

Attachment Styles and Sexual Dynamics: Exploring the Influence on Young Adults' Sexual Standards, Behaviors, and Attitudes

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Abstract

Individual preferences, attitudes, personality, and sexual orientation all shape attitudes toward sexual behaviour, expressions and identity. Aside from preferences and personality, individual attachment style has been identified for its association with sexuality and/or sexual motivations (Sprecher, 2013). The purpose of this study is to examine how adults' attachment style is associated with their sexual standards, behaviours, and attitudes. Attachment styles refer to the ways individuals form connections to those in their immediate circles, stemming from early bonds established during childhood with parents or caregivers (Birnbaum, 2007). These bonds serve the evolutionary purpose of ensuring the survival, adaptation, and thriving of our species in its environment. Consequently, the attachment system, initially employed to bond with parents during childhood, extends to romantic partners in adulthood, forming our sexual preferences and attitudes in these relationships (Segovia et al., 2019). Methods used to conduct this research included online anonymous surveys. A secondary sample source of 96 women completed self-report scales tapping attachment orientations; relationship satisfaction; sex-related affect and cognitions; and sexual functioning (Sprecher, 2013). Findings indicated that (a) Attachment orientation predicts motivations for sex in casual encounters (b) Gender was found to moderate the influence of attachment style on sexuality (c) Men with a dismissive/avoidant attachment style were more sexually permissive (d) For women, a secure attachment style was associated with lower sexual permissiveness (Sprecher, 2013). In terms of limitations, findings from secondary sample studies are retrospective, therefore participants' recall of the sexual encounter could be inaccurate or biased. Additionally, it is stated that sexual satisfaction in committed relationships tends to reach a peak period (i.e., "honeymoon period") after which it decays significantly (Segovia et al., 2019). However, it is unclear whether sexual satisfaction in casual relationships shows a similar pattern. Future studies should therefore a) examine how casual relationships develop and change over time b) assess intimacy levels within each type of casual encounter and outline the factors that make the different types of casual encounters evolve into more intimate relationships; and c) examine the course of sexual satisfaction in casual relationships and how each of these differ as a function of one's attachment orientation (Sprecher, 2013).

Key Words: Attachment Style, Sexual Attitudes, Sexuality, Gender

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