinions, and sexual relations. Research on the quality of marital life often treats concepts such as marital quality, marital success, happiness, and marital satisfaction as synonymous and evaluates them using similar criteria (Şener & Terzioğlu, 2002).

Analyses of studies aimed at determining the indicators of marital happiness reveal that marital satisfaction is the strongest predictor of marital happiness (Billioleu, 2003).

Relationship satisfaction has been defined in various ways in the literature as "the subjective feelings of happiness and contentment individuals experience across all aspects of their marital relationships." Hawkins (1968) emphasized that relationship satisfaction originates more from individuals' perceptions than from their partners' behaviors. Nichols (2005) defined marital satisfaction as the sense of fulfillment and happiness individuals experience based on their couple relationships. Rusbult (1983) conceptualized relationship satisfaction as "the positivity of feelings toward the partner and an interpersonal evaluation of relationship attraction." Campbell (1976) stated that relationship satisfaction is a fundamental component of happiness and general well-being.

Considering the association between happiness in romantic relationships and overall well-being, it is appropriate to examine the variables that predict relationship satisfaction within romantic relationships. Within this scope, the key variables are relationship satisfaction and individuals' conflict resolution styles.

Attachment styles and relationship satisfaction

Cognitive models that shape individuals' perceptions of both themselves and others play a crucial role in relationship satisfaction, which refers to individuals' subjective evaluations of their relationships (Sarı, 2008). Whether these cognitive models are positive or negative influences how consistently and reliably individuals perceive responses from their social environment and the extent to which they consider themselves worthy of love. These varying perceptions, in turn, contribute to the formation of attachment styles (Main et al., 1985). From this perspective, it can be suggested that differences in attachment styles lead to variations in relationship satisfaction. Accordingly, researchers have examined the relationship between attachment styles and relationship satisfaction based on the assumption that individuals with different attachment styles exhibit distinct relational characteristics.

International studies in the literature support this view. In his study examining the functionality of attachment styles in romantic relationships, Simpson (1990) found that individuals with secure attachment styles experience higher levels of trust and greater mutual satisfaction in their relationships. In contrast, individuals with avoidant attachment styles tend to maintain emotional distance, experience lower levels of trust, and report lower relationship satisfaction. Those with anxious-ambivalent attachment styles were found to experience lower levels of mutual satisfaction and trust, whereas individuals with preoccupied attachment styles may derive satisfaction from their relationships due to their continued investment, even when they are not fully happy.

Similarly, in their research, Hazan and Shaver (1987) reported that individuals with secure attachment styles trust their romantic partners and experience higher levels of relationship satisfaction compared to individuals with other attachment styles. They also noted that individuals with anxious-ambivalent attachment styles exhibit greater emotional fluctuations and display obsessive tendencies in their relationships. Furthermore, individuals with avoidant attachment styles were found to experience difficulties in forming close relationships and in trusting their romantic partners (Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

Differences in attachment styles are associated not only with variations in romantic relationship satisfaction but also with differences in how individuals evaluate and interpret their romantic relationships. Individuals who derive high levels of satisfaction from their romantic relationships tend to use less negative expressions when evaluating their relationships. In contrast, individuals with low levels of relationship satisfaction are more likely to evaluate their relationships in a negative manner (Lin & Rusbult, 1995).

Similarly, Kirkpatrick and Davis (1994) found that women with anxious-ambivalent attachment styles and men with avoidant attachment styles were more likely to make negative evaluations of their romantic relationships. Considering that individuals with anxious-ambivalent and avoidant attachment styles generally report lower levels of relationship satisfaction, the findings of Kirkpatrick and Davis (1994) can be regarded as consistent with the existing literature. It is understood that the findings of Kirkpatrick and Davis (1994) are consistent with the existing literature. However, the impact of attachment styles on relationships is not limited solely to perceived levels of satisfaction and trust. How individuals interpret problems within the relationship and the responses they develop in the face of these problems, namely their conflict resolution capacities, emerge as behavioral manifestations of attachment dynamics. Therefore, secure and insecure attachment patterns should not be considered merely as emotional states, but rather as fundamental mechanisms that determine how disagreements between partners are managed. In this context, the sustainability of relationship satisfaction largely depends on the resolution strategies individuals employ during moments of conflict.

Conflict Resolution

Gottman and Krokoff (1989) demonstrated that communication-related problems and deficiencies in conflict resolution skills contribute significantly to marital difficulties. In other words, individuals who avoid conflict tend to experience greater unhappiness compared to those who confront conflict directly. Avoiding conflict prevents the resolution of existing problems and may give rise to negative emotions such as anger and resentment (Christensen & Shenk, 1991).

Other researchers have suggested that verbal conflict may lead to catharsis, or emotional release, which in turn supports open communication and facilitates various functional processes, including decision-making. For example, Vucinich (1987) argued that constructive conflict resolution should be sufficiently effective to enable conflict, which is a routine component of family communication, to serve positive relational functions such as decision-making and problem-solving.

In brief, up to a certain point, conflict can support the process of relational adjustment and help prevent relational stagnation. However, if partners fail to address the underlying causes of problems, misunderstandings may increase, leading to the escalation rather than the resolution of conflicts (Dhir & Markman, 1984).

If conflict is considered an inevitable component of both marriage and romantic relationships, the manner in which partners cope with conflict becomes critically important for relationship continuity and maintenance. At the same time, the conflict resolution styles adopted by partners influence both individual well-being and perceived relationship or marital satisfaction at the relational level. Gottman and Levenson (1992) reported that in successful marriages, partners are able to discuss emerging problems openly and attempt to resolve them in a constructive and non-hostile manner. In such marriages, partners demonstrate mutual care and interest, engage in shared social activities, express physical and emotional intimacy, and generally agree on core values. Additionally, they accept and even support changes that may occur in both their partners and their relationships.

To examine how couples cope with marital conflict and the effects of these strategies on relationship outcomes, Gottman, Coan, Carrere, and Swanson (1998) observed newly married couples over a six-year period. Their findings indicated that a behavioral pattern predictive of divorce involved a wife initiating interactions with negative affect, particularly anger, followed by a husband responding with rejection and resistance to the wife's demands, without either partner displaying positive behaviors capable of interrupting this negative interaction cycle. In contrast, in happy marriages, women tended to initiate communication with positive affect in a constructive manner, and men responded by accepting their partners' requests. Humor was also found to play a soothing role, particularly in calming men during conflict interactions. Positive affect, regardless of the presence of conflict, was associated with long-term relationship

happiness and stability (Gottman et al., 1998). When these findings are considered together, it becomes evident that in romantic relationships, it is not the presence of conflict itself, but rather how conflict is managed that plays a determining role in relationship satisfaction, continuity, and marital stability.

Conflict Resolution Styles

Mayer (2012) conceptualized problems as emotional phenomena and defined conflict as a manifestation of disagreement, whether stemming from actual or perceived conflicts of interest, inconsistencies in worldviews, or behavioral differences (Mayer, 2012). Problems emerge through individuals' perceptions, processes, emotions, or actions and are experienced through the individual. In essence, conflict represents the transformation of an emotional reaction into action. Emotions are translated into behaviors, and behavioral conflict creates the potential to interfere with the needs of others, thereby generating further emotional responses. Accordingly, individuals are expected to engage in open and direct communication to express their needs clearly. This approach represents a behavioral form of conflict resolution.

Conflict resolution styles are often characterized as conciliatory, constructive, and amicable approaches (Karcıoglu & Aliogulları, 2012). However, the literature also identifies opposing styles, including aggressive and destructive approaches. The intensity and structure of conflicts may vary, and conflicts can occur suddenly or recur frequently. Observations of individuals who experience chronic conflict indicate that one party may predominantly use emotion-focused expressions, while the other relies more heavily on perceptual interpretations, thereby escalating the conflict rather than resolving the underlying issue. Although conflict is a common occurrence in close relationships, it serves as an important indicator of relationship quality. Conflicts within close relationships also play a determining role in individuals' mental and physical health (Zara & Yücel, 2017). Within this framework, conflict resolution styles should be regarded as fundamental relational dynamics that explain how individuals transform their emotional reactions into behaviors, and how these behaviors are decisive in the functioning of close relationships and perceived relationship satisfaction.

Conflict Resolution and Communication

Responses to conflict resolution have both positive and negative effects on relationship satisfaction. Studies examining the relationship between relationship satisfaction and responses to relational problems indicate that relationship satisfaction is positively associated with constructive responses (Etcheverry & Le, 2005; Finkel & Campbell, 2001; Hojjat, 2000) and negatively associated with destructive responses (Bushman, 1998; Hojjat, 2000; Metts & Cupach, 1990; Weiser & Weigel, 2014).

For instance, Etcheverry and Le (2005) reported a positive relationship between relationship continuity and satisfaction, adaptive conflict resolution responses, and willingness to engage in relational sacrifice. Finkel and Campbell (2001) found that self-control supports individuals' ability to respond adaptively to their romantic partners' destructive behaviors and highlighted a positive association between adaptive responses and relationship satisfaction. Similarly, Hojjat (2000) emphasized that adaptive responses to conflict are positively related to relationship satisfaction, whereas maladaptive responses are negatively related.

Bushman (1998) also demonstrated that relationship satisfaction is negatively associated with exit and neglect responses. Metts and Cupach (1990) suggested that problem-solving responses mediate the relationship between dysfunctional beliefs and relationship satisfaction, noting that both dysfunctional beliefs and negative problem-solving responses are related to lower relationship satisfaction. Furthermore, Weiser and Weigel (2014) found that following serious infidelity, individuals are less likely to respond constructively and more likely to engage in destructive responses, which are negatively associated with relationship satisfaction within the framework of the Investment Model. Frequent use of exit and neglect responses decreases relationship satisfaction, whereas the use of voice and loyalty responses increases satisfaction (Rusbult et al., 1982; Rusbult et al., 1986a). Within this framework, responses to conflict resolution provide an important conceptual basis for understanding how individuals' attachment-based tendencies are activated in the face of relationship problems and how these tendencies shape relationship satisfaction.

Attachment Style And Conflict Resolution Styles

Attachment, which holds a central place in human life, is described as a powerful emotional system through which individuals experience pleasure with significant others and derive comfort in times of distress (Ainsworth, 1991). Attachment can be regarded as a multidimensional construct encompassing both internal and environmental changes and developments. Attachment patterns that begin to form in the early months of life and establish the foundation of a sense of security are likely to influence close emotional relationships such as marriage.

Numerous researchers have examined the link between early attachment styles and later close relationships (Brennan & Shaver, 1995; Collins & Read, 1990; Feeney & Noller, 1990; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Kirkpatrick & Davis, 1994; Simpson, 1990) and emphasized the influence of childhood experiences and internal working models on adult relationships (Bozkurt, 2006; Fraley & Shaver, 2000; Waters & Cummings, 2000; Waters et al., 2002).

The secure attachment model encourages acceptance of problems and promotes seeking support from others. In contrast, the dismissing attachment model restricts problem acceptance and limits seeking help and attention from others. The anxious (preoccupied) attachment model constrains developmental domains and inhibits independence and self-confidence. Based on these findings, securely attached individuals tend to accept negative emotions and possess strong coping mechanisms; avoidantly attached individuals tend to reject negative emotions altogether and may respond emotionally due to an inability to identify the causes of problems; and anxiously attached individuals tend to express emotions in exaggerated ways but struggle to categorize and regulate them in an adaptive and acceptable manner (Cooper, 1988).

Research indicates that secure attachment styles support healthy communication patterns, whereas anxious and avoidant attachment styles contribute to various communication difficulties (Ciechanowski et al., 2021; Karakuş & İzci, 2020). Additionally, studies suggest a link between attachment styles formed in parent-child relationships and individuals' later communication styles, and highlight that attachment styles play a significant role in communication within romantically based relationships as well (Lee et al., 2020; Özcan & Güney, 2019). Accordingly, it is understood that attachment styles shape individuals' emotional regulation and communication patterns, form the basis of the resolution styles they adopt in conflict situations, and play a determining role in the quality of close relationships.

Conclusion

The findings of this review indicate that satisfaction in romantic relationships is not a coincidental state of "feeling good," but rather a dynamic process closely associated with individuals' internal working models of close relationships, their patterns of relationship evaluation, and the coping repertoires activated during moments of conflict. Attachment theory emphasizes that early caregiving experiences are not confined to childhood; instead, they are reproduced in later life through trust, intimacy, and emotional regulation within close relationships. Accordingly, adult attachment styles should be understood as a set of underlying tendencies that shape the everyday functioning of romantic relationships from the background.

The conceptualization of attachment in romantic contexts by Hazan and Shaver, together with the four-category model proposed by Bartholomew and Horowitz based on self-other representations, provides a functional framework for understanding how adult attachment manifests in diverse relational patterns. The findings highlighted in this review suggest that secure attachment is associated with higher levels of trust and more positive evaluations of romantic relationships, whereas anxious-ambivalent and avoidant attachment patterns are linked to lower levels of relationship satisfaction and more problematic relational appraisals.

These differences cannot be explained solely by emotional intensity; rather, they should also be interpreted through the comparison processes emphasized in theoretical models of relationship satisfaction and through individuals' responses to dissatisfaction. Social Exchange Theory posits that individuals evaluate their relationships based on subjective criteria, while the Investment Model suggests that responses such as exit, voice, loyalty, and neglect play a decisive role in shaping relationship trajectories under conditions of dissatisfaction. In this context, attachment style may serve as a foundational factor that determines which responses become more readily accessible. While secure attachment

patterns are more likely to facilitate confrontation of problems and solution-oriented communication, anxious and avoidant patterns may give rise to cycles characterized by emotional escalation or withdrawal.

Finally, although conflict is an inevitable component of close relationships, what ultimately determines relationship quality is not the presence of conflict itself but the manner in which it is managed. The literature indicates that communication-related problems and deficiencies in conflict resolution skills intensify relational difficulties, whereas conflict avoidance hinders problem resolution and fosters negative emotional experiences. Taken together, this review demonstrates that examining attachment, relationship satisfaction, and conflict resolution processes in an integrated manner offers a robust conceptual framework for both future research designs and relationship-focused psychoeducational and intervention programs. In this context, the findings obtained necessitate prioritizing attachment-based emotion regulation strategies in couple therapy, increasing relational awareness in premarital counseling programs, and examining digitalized communication dynamics and cultural context through longitudinal methods in future research.

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