

Predictors of Romantic Relationship Addiction: Attachment Styles, Mindfulness, and Separation Anxiety

Abstract

Romantic relationship addiction is often linked to emotional overdependence and impaired functioning, especially in emerging adulthood. This study tested an integrated model that focused on attachment styles, mindfulness in romantic relationships, and adult separation anxiety.

The sample included 420 emerging adults (18–30) who were currently in a romantic relationship. Participants completed measures of romantic relationship addiction, anxious and avoidant attachment, mindfulness in romantic relationships, and adult separation anxiety. We analyzed the data using correlations, multiple regression, and structural equation modeling (SEM).

Anxious and avoidant attachment showed positive links with relationship addiction. Mindfulness showed a negative link. Separation anxiety also showed a negative link. In the SEM, mindfulness predicted lower anxious and avoidant attachment. It also predicted higher separation anxiety. In turn, anxious and avoidant attachment predicted higher relationship addiction, whereas separation anxiety predicted lower relationship addiction. The overall model showed good fit.

These results point to the combined role of attachment-related vulnerability and mindfulness in romantic relationship addiction during emerging adulthood. They also support the use of attachment-informed and mindfulness-based approaches when working with maladaptive dependency in romantic relationships.

Keywords: romantic relationship addiction, attachment styles, mindfulness, separation anxiety, emerging adulthood

Introduction

Emerging adulthood refers to the period between late adolescence and full adulthood, most often defined as ages 18 to 25, although some scholars extend it into the early 30s (Arnett, 2000; Rindfuss, 1991). This stage is marked by increasing independence and greater freedom of choice. At the same time, full adult roles and responsibilities are still developing. Individuals begin to separate from family dependence, yet personal and intergenerational adulthood is not fully established.

During emerging adulthood, key developmental tasks include identity formation, career orientation, and the development of close interpersonal relationships. Romantic relationships play a particularly central role in this period. Learning how to begin, maintain, and end romantic relationships in a healthy manner represents an important psychosocial milestone (Snyder, 2006; Reifman, 2011).

Positive romantic relationships are generally associated with mutual emotional involvement, trust, and physical and emotional closeness (Acevedo & Aron, 2009; Morris et al., 2023; Solomon, 1988; Marchi & Jonason, 2023). Earlier work emphasized balance within relationships, including love, respect, desire, and emotional intimacy (Curtis, 1983). Such qualities are typically linked to higher life satisfaction and better mental health (Mitchell et al., 2014).

For some individuals, however, romantic relationships take on a maladaptive form characterized by excessive emotional dependence. This pattern is often referred to as romantic relationship addiction (Nair et al., 2023). It involves difficulties with separation, persistent preoccupation with the partner, and distress resembling withdrawal symptoms. Early descriptions compared this pattern to substance dependence, particularly in terms of tolerance and emotional withdrawal (Peele et al., 1992). More recent frameworks have classified romantic relationship addiction within the broader category of behavioral addictions (Fisher, 2014; Sussman, 2010; Wolfe, 2000; Shyroka & Brukh, 2021).

Individuals experiencing romantic relationship addiction often show intense relational focus, elevated anxiety, and disruptions in daily functioning (Kwee, 2007; Stanbury & Griffiths, 2007; Misirli & Karadayi Kaynak, 2023). These difficulties may affect academic, occupational, and social life, along with reduced interest in other activities (Earp et al., 2017; Reynaud et al., 2010). Although such relationships may begin with genuine emotional attachment, they can gradually shift toward obsessiveness and anxiety related to separation or abandonment (Sussman, 2010).

This study focuses on three psychological constructs that have been linked to romantic relationship addiction: attachment styles, mindfulness within romantic relationships, and adult separation anxiety. Attachment is commonly examined through three patterns—secure, anxious, and avoidant—as proposed by Hazan and Shaver (1987). Previous research has consistently shown that anxious and avoidant attachment styles are more strongly associated with romantic relationship addiction, whereas secure attachment is related to greater relationship stability and satisfaction (Paquette et al., 2020). Individuals with anxious attachment tend to fear rejection and abandonment, while those with avoidant attachment often maintain emotional distance or reduced engagement in close relationships (Levy & Davis, 1988; Brauer & Proyer, 2020).

Mindfulness refers to an individual's capacity to maintain present-moment awareness with an accepting and non-judgmental attitude. Within romantic relationships, higher levels of mindfulness have been associated with better emotional regulation, greater empathy, and more adaptive relational functioning (Karremans et al., 2020; Morris et al., 2024).

Separation anxiety involves emotional distress related to actual or anticipated separation from significant attachment figures. Although traditionally associated with childhood, growing evidence indicates that separation anxiety can also be present in adulthood, particularly within close romantic bonds (Silove et al., 1993; Cyranowski et al., 2002; Finsaas & Klein., 2021). Adult separation anxiety has been observed more frequently among individuals with anxious attachment tendencies and is often discussed in relation to dependency-oriented romantic relationships (Pini et al., 2021).

Romantic relations are generally associated with psychological well-being and life satisfaction (Auslander & Rosenthal, 2010; Camirand & Poulin, 2022). However, when considering persons with romantic relation addiction, the abovementioned positive associations are usually compromised. Persons affected usually find themselves with lower relational satisfaction, higher feelings of abandonment, or progressively increasing lifestyles associated with the linked partner (Broemer & Blümle, 2003; Asselmann & Specht, 2022). It is with this background that the concept of attachment theory, as well as adult separation anxiety, provide the essential conceptual frameworks for understanding the mentioned preceding psychologic processes relating to the abovementioned maladaptive patterns of relations (Simpson et al., 2007; Zhang et al., 2021). The primary goal of the current research is the examination of the predictive roles of the variables of attachment style, mindfulness, and adult separation anxiety in romantic relationship addiction in a single structural model. This serves to fill a gap within existing literature where these three psychological constructs have never been considered simultaneously. The study thus seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors underlying maladaptive romantic involvement.

Based on this model, the following research hypotheses have been developed:

H1: Mindfulness negatively predicts relationship addiction.

H2: Mindfulness negatively predicts avoidant and anxious attachment styles.

H3: Avoidant and anxious attachment positively predict relationship addiction

Method

Population

In this study, a quantitative design for relational screenings was used to determine the predictive roles of attachment styles, relationship mindfulness, and adult separation anxiety on romantic relationship addiction.

Sample Group

The target population of this study included persons belonging to the stage of emerging adulthood, who were studying at universities in Turkey. Due to the large target population, the sample size required for this study was estimated using the Krejcie & Morgan (1970) table, considering a margin of error of 5% to have sufficient power for statistics. A minimum of 384 participants were hence identified.

The convenience sampling method was utilized to recruit the participants. A total of 384 individuals aged between 18 and 30 years participated in the study. Each participant was in a romantic relationship. Among the respondents, the gender was predominantly female, comprising 68.8% of the sample, while the male gender was 31.2%. The demographic factors we looked at, such as gender, employment status, marital status, and the number of past romantic relationships, are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1.

Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

		n	%
Personal Information	Female	289	68,8
	Male	131	31,2
Employment Status	Employed	138	33,1
	Unemployed	49	11,8
	Student	230	55,2
Marital Status	Single	239	56,9
	Married	44	10,5
	Dating	123	29,3
	Engaged	14	3,3
Number of Romantic Relationships	1-2	220	52,4
Age	3-4	116	27,6
	5+	84	20,0
Total		420	100

As indicated in Table 1, all participants were aged 18 to 30years, with a median age of 22 and a mean of 22.65 years ($SD = 3.22$). With respect to being at work, 138 participants (33.1%) were working, 49 participants (11.8%) were unemployed, and 230 participants (55.2%) were pursuing their studies.

Concerning their relationship status, 239 persons (56.9%) said they are single, 44 (10.5%) are married, while 14 people (3.3%) said they are either engaged or in a committed relationship before marriage.

Regarding romantic relationship history, 220 participants (52.4%) said they had one to two romantic relationships, 116 (27.6%) said three to four, while 84 (20.0%) said five or more.

Data Collection Tools

Personal Information Form

A demographic information form has been designed by the researcher to harvest background information of the participants in the era of emerging adulthood. The form comprises questions related to gender, age, residence, marital status, as well as the number of romantic relations.

Spann-Fischer Codependency Scale

This is a 16-item questionnaire that was first created by Fischer and Spann (1991) and later translated into Turkish by Tanhan and Mukba (2014), to measure romantic relationship addiction as a single dimension construct. For the current study, the Cronbach's alpha index was .885.

Experiences in Close Relationships Inventory–II (ECR-II)

Designed by Fraley et al. (2000) and translated into Turkish by Selçuk et al. (2005), the ECR-II consists of two subscales: the subscale of anxious attachment and the subscale of avoidant attachment. Internal consistency values for the current study were calculated as .925 in the subscale of anxious attachment and .950 in the subscale of avoidant attachment.

Mindfulness in Romantic Relationships Scale

This five-item unidimensional scale was first developed by Kimmes et al. (2017), then adapted to Turkish by Zümbül and Okur in 2020. The alpha value of the scale in the present study was found to be .861.

Adult Separation Anxiety Questionnaire (ASAQ)

The scale, developed by Manicavasagar et al. (2003) but adapted for use in Turkish by Diriöz et al. (2012), contains 27 items intended for use in the assessment of separation anxiety in adults. On the current sample, internal consistency reliability was found to be .950.

Procedure

Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the Social Sciences Scientific Research Ethics Committee of Istanbul Medipol University (Approval No: 57; Date: May 16, 2022). A pilot study was conducted to evaluate the clarity and applicability of the measurement instruments. Subsequently, data were collected online via Google Forms. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who voluntarily agreed to take part in the study. Measures were taken to ensure that each participant could complete the survey only once.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics have been carried out on all the variables. Means and standard deviations are provided for the continuous variable. Frequencies and percentages are provided for the categorical variable. Non-parametric tests (Kruskal-Wallis H) are considered in the present research if the size of the groups is smaller than 30. If the size of the groups exceeds 30 in the study, then parametric tests (independent samples t-test and ANOVA) are utilized. Bonferroni correction of the post hoc tests will be carried out.

Correlation coefficients were calculated to find the relationship among the continuous variables. The scaled scores were calculated following the original set of procedures, and the reverse-scored items were scored inversely. To explore the predictive value of each variable on romantic relationship addiction, multiple regression was done. The variance inflation factor was checked to see whether multicollinearity existed.

The research employed Structural Equation Modeling with Maximum Likelihood Estimation to validate the postulated model. Fit indices utilized to establish whether the postulated model fitted the data included chi-square division by degrees of freedom (CMIN/df), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). All analyses were conducted using SPSS and AMOS 26 software; p-values are set at .05.

Results

The findings are first described through descriptive statistics of the variables in the study, followed by assessment of relationships and patterns of prediction among variables.

Table 2.

Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Avoidant Attachment	-			
2. Anxious Attachment	.670**	-		
3. Mindfulness	-.718**	-.621**	-	
4. Separation Anxiety	-.643**	-.687**	.663**	-

The following table presents the values for the Pearson correlation and their respective significance levels for the variables: avoidant attachment, anxious attachment, mindfulness in romantic relationships (MRS), and adult separation anxiety (ASAQ):

Anxious and avoidant attachment styles were strongly and positively correlated ($r = .670, p < .001$). Both anxious and avoidant attachment were negatively associated with mindfulness in romantic relationships (MRS) ($r = -.621$ and $r = -.718$, respectively, $p < .001$). Similarly, anxious ($r = -.687, p < .001$) and avoidant attachment ($r = -.643, p < .001$) showed significant negative correlations with adult separation anxiety (ASAQ). In contrast, MRS was positively correlated with ASAQ ($r = .663, p < .001$).

The above table reveals the existence of a strong positive relationship between avoidant and anxious attachments, as the value for the correlation coefficient is 0.670 and the significance level is .000, meaning that the probability value is less than .01. The negative correlation between MRS and both avoidant and anxious attachments also seems to indicate that as the level of mindfulness increases, the level of avoidant and anxious attachments decreases. The negative value for the correlation coefficient also reveals the inverse relationship between avoidant and anxious attachments and adult separation anxiety, as the values for the correlation coefficient are -0.643 and -0.687 , respectively, and the respective significance levels are .000. The positive value for the correlation coefficient also reveals a direct relationship between MRS and ASAQ, as the value for the correlation coefficient is 0.663 and the significance level is .000.

Table 3.

Model Fit Indices for the Structural Equation Model

Fit Index	Acceptable Fit Criteria	Model Value	Interpretation
χ^2/df	< 3.00	0.85	Good fit
RMSEA	$\leq .08$	0.042	Good fit
CFI	$\geq .90$	0.97	Good fit
TLI	$\geq .90$	0.96	Good fit
SRMR	$\leq .08$	0.038	Good fit

Note. χ^2/df = normed chi-square; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; TLI = Tucker–Lewis Index; SRMR = Standardized Root Mean Square Residual. Fit criteria are based on commonly accepted guidelines in the SEM literature. Lower values of χ^2/df , RMSEA, and SRMR and higher values of CFI and TLI indicate better model fit.

Table 4.

Variable	Group / Value	M ± SD	t / F / H / r	p
Sex	Female	57.97 ± 14.28	$t = -2.63$	.005
	Male	62.95 ± 19.43		
Employment Status	Employed	53.21 ± 14.35 ^b	$F = 27.52$	< .001
	Unemployed	54.10 ± 13.11 ^b		
Marital Status	Student	64.59 ± 16.20 ^a	$H = 24.56$	< .001
	Single	60.61 ± 15.23 ^b		
	Married	47.89 ± 14.32 ^a		
	Dating	62.50 ± 16.41 ^b		
Engaged	Engaged	51.50 ± 19.37	$F = 24.12$	< .001
	None	55.99 ± 12.25 ^a		
Number of Romantic Relationships				
Age	-	22.65 ± 3.22	$r = -.379$	< .001
Anxious Attachment	-	77.66 ± 23.40	$r = .832$	< .001
Avoidant Attachment	-	66.86 ± 27.53	$r = .703$	< .001
Mindfulness	-	18.73 ± 6.71	$r = -.655$	< .001
Separation Anxiety	-	71.59 ± 18.37	$r = -.715$	< .001

Note.

t = independent samples t-test; F = one-way ANOVA; H = Kruskal–Wallis H test; r = Pearson correlation coefficient.

Different superscript letters (^a, ^b) indicate statistically significant group differences.

The findings show differences in romantic relationship addiction scores across a variety of demographic and psychological variables. One thing which appears is a marked difference in scores for males and females, showing a greater tendency towards relationship addiction in the former ($t = -2.63$, $p = 0.005$). The addiction scores tended to vary significantly depending upon whether a person is employed or unemployed ($F = 27.52$, $p < 0.001$); students tend to show higher levels of addiction compared to those who are employed or unemployed. Marital status also presented a significant difference in addiction scores ($H = 24.56$, $p < 0.001$), with married people showing lower levels of relationship addiction. The scores for a person's addiction also tended to increase with an increase in the number of romantic relationships previously held ($F = 24.12$, $p < 0.001$); those who have had three or more previous romantic relationships show higher levels of addiction. There is a negative relationship between the scores for addiction in romantic relationships and a person's age ($r = -0.379$, $p < 0.001$); addiction scores tend to decrease with increased age. For psychological variables, anxious attachment ($r = 0.832$, $p < 0.001$) and avoidant attachment ($r = 0.703$, $p < 0.001$) tend to increase with increased scores for addiction. There is a marked negative relationship for mindfulness ($r = -0.655$, $p < 0.001$) and adult separation anxiety ($r = -0.715$, $p < 0.001$) with romantic relationship addiction scores.

Table 5

Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Romantic Relationship Addiction

Predictor	B	95% CI	β	t	p	VIF
Sex	.746	[-.999, 2.492]	.021	.84	.401	1.08
Employment Status	.614	[-.508, 1.737]	.035	1.08	.282	1.75
Marital Status	1.193	[.376, 2.010]	.072	2.87	.004	1.07
Number of Romantic Relationships	.259	[-.694, 1.212]	.015	.54	.593	1.39
Age	.108	[-.170, .385]	.021	.76	.446	1.29
Anxious Attachment	.393	[.342, .444]	.568	15.13	< .001	2.38
Avoidant Attachment	.102	[.057, .147]	.173	4.44	< .001	2.58
Mindfulness	-.176	[-.357, .005]	-.073	-1.91	.056	2.46
Separation Anxiety	-.143	[-.209, -.078]	-.163	-4.29	< .001	2.43
Constant	33.62	[24.45, 42.78]	-	7.21	< .001	-

Note.

CI = confidence interval; VIF = variance inflation factor.

Table 5 summarizes the results of the multiple regression analysis conducted to predict romantic relationship addiction based on demographic and psychological variables, while controlling for multicollinearity.

Among the demographic variables, only marital status emerged as a significant predictor ($\beta = .072$, $p = .004$), indicating that relationship status is associated with variation in addiction scores. The other demographic variables: gender, employment status, number of romantic relationships, and age, did not reach statistical significance in the multivariate equation. As far as the psychological antecedents, the beta value revealed that anxious attachment had a strong positive association with romantic relationship addiction ($\beta = .568$, $p < .001$), followed by avoidant attachment ($\beta = .173$, $p < .001$). It is clear that increasing levels of insecure attachment are linearly related to an addictive style of relationship. The relationship between mindfulness and relationship addiction is weakly negatively correlated ($\beta = -0.073$), but not yet statistically significant ($p = 0.056$), using conventional standards. Separation anxiety proved to be a strong predictor of relationship addiction, with a negative correlation ($\beta = -0.163$, $p < .001$), suggesting that a rise in separation anxiety is associated with a reduction in relationship addiction.

The values of the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) varied from 1.07 to 2.58, and there were no multicollinearity issues.

Table 6

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) Results

Pathway	B	β
Anxious Attachment $\leftarrow$ Mindfulness	-2.164	-.621
Avoidant Attachment $\leftarrow$ Mindfulness	-2.944	-.717
Separation Anxiety $\leftarrow$ Mindfulness	1.815	.663
Romantic Relationship Addiction $\leftarrow$ Avoidant Attachment	.096	.162
Romantic Relationship Addiction $\leftarrow$ Anxious Attachment	.381	.550
Romantic Relationship Addiction $\leftarrow$ Separation Anxiety	-.161	-.182
Romantic Relationship Addiction $\leftarrow$ Mindfulness	-.184	-.076

The SEM findings show the existence of correlations between the variables used in the study. The variable of mindfulness was found to be negatively linked to insecure attachment style, indicated through both anxious and avoidant components: anxious attachment ($B = -2.164$, $\beta = -.621$, $p < .001$), and avoidant attachment ($B = -2.944$, $\beta = -.717$, $p < .001$).

By contrast, mindfulness was significantly and positively related to adult separation anxiety ($B = 1.815$, $\beta = 0.663$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that greater levels of mindfulness are linked to increased distress related to separations.

In regard to addictive relationships, positive associations were found between avoidantly attached ($B = .096$, $\beta = .162$, $p < .001$) and anxiously attached ($B = .381$, $\beta = .550$, $p < .001$) individuals with respect to addictive behaviors. The significance of insecure attachment patterns is established.

Specifically, the result showed that the separation anxiety factor acted as a negative predictor of relationship addiction ($B = -.161$, $\beta = -.182$, $p < .001$), which implies that as the degree of separation anxiety is higher, the degree of romantic relationship addiction is lower.

Finally, there was a weak but significant negative correlation between mindfulness and relationship addiction ($B = -.184$, $\beta = -.076$, $p = .047$), suggesting the existence of a buffering effect to some degree.

Discussion

This study also makes it clear how mindfulness as well as attachment styles are interconnected in romantic relationships with a focus on their predictive power for romantic relationship addiction. As a whole set of findings confirms existing scholarly insights and

represents a meaningful addition to the increasing number of scholarly papers on this issue. This is particularly because the findings confirming a positive impact of mindfulness on relationship quality (Crane et al., 2017; Morris et al., 2024) along with the well-documented links between attachment styles, separation anxiety, and romantic styles of relatedness in romantic relationships (Efrati et al., 2021; Gori et al., 2023) indicate that the present findings are theoretically justified.

The findings indicate that mindfulness practices have the potential to increase an individual's capacity to practice empathy, emotional response, and self-awareness within the context of romantic relationships. This can help to counteract the development of relationship addiction. The findings are in line with existing literature by Karremans et al. (2020) that mindfulness practices lead to positive associations with better functional relationships. The findings are further similar to existing literature by Crane et al. (2017) that showed mindfulness practices can have high effectiveness in dealing with emotional issues associated with intimate relationships.

Extant literature has demonstrated that there is a positive correlation between relationship addiction and insecure attachment styles, specifically anxious and avoidant styles of attachment (Gori et al., 2023; Nair et al., 2023). The current findings are in line with the aforementioned literature, as the current study found that the anxious and avoidant styles of attachment predicted a higher level of relationship addiction. The findings of this study imply that individuals with an insecure style of attachment can be influenced by a sort of addiction to their relationship.

In this study, separation anxiety was negatively associated with romantic relationship addiction, a finding that contrasts with much of the existing literature, which has typically reported a positive association between these variables (e.g., Pini et al., 2021). Separation anxiety, however, does not necessarily reflect dependency-oriented relational patterns. As argued by Finsaas and Klein (2021), adult separation anxiety is a complex construct that may be shaped by individual personality characteristics and coping styles. From this perspective, higher separation anxiety may be associated with avoidant or distancing responses rather than increased relational dependence. Similar patterns have been noted in earlier research on adult separation anxiety and relational functioning (Cyranowski et al., 2002), which may help explain the negative association observed in the present study.

These results were consistent with expectations, in that anxious and avoidant dimensions of attachment style were significantly linked with increased levels of romance addiction in romantic relationships. These results further attest the construct validity of an attachment-based model of romance addiction because previous research has consistently shown that insecure attachment is characterized by relationship satisfaction (Brauer & Proyer, 2020), lack of emotional security (Gori et al., 2023), and couple-related conflicts. These results further attest that dimensions of attachment style capture an essential psychological process in the establishment of romance addiction.

The current study brings to the fore the great impact that a number of psychological factors can have on the issue of romantic relationship addiction. The core psychological factors that have been emphasized in the current study include anxious as well as avoidant attachment styles, mindfulness, as well as adult separation anxiety. It is evident that the manner in which individuals participate in romantic relationships can be inextricably tied to their attachment style as well as their mindfulness.

It is important to note that anxious and avoidant attachment styles could successfully predict romantic relationship addiction, thus validating the use of the attachment theory in this field

of study. This finding supports other research that has found insecure attachment styles are related to decreased levels of satisfaction and security in romantic relationships.

Additionally, mindfulness was seen to exert a protective function through improved emotional regulation, empathy, and communication in romantic relationships. As supported in previous literature (Crane et al., 2017; Winter et al., 2021), mindfulness-based practices were related to better relationship harmony and conflict resolution. This further reinstates the relevance of mindfulness training in any psychoeducational intervention for addictive relationships.

At last, this research contributes to the increasing body of literature by combining attachment styles, mindfulness, and separation anxiety concepts in a unified model. Future studies conducted in this field may possibly provide added constructs or theoretical perspectives that may lead to the development of corresponding interventions for people at risk for maladaptive relationships.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although this study did make some important contributions, it also carries some limitations that must be recognized. First, this study was cross-sectional, and causal conclusions cannot be drawn on the relationship between attachment type, mindfulness, separation anxiety, and relationship addiction. Further longitudinal research is needed for this question. In addition, the use of single self-report measures could have caused response-set bias, such as social desirability bias.

Future research should combine data sources from multiple research strategies, such as interviews, observational tasks, or partner/informant reports, allowing for the gathering of richer information about the addictive behavior in romantic relations. It would also be important for future research to study these relations with people from different age categories because the present study was conducted with people from the stage of emerging adulthood, which could pose constraints for the generalizability of the findings for people from different age categories.

Data Availability Statement

Ethical issues and the matter of confidentiality in the study require that the datasets created and investigated here not be published. Requests to view the anonymized datasets can be made through the author.

Conclusion

With the complexity observed in romantic relationships today, it is crucial to be able to identify the reasons behind the development of dependency in such associations. In exploring the subject matter, this particular study aims to establish links between psychological elements such as styles of attachment, mindfulness, and separation anxiety and their relation to addiction in romantic associations. Results revealed that there is greater vulnerability towards these addiction patterns for people who possess either anxious or avoidant styles of attachment in their romantic associations, whereas when it comes to their romantic experiences, their level of mindfulness shields them from such addiction patterns.

A rather unexpected finding is that relationship addiction is negatively associated with separation anxiety. Against received wisdom, higher levels of separation anxiety are actually associated with less addictive relationship behavior. This is an unexpected finding because,

according to received wisdom, separation anxiety would be expected to increase relationship intimacy rather than reduce it.

In general, the findings highlight the importance of understanding the complex interaction between several skills of emotional regulation, attachment, and the personal strategies used to cope when experiencing a romantic relation addiction. This awareness of complexity may be crucial to successfully addressing interventions for people struggling with unhealthy forms of attachment in love.

Contribution to the Field

Increasingly, the phenomenon of romantic relationship addiction is identified as an unhealthy pattern of relating to other partners. However, it is relatively uncommon to find studies that investigate the ways in which attachment styles and emotional regulation processes interact in efforts to regulate these addictive patterns of relating. This current research endeavors to provide some long-overdue analysis by examining the processes of mindfulness, separation anxiety, and attachment styles. Via a relatively large cross-section of young adults, it appears that those individuals who were identified as being anxiously or avoidantly attached were relatively likely to be suffering from relationship addiction. On the other hand, it is clear that those levels of mindfulness which occur in relationship were negatively predictive of relationship addiction susceptibility, suggesting that those processes which relate to being aware in the present moment offer some form of protection against the development of these poor relationship patterns. Crucially, it is clear that separation anxiety acted to negatively correlate with relationship addiction, calling into question several common assumptions that it is instead simply indicative of highly pathoplastic relationships which overflow between partners in the form of indulgent dependence. This current research assesses a complex array of psychological processes in order to better examine these interrelationships in relation to attachment styles in relationship addiction than has previously been the case in previous research efforts.

Recommendations

The findings appear to have a variety of applications, especially in encouraging healthier relationship patterns in young individuals. Several psychological issues relevant to interpersonal relations, including attachment, mindfulness, and separation-related coping, have been found to be successfully handled in either a preventative fashion or a therapeutic manner.

In order to enhance the development of more secure, satisfying, and healthy relationships, the following strategies are suggested:

Raise awareness about attachment patterns. Those with anxious or avoidant patterns of attachment may well benefit from involvement in group-based educational programs aimed at changing associated behaviors.

Practice mindfulness in romantic situations. Meditation, mindful breathing, and the examination of emotional triggers can aid an individual in maintaining a sense of objective reality and escaping dependent reactions to a romantic stimulus. - Offer organized support regarding separation distress. People exhibiting high levels of separation anxiety should have targeted interventions to maximize healthy adaptational strategies, considered to be between the extremes of interdependence and disconnection.

Additional training for mental health professionals: Mental health professionals, or therapists, that work with young adults could benefit from additional training that focuses on attachment-oriented, mindfulness-based interventions, specifically when dealing with romance-related issues or the symptoms of overdependence.

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