

How Attachment Styles Influence Emotional Regulation of Young Adults in Srilanka

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ABSTRACT: *This research is a cross-sectional quantitative study which investigates how attachment styles influence the emotional regulation of young adults in Sri Lanka. The aim of this research is to understand the impact of attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance on cognitive appraisal and emotional suppression. For this purpose, a survey research design was utilized and a sample size of 147 young adults selected through convenient sampling and they completed an online questionnaire on attachment style, and emotional regulation. The questionnaire was based on predeveloped 7-point Likert scales, The Experiences in Close Relationship Scale short version (ECR-SV) to measure attachment styles and the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) to measure emotional regulation. This research found attachment anxiety and avoidance had a negative impact on using reappraisal while Attachment anxiety showed a greater negative impact on reappraisal. Also, it was found attachment anxiety and avoidance had a positive impact on using emotional suppression while avoidance showed a significant greater positive impact on suppression. However, the current research was not able to find out the impact of secure attachment on ER dimensions due to the questionnaire used, therefore future research should examine the impact of secure attachment on ER dimensions. A significant factor derived from the results is that, it's important to design interventions that focus on improving ER in order to address difficulties with ER for those with attachment problems.*

KEYWORDS: attachment style, young adults, emotional regulation, attachment style and ER, attachment and emotional regulation, influences of emotional regulation

INTRODUCTION

Style of Adult attachment is developed in infants through interactions infants have with their caregivers, during early stages of their life, therefore attachment theory mentions that emotional bonds developed early between infants and their caregivers, aids in infants developing their internal working models of self and others close to them (Bowlby, 1973, 1980, 1982, 1988) these internal models will aid and influence the development of later relationships with others (Bretherton, 1987). Internal working models are constructed on beliefs an infant has about the availability, dependability, and supportiveness of attachment figures from which ‘models about others’ are formed (Bowlby, 1973). If the attachment figures are available in a dependable manner and respond to signs of distress, individuals form a “secure attachment”. If the primary caregiver is absent or negligent an individual forms insecure attachment styles such as anxious or avoidant attachment styles (Read et al., 2018).

As such regulatory factors of attachment being strongly linked with general tools of ER , it’s the opinion of some researchers that the system of attachment, in itself, is device for ER Hence, attachment theory has provided a detailed framework to describe how “adult attachment style” (AAS) might impact ER techniques that people use in social situations (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2014).

Bowlby introduced three *attachment styles* (AS), secure attachment, anxious, and avoidant styles (Brumairu, 2015). Adults who own a “secure attachment style” are willing to rely on others for support, they are at ease with intimacy and also are confident that others would value them, those with an “*anxious attachment style*” (AAS), are insecure about the responses of others and although they have a strong need for intimacy, they also fear rejection, those with an “*avoidant style*” (AAV) are defined by their insecurity regarding the intention of others, they reject assistance from others and have a reduced ability to be expressive of affection and intimacy (Fraley & Shaver, 1997; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002).

Emotion regulation (ER) is “an individual’s action of changing their emotional experiences through initiating, maintaining or modifying the frequency, intensity, or duration of their emotions” (Kobak et al., 1993). Gross and John. (2003), has emphasized two important ER techniques known as cognitive reappraisal (REAP) and emotional suppression (ESUP).

Cognitive reappraisal “involves reframing of a negative emotional event so that the new understanding reduces or changes the emotional impact caused by that event” REAP is a form of cognitive change and considered as an adaptive ER technique, therefore reappraisal is mainly used to reduce negative emotions (Lazarus & Alfert, 1964). **Emotional suppression** is “inhibiting an emotional response which is already activated, by down-regulating the expression of that emotion outwardly”, this is considered as a dysfunctional ER technique as studies show Suppression has a positive association with anxiety (Gross, 1998).

Significance of the problem

A rational basis is provided by the “attachment theory” to explain individual differences in ER, the “neural substrates” of ER in adulthood is strongly shaped by the social interaction quality, children develop with their care givers (Ferraro & Taylor, 2021). And ER is considered as a factor that causes and leads to a broad range of psychological issues, such as, eating disorders, anxiety issues, personality disorders, and addictions to alcohol and social-media (Cisler et al., 2016) also young adulthood is a phase where individuals face many new experiences such as forming new friendships and romantic relationships, going through breakups, going to college, and also being employed, ER is an important tool for young adults to face these new experiences successfully, leading to psychosocial well-being (Wood et al., 2018).

However, studies on how AS influences ER in young adults of SriLanka is limited and rare, although there are previous researches done in SriLanka which focuses on emotional dimensions that influence development of children, those studies focused mainly on emotional abuse, also research conducted in SriLanka on how family impacts ER, focuses on children (Gunawardena & Schuck, 2021). Therefore, the current study aims to focus on young adults to fill this gap.

Also, child-rearing practices and how these practices are viewed by the child is strongly influenced by culture, therefore, it is quite reasonable to expect different AS across cultures, also collectivism and AAX was positively related, as people from collectivist cultures are more invested in their in-group they are also more dependent and more fearful of rejection (Agishtein & Brambaugh, 2013). Therefore, this indicates the necessity of doing this study in a Srilankan context.

Background statistics

In collectivist cultures such as SriLanka, parents play a crucial role in a child’s life. For example, majority of young and late adolescents in SriLanka, which is 60% considered their families as intimate and close. And 52% considered their families a refuge when facing problems (UNICEF, 2004). Kariyawasam and Ononaiye (2019), states that SriLanka is one of the countries having highest rates of self-harm, and suicide rates in SriLanka are five times greater compared in UK and also, SriLanka was placed as the fourth country, recording highest suicide rates in 2006, also suicidal ideations and ER, has a strong link with each other. These statistics shows that attachment is not only an important factor for ER but also overall mental health

Research done previously in SriLanka found university students had lower levels of ER skills and an increased rate of emotional problems also the lack of maternal attachment led to youth of SriLanka being emotional abused (Gunawardena & Schuck, 2021). Also, the need for ER is given more importance in countries like SriLanka, having collectivist cultures compared to independent cultures like Europe. Despite placing such importance on ER, skills such as coping with stress/emotions, self-awareness, and empathy were found quite weak among Sri Lankan youth (UNICEF, 2004).

Objectives and aim of the study

The objective of the present study is to study how AS influences the ER of young adults in Sri Lanka. The current study aims to test the following hypotheses developed, for the current study

Research hypothesis

H0. Attachment styles have no impact on ER dimensions

H1. Attachment anxiety and avoidance would have a negative impact on cognitive reappraisal, while attachment anxiety demonstrating a greater impact

H2. Attachment anxiety and avoidance would have a positive impact on emotional suppression, while attachment avoidance demonstrating a greater impact

LITERATURE/THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

Review of literature

Kariyawasam and Onoaiye (2020), in their study on the “Impact of Attachment on Self-Harm in UK and Sri Lankan Students, found that children of “authoritarian/strict” parents had insecure attachments ($r = -.65, 8.59, p < .05$) and children of “authoritative” parents, experienced strong and “secure attachments” with their parents ($r = .67, p < .05$) and Further, participants had a high probability of self-harming if they had authoritarian/strict parent’s and least probable to be self-harming when parents were permissive This finding is supported by the Attachment theory of Bowlby, that weak relationships between parent-child, could cause long-term behavioral problems in young people such as self-harm. (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). Claes, Raedt, Walle, and Bosmans (2016) found that people who experience maternal “insecure attachments” will mistrust their mother, which leads to a lack of communication with their mothers, therefore children who do not have effective communication are more prone to engage in self-harming behaviors.

Gunasekara and Schuck (2020), in their study with, adolescent participants aged 12-14 and 349 parents from the Colombo Educational zone in Sri Lanka, found that parental ER problems predicted adolescents’ ER problems significantly. However, results also showed that emotional difficulties of parents had a higher impact on adolescent ER problems, than the quality of attachment between parent and child or the temperament of the adolescent, therefore attachment quality with parents was not significant for adolescent ER difficulties. This study stated that Adolescents and adults who belonged to low socio-economic groups displayed greater ER difficulties as they did not reappraise life in benevolent ways due to factors such as “ESUP”, and social stressors. The author stated that the Sri Lankan families having a patriarchal nature could be the reason for the father’s ER ability to have a significant influence on adolescent ER ability.

The influence of “insecure attachment styles (avoidant/ anxious)” on romantic relationship satisfaction, mediated by ER techniques such as REAP and ESUP and psychological distress was evaluated in the study done by Noppaprach et al. (2015), in Thailand. AAV had a direct influence on ‘decreased relationship satisfaction’ in that higher avoidance led to lower relationship satisfaction (-0.46). AAX had an indirect impact on relationship satisfaction via use of ESUP, leading to higher psychological distress, which then led to lower relationship satisfaction. Thais with attachment anxiety (AAX) tried to regulate emotions more compared to those with “attachment avoidance” because avoidants used REAP less, as it doesn’t suit their self-reliance attitude and used less suppression in order to avoid attachment (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003). Thais with AAX tried to regulate emotions and tried harder to heal from negative experiences compared to those with ‘avoidant attachment’ therefore they had a positive impact on REAP (Bowlby, 1969, 1982; Gross & John, 2003). Also, this study states, individuals with anxious attachment suppressed more and avoidant individuals deactivated or avoided attachment through lesser suppression. ESUP in the Thai culture is common and this can support insecure attachments, which is helpful in romantic relationships, but indirectly caused distress.

Contrary to the findings of Noppaprach et al. (2015) who said avoidants suppress less, Mikulincer and Shaver (2007), states that individual with a high score on avoidance used suppression for emotional regulation more often, this finding agrees with the attachment theory where AAV is associated with deactivating techniques like suppression, that allow individuals to keep the attachment process in low state of engagement, mostly via inhibition. also, Mikulincer & Shaver. (2007) states AAX used reappraisal in a negative manner (by considering even benign events as threatening, being pessimistic about their abilities and distress) in order to up-regulate negative emotions. Also, AAX used reappraisal more to gain more attention, protection and care from attachment figures. Cooper et al. (2018), in their study on “Attachment Styles, Emotion Regulation, and Adjustment”, states that although avoidant individuals exhibited an equal level of negative symptoms similar to the anxious group, avoidant adolescents showed less hostility and depression, were more academically able but also less socially competent, and were less likely to get involved in romantic relationships. Although “avoidant adolescents” displayed higher levels of distress and therefore more motivated to participate in problematic behaviors to manage distress, they lacked the social skills to do so. Non-problematic behaviors among avoidant individuals was due to social deficits caused by low ER.

Read et al. (2018) conducted a study on “Adult attachment and social anxiety: in Australia. Results of this study indicate that individuals with AAX experience, social anxiety partly because of engaging in suppression and their inability to utilize REAP. It is expected that higher “AAX and/or avoidance” would cause higher degree of social anxiety symptomology. Those with “AAX and AAV” were expected to exhibit higher use of dysfunctional ER strategies (which means using more suppression and less reappraisal). This study reported AAX ($r = .323, p < .001$) and AAV ($r = .248, p < .001$) styles positively linked to social anxiety and were positively correlated to interpersonal discomfort and the use of ESUP. Association was stronger between Avoidant individuals and the use of suppression comparatively to

anxious individuals and their use of ESUP. This was supported by previous studies (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). REAP had a negative relationship with both avoidance and anxiety attachments.

According to a study done by Heshmathi et al. (2015) in Iran on how different types of child maltreatment (CM), impact attachment style (AS) and ER dimensions. This study showed that CM levels influenced grief from romantic breakup significantly and CM levels also predicted ESUP significantly. Iran and other Middle Eastern countries adhere to more ESUP compared to Western countries, which are more open to emotional expression, and provide greater social support. Romantic breakups, and other stressful life occurrences, can produce an array of psychological problems ensuing a romantic breakup in college students, and therefore ER factor for the wellbeing of young adults, is considered very important (Field, 2017; Field et al., 2009; Reimer & Estrada, 2020).

A study on “Attachment Orientations and Family Functioning and the Mediating Role of ER” by Brandão et al. (2022), showed that “insecure attachments”, AAX and AAV, were related to poor family functioning. Additionally, emotion suppression was a partial mediator between “attachment insecurity” (AAX/AAV) and perceived family functioning, AAX significantly predicted family functioning “(B = -0.11, p < 0.001)” and emotion suppression “(B = -0.07, p = 0.029)” but did not predict REAP. However, when ER strategies were used the relationship between “AAX” and family functioning reduced significantly. When examining the effect of AAV on family functioning, avoidance did not have a significant relationship with “REAP” but had a significant relationship with ESUP. where avoidant individuals recording higher suppression. Hence results suggested that ER played a role in the influence that attachment styles may have on family functioning.

A study done by Henschela et al. (2020), showed that anxiously attached individuals showed significantly high ER problems compared to “secure individuals”, the ER difficulties were related to, recognition and acceptance of emotions (p < .01), controlling impulses (p < .01), using goal-focused behaviors (p < .05), and problems with following ER practices (p < .001), than secure participants, also anxious individuals displayed greater individual distress and fantasy (p < .001) as compared to secure and avoidant people. Current research findings enhance these findings by indicating the impact of fantasy in anxious people, AAX was related to increased personal distress, through the tendency to experience pain due to others’ emotional distress. other studies too revealed that people with an AAX had higher levels of fantasy and therefore, had a greater probability of imagining another individuals’ emotional experiences and feel these emotions for themselves and feel more distress, due to a lack of ER. (Adams, 2001). Also, Avoidant participants faced higher difficulties in recognizing emotions and lower empathy compared to secure individuals (p < .05). The findings of Henschela et al. (2020) are congruent with other research demonstrating that avoidant individuals utilize deactivating tools and engage in suppression of attachment feelings they are consciously aware (Fraley & Waller, 1998; Mallinckrodt & Wei, 2005; Wei, Vogel, Ku, & Zakalik, 2005). Secure individuals on the other hand were more adaptive in using ER techniques, allowing them to understand another individual’s opinion more effectively. These results are congruent with the results of Troyer and Greitemeyer (2018).

A study was conducted on “The neural substrates of social emotion perception and regulation, modulated by adult attachment style” (Vrtička et al., 2015). This study used fMRI scans for 19 healthy adults to investigate the influence of “adult attachment style” in processing pleasing or hostile social and non-social situations. Avoidant respondents displayed higher “prefrontal and anterior cingulate activation” towards socially negative situations when making judgments emotionally. Also, these participants showed increased “dorsolateral prefrontal cortex and left amygdala activity” for negative social scenarios during REAP, and extra stimulation in “motor area and ventral caudate” for positive emotions suppression. The findings demonstrate that “avoidants” might use less efficient methods of REAP to navigate negative emotions, leading to increased conflict when suppression cannot be used. Also, anxious individuals have increased arousal towards negative events without, down-regulating emotions via cognitive reappraisal or suppression. Therefore “AAX” demonstrated a marginal negative relationship with REAP and ESUP. also “AAV” had a significant positive, marginal relationship with ESUP and negative impact on REAP.

A study done by Liu and Ma. (2019) on “Adult Attachment Style, ER and Social Networking Sites (SNS) Addiction”, showed that “AAX” predicted ER significantly “(B = 0.963, p < 0.001)” which in turn significantly impacted SNS addiction (B = 0.6, p < 0.001). Also, avoidance attachment predicted ER but *not* significantly, but which in turn predicted SNS addiction significantly. The study states that numerous studies done previously, showed that “AAX” and “emotional *dysregulation*” are positively associated and these two elements leads to maladaptive behaviors and internet addiction (Estevez et al., 2018), anxiety, depression, and eating disorders (Norrish et al., 2019), individuals with AAX have a greater need for acceptance and belonging socially, which is often fulfilled through social media (Hart et al., 2015). Similarly, another study demonstrated that individuals with AAX had higher probability of spending extra time on social media when going through negative feelings and also was over concerned about the perceptions of other social media followers had about them (Oldmeadow et al., 2013)

Study done by Domic-seide et al. (2023), asked participants to reappraise or suppress emotions when looking at negative images. This study found a link between arousal and dominance during REAP for avoidant attachment. A negative association was found, between ESUP and AAV, higher scores in avoidance, led to lower emotional control (p = 0.04). No relationship was found between AAV and REAP. This study states that there can be a few reasons for why AAV individuals find it difficult to use REAP. 1. avoidant individuals are prone to deactivate or repress emotions hence it can be difficult to use reappraisal as REAP requires knowledge and acceptance of one’s own emotions. 2. AAV find it difficult to identify and express emotions, 3. they have limited range of regulatory methods, due to not developing required resources to use REAP. 4. negative beliefs related to emotions, which makes using ER strategies difficult (Fraleigh and Shaver, 1998; Shaver and Mikulincer, 2002; Mikulincer and Shaver, 2007).

According to the meta-analysis done by Webb et al. (2012), preventing expression of emotions outwardly was effective. But trying to suppress the experience and thoughts related to emotions was ineffective. Also, there was no relationship between avoidance and REAP. ESUP can decrease the observable parts of emotions and physiological responses, but ESUP cannot decrease the connected emotional experience and evaluating the efficacy of suppression via a self-report is not possible. (Mohammed et al., 202).

METHODS

3.1. Conceptual framework

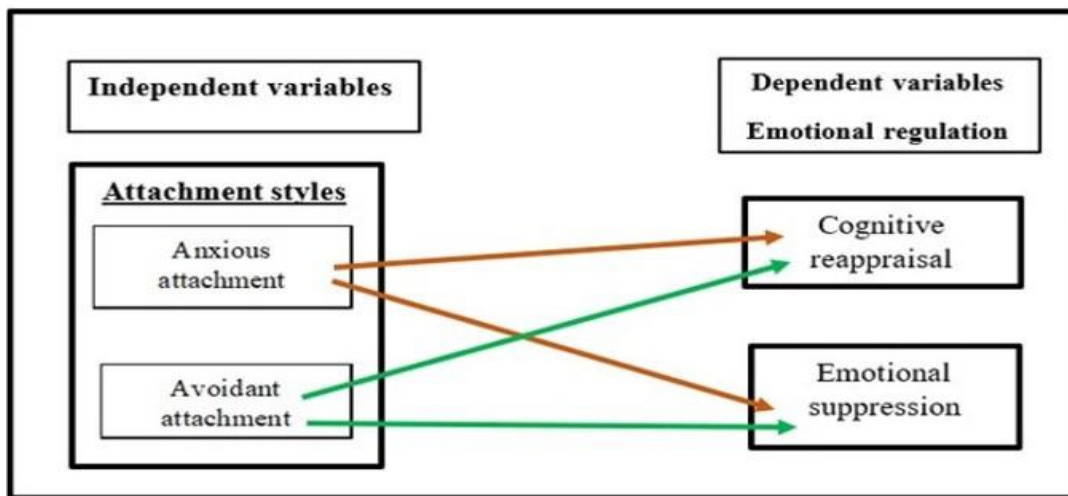


Figure 1

Conceptual framework

Research design

The present study will utilize a quantitative research method Present study will utilize a “Correlational quantitative research”, the current study has two independent variable (IV), and two dependent variables (DV), namely cognitive reappraisal and emotional suppression to measure ER. Therefore, correlational research aids to determine relationships between variables (Curtis et al., 2016). Quantitative studies generally utilize surveys (Walliman, 2011), and as the current study is quantitative, a survey was considered most suitable for this study. Surveys collect standardized data utilizing the same questions for all respondents, which enables economical and efficient data collection, especially when researchers have to administer questions to a large number of participants (Morling, 2018). surveys provide probability and non-probability sampling techniques which enables to represents large populations and the results obtained are used to generaliz e about the whole population (Pawar, 2016).

Participants and sample

Young adults as defined by Eric Erickson between ages 20-40 in SriLanka (Montgomery & Arnett, 2020), will be the target population for the present study. The minimum sample size needed to conduct linear multiple regression utilizing two independent variables and dependent variables, was determined by conducting a “Priority power analysis” using “G*Power version 3.1” (Faut et al., 2007), Results of priority power analysis required the sample size to have 95% power in order to recognize small to medium effect, at a significance measure of “ $\alpha=0.05$ ” and “ $N=89$ ” however larger numbers are more generalizable for the wider population of SriLanka, therefore the author aimed to obtain a sample size of $N=147$.

The author aims to utilize Voluntary sampling, a non-probability sampling method, the participants for the current study will voluntarily enroll through an advertisement displayed on social media, the advertisement includes a link to the online survey.

Data collection

The primary data collection method employed for the present research is an online questionnaire (Salkind, 2010). The researcher used an online questionnaire as it's easier, faster and less costly to distribute. The questionnaire was created through Qualtrics (Qualtrics, Provo, UT), and a social media advertisement was posted to recruit participants. The type of questionnaires used was a seven-point Likert scales

Materials

Emotional regulation

The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ: Gross & John, 2003) is a self-report questionnaire consisting 10-items. Developed to measure participant's ability to regulate emotions in two forms: (1) “Cognitive Reappraisal” containing 6 items, and (2) “Suppression” containing 4 items, Scoring is based on answers given on a seven-point Likert scale from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”). Gross and John (2003), found the test-retest reliability to be .69 for reappraisal and suppression subscales, also the internal consistency for the subscales were acceptable (reappraisal, $\alpha = .79$; suppression, $\alpha = .73$). Previous studies done by Read et al. (2018), Karreman and Vingerhoets (2012) have used this scale.

Experiences in Close Relationship Scale Short Version.

The Experiences in Close Relationship Scale short version (ECR-SV; Wei et al., 2007) is a scale of twelve-items used as a measure adult attachment. The scale consists of two subscales containing six-item each: anxiety and avoidance. Each item is scored on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. The ECR-SV has proven to have excellent psychometric properties in terms of reliability and validity in an Asian sample (Lee and Shin, 2019). Wei et al. (2007) established in their sample ($N=851$) that the short version had high internal consistency, with coefficient alphas of .78 (Anxiety) and .84 for (Avoidance). For this study the scale has been reworded items to refer to “close” relationships rather than “romantic” relationships, similar to questionnaires like revised attachment style scale (RAAS:) and Relationship Scale Questionnaire

Ethical considerations and Procedure

Approval of ethics will be obtained from the ethics committee of Cardiff metropolitan university before conducting the present study. Data collection will take place for two months and those who volunteer to take part in the online survey will be recruited through a social media advertisement which includes a link to the Qualtrics online survey. The survey will be completed anonymously by Participants and would require approximately 15 minutes. After clicking on the survey link, participants will have access to the study information sheet which includes; aims of the study, declaration of data protection via anonymity and confidentiality and a statement on participant right to withdraw anytime, from the survey, without adverse consequences. Participants will provide informed consent before proceeding with the study and then participants will answer questions on demographics such as age, gender and marital status, then scales on attachment styles and emotional regulation will be completed. The inclusion criteria for participants for the current study includes being between ages of 18-40 and being a SriLankan citizen and the exclusion criteria includes participants not being below 18. Participants will be thanked for participation, at the end of the study

Data analysis

The data collected through the Qualtrics survey, will be exported to SPSS 29. items in scales requiring reverse scoring will be reverse scored. Data analysis for the current study includes three types of analysis namely descriptive, correlational and multiple linear regression. Multiple linear regression will be done in order to determine the impact the independent variables has on ER of adults and to test hypotheses (Cohen & Swerdlik, 2018).

FINDINGS / RESULTS

Reliability test

As per Table 1, the Cron Bach Alpha value of the present study is 0.73, which is greater than 0.7 hence the author can precede further with the collected data to conduct the statistical analysis (Oliver, 2010).

Table 1

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.418	.395	4

Demographic assessment

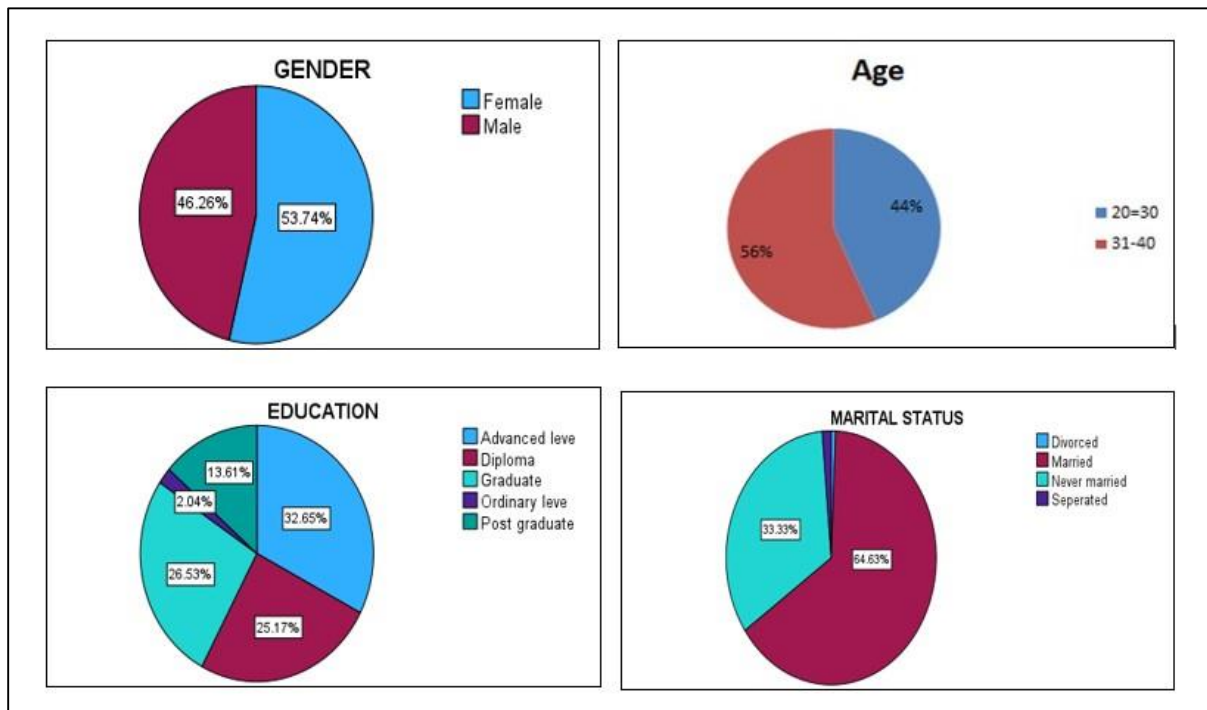


Figure 2: Demographic information

As per the figures above it is evident that both men and women have almost equally participated in the present research thereby the results can be applicable for both genders and the sample is representative. Further “age data” also suggests that economically active segment of the nation has participated in the research and therefore it can be assumed that they undergo a higher level of emotional changes due to work-life pressure. Similarly, the educational qualification shows that at least 64% have a diploma or above and therefore, respondents possess qualifications which is sufficient to obtain employment and hence, emotional suppression issues can be experienced by them in work and personal life due to attachment insecurities. Similarly, as Brando et al. (2019) suggested that married people tend to face higher ER related concerns due to insecure attachment in their relationships and the present study involves more than 60% of married people in respondents. Thereby the respondents of the study are representative and the findings are relevant.

Descriptive analysis

Table 2*Item Statistics*

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Anxious attachment	4.328798185941	.9141092549146	147
Attachment avoidance	3.460317460317	.8499112079448	147
Cognitive reappraisal	5.281179138322	.9585795238844	147
Suppressor	4.794217687075	1.396761383790	147

According to table 2, the mean value of the data set is 4 or close to 4 hence it is evident that at least one respondent for each statement would have chosen the option ‘Neutral’. Similarly, the standard deviation for each variable is close to the minimum value of the options hence it can be concluded that the data collected is not volatile or dispersed, hence it can be used to continue the statistical analysis and any conclusions made from the data collected can be reliable and generalized.

Correlation analysis

Correlations between attachment style and ER elements

Table 3

Correlations attachment style and ER

		Attachment styles	ER Dim
Attachment styles	Pearson Correlation	1	.179*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.030
	N	147	147
	Pearson Correlation	.179*	1
ER Dim	Sig. (2-tailed)	.030	
	N	147	147

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3, indicates correlation between “attachment styles” and ER elements are statistically *significant*, $r(147) = +.179$, $p < 0.05$, two tailed. Pearson correlation value of $+0.179$ suggests a *weak positive* correlation between “attachment styles” and ER.

Correlations between attachment styles and reappraisal**Table 4***Correlations between attachment anxiety and reappraisal*

		Anxious attachment	Cognitive reappraisal
Anxious attachment	Pearson Correlation	1	-.108
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.192
	N	147	147
Cognitive reappraisal	Pearson Correlation	-.108	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.192	
	N	147	147

Table 4, indicates correlation between “attachment anxiety” and reappraisal is statistically *insignificant*, $r(147) = -.108$, $p = .192$, two tailed. Pearson correlation value of $-.108$ suggests a *weak negative* correlation between AAX and reappraisal.

Table 5*Correlations between Avoidance and reappraisal*

		Attachment avoidance	Cognitive reappraisal
Attachment avoidance	Pearson Correlation	1	-.031
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.713
	N	147	147
Cognitive reappraisal	Pearson Correlation	-.031	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.713	
	N	147	147

Table 5, indicates correlation between “attachment avoidance” and reappraisal is statistically *insignificant*, $r(147) = -.031$, $p = .713$, two tailed. Pearson correlation value of $-.031$ suggests a *weak negative* correlation between AAV and reappraisal.

Overall for reappraisal, anxious and avoidant attachment styles have a weak negative, insignificant relationship with reappraisal

Correlations between attachment styles and Suppression

Table 6

Correlations between attachment anxiety and Suppression

		Anxious attachment	Suppression
Anxious attachment	Pearson	1	.036
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.668
	N	147	147
Suppression	Pearson	.036	1
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.668	
	N	147	147

Table 6, indicates, correlation between “attachment anxiety” and suppression is statistically insignificant, $r(147) = +.036$, $p = .147$, two tailed. Pearson correlation value of .036 suggests a weak positive correlation between AAX and suppression.

Table 7

Correlations between avoidance and suppression

		Attachment avoidance	Suppression
Attachment avoidance	Pearson	1	.456**
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	147	147
Suppression	Pearson	.456**	1
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	147	147

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

table 7, indicates, correlation between AAV and suppression is statistically significant, $r(147) = +.456$, $p < .01$, two tailed. Pearson correlations value of .456 suggests a moderate positive correlation between AAV and suppression.

Overall for suppression, although AAX showed a weak *positive insignificant* correlation with suppression, AAV showed *moderate positive significant* relationship with suppression

Regression analysis

Regression analysis between attachment styles and ER elements

Table 8

Model Summary for attachment styles by ER elements

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F C
1	.031 ^a	.001	-.006	.961429402603	.001	.136	1	145	.71
2	.109 ^b	.012	-.002	.959506282260	.011	1.582	1	144	.21

a. Predictors: (Constant), Attachment avoidance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Attachment avoidance, Anxious attachment

As shown in the regression model summary, Table 8, Attachment styles can contribute 1% for the change in ER elements of the chosen population. in the present study R square value is less than .07, hence the model reveals a low effect on ER by attachment styles

Regression between attachment styles and reappraisal

Table 9

Model summary for attachment style by reappraisal

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.091 ^a	.008	.002	.957851537883

a. Predictors: (Constant), Attachment styles

As shown in Table 9, R square value is .008 for reappraisal by both attachment styles, and this implies that present regression model can explain 1 % of change in cognitive reappraisal of the chosen population. As the R square value is less than 0.7 the model reveals a low effect by attachment styles (AAX and AAV) on reappraisal.

Regression between attachment styles and suppression**Table 10***Model summary for attachment style by suppression*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.307 ^a	.095	.088	1.33366

a. Predictors: (Constant), Attachment styles

As shown in Table 10, R square value is .095 for both “attachment styles” and this implies that present regression model indicates that both “attachment styles”, can contribute 9.5% of change in suppression for the chosen population. As it is less than 0.7, the model reveals a low effect by attachment styles (AAX /AAV) on suppression.

Table 11*ANOVA^a for attachment style by reappraisal*

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.121	1	1.121	1.222	.271 ^b
	Residual	133.035	145	.917		
	Total	134.156	146			

a. Dependent Variable: Cognitive reappraisal

b. Predictors: (Constant), Attachment styles

Further overall viability and statistical significance of the model can be assessed through ANOVA and as per Table 11 above, $p = .271$ hence the model is insufficient to measure the role of “attachment styles” in REAP statistically.

Table 12

ANOVA^a for attachment style by suppression

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	60.888	2	30.444	19.725	<.001 ^b
	Residual	220.709	143	1.543		
	Total	281.596	145			

a. Dependent Variable: suppression

b. Predictors: (Constant), attachment avoidance, anxious attachment

However, in table 12, in the ANOVA model for suppression, $F < .001$, hence it suggests that the model is fit enough to statistically measure the impact of attachment styles on suppression.

Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis of the study can be tested through the coefficient figures obtained through the regression analysis and the significant factor will be evaluated, to assess whether there is a positive or negative or strong, moderate or weak effect is there between the independent variables and dependent variables. Further the null hypothesis will be proved or rejected.

H₀; Attachment styles has no impact on ER dimensions

Table 13

Attachment style by ER coefficients

Coefficients^a Attachment style by ER

Model		Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence	
		Coefficients		Coefficients			Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower	Upper
							Bound	Bound
1	(Constant)	8.217	.907		9.055	<.001	6.424	10.011
	attachment style	.240	.115	.172	2.096	.038	.014	.467

a. Dependent Variable: ER_Dim

As per table 13 above, “attachment styles” had a *significant* impact on ER dimensions of reappraisal and suppression, $\beta = .172$, $p < .001$. Coefficient value of indicates “anxious attachment styles” has a positive impact on ER.

H1; Attachment anxiety and avoidance would have a negative impact on using reappraisal while attachment anxiety shows a greater negative impact on reappraisal.

Table 14

Coefficients^a anxious attachment by reappraisal

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	99.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	5.772	.383		15.072	.000	4.773	6.772
	Anxious attachment	-.113	.087	-.108	-1.310	.192	-.339	.113

a. Dependent Variable: Cognitive reappraisal

As per table 14 above, “attachment anxiety” had a significant impact on reappraisal, $\beta = -.108$, $p < .05$. Coefficient value of $-.108$, indicates “anxious attachment” has a negative impact on REAP. (Coefficient was equal to correlation value).

Table 15

Coefficients^a avoidance by reappraisal

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	99.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	5.401	.334		16.193	.000	4.530	6.271
	Attachment avoidance	-.034	.094	-.031	-.368	.713	-.279	.210

a. Dependent Variable: Cognitive reappraisal

Also, as per table 15 above, attachment avoidance too had a *significant* impact on reappraisal, $\beta = -.031$, $p < 0.05$. coefficient value of $-.031$ indicates “avoidant attachment” has a negative impact on REAP.

These suggest that both attachment styles have a negative impact on REAP but, ‘attachment anxiety’ has a greater negative impact on REAP as it has a greater coefficient figure. Thus, it is evident that H1 is proven. (coefficient was equal to correlation value).

H2; Attachment anxiety and avoidance would have a positive impact on using suppression while AAV shows a significant greater impact on suppression

Table 16

Coefficients^a anxious attachment by suppression

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		99.0% Confidence Interval for B		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	4.558	.561		8.125	.000	3.094	6.022
	Anxious attachment	.055	.127	.036	.430	.668	-.276	.386

a. Dependent Variable: Suppression

As per table 16 above, “attachment anxiety” had a significant impact on emotional suppression $\beta = +.036$, $p < .05$. coefficient value of $+.036$ “anxious attachment” has a positive impact on ESUP. coefficient was equal to correlation value.

Table 17

Coefficients^a avoidant attachment by suppression

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		99.0% Confidence Interval for B		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	2.202	.433		5.088	.000	1.072	3.331
	Attachment avoidance	.749	.121	.456	6.167	.000	.432	1.066

a. Dependent Variable: Suppression

As per table 17 above, “attachment avoidance” had a significant impact on emotional suppression $\beta = +0.456$, $p < .05$. coefficient value of $+0.456$ indicates “avoidant attachment” has a positive impact on ESUP. (coefficient was equal to correlation value)

“Attachment avoidance” has a greater coefficient value than ‘anxious attachment’. therefore, attachment avoidance shows a greater impact on emotional suppression, hence H2 is proven. This suggests that people with ‘insecure attachment styles’ have a higher use of emotional suppression.

DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings

Attachment anxiety and avoidance, both have a negative impact on ‘REAP’. But attachment anxiety has a greater negative impact on reappraisal. These results suggest that people with ‘insecure attachment styles’ make lesser use of ‘REAP’.

Attachment anxiety and avoidance, both have a significant positive impact on ESUP but ‘attachment avoidance’ has a greater positive impact on ESUP. These results suggest that people with ‘insecure attachment styles’ make lesser use of ‘ESUP’.

Finding 1- Attachment styles have a significant positive impact on ER of young adults

People with higher levels of “AAX or AAV” are prone to using dysfunctional ER techniques (Read et al., 2018), as they repeatedly fail to ease distress, ‘insecurely attached’ people find alternate methods to regulate distress to satisfy their needs for attachment (e.g. hyper-activating methods linked to ‘anxious attachment’) or individuals disable their attachment needs by decreasing their dependence on attachment figures in order to avoid undesirable emotional experiences (e.g. deactivating attachment methods linked to AAV), This finding is supported by the Attachment theory of Bowlby, that weak relationships between parent-child, could cause long-term behavioral problems in young people such as self-harm and undesirable behaviors such as eating related problems, internet addiction anxiety and depression.

However, several studies also showed that, *factors other than* AS influenced ER, Adolescents and adults in the “low socio-economic groups” displayed greater ER difficulties as they did not reappraise life in benevolent ways due to factors such as “ESUP”, and social stressors, emotional difficulties of parents had a higher impact on adolescent ER problems, than the quality of attachment between parent and child or the temperament of the adolescent.

Finding 2- Both attachment styles had a negative impact on using reappraisal while “Attachment anxiety” showed a greater negative impact on reappraisal.

Supporting finding 2 many studies indicate that both AAX and AAV have a negative impact on reappraisal, avoidants displayed increased “dorsolateral prefrontal cortex and left amygdala activity” for

negative social scenarios, therefore avoidants might employ less efficient REAP methods to navigate negative emotions, AAX displayed different increments in the “right amygdala” for negative events This tells anxious individuals have increased arousal towards negative events as they don’t downregulate emotions via REAP or suppression. Finding 2, also states that AAX has a greater negative impact on REAP than avoidance, confirming this AAX individuals faced significantly higher ER related problems compared to “secure and avoidant individuals”, the ER difficulties were related to, recognition and acceptance of emotions, controlling impulses, using goal-focused behaviors and problems with following ER practices, than secure participants, also AAX was related to increased personal distress, through the tendency to experience pain due to others’ emotional distress, which means they use REAP less which supports the findings of the present study.

However, *contradicting finding 2*, Noprapach et al. (2015) states in his study done in Thailand, Thais with AAX tried to regulate emotions and tried harder to heal from negative experiences compared to those with ‘avoidant attachment’ therefore they had a positive impact on REAP. Thais with AAX tried to regulate emotions more via REAP, compared to those with AAV because ‘avoidant individuals’ used reappraisal less, as it doesn’t suit their self-reliance attitude. Also, AAX use more REAP in an exaggerated manner (by considering even benign events as threatening, being pessimistic about their abilities and distress) and Also, AAX used reappraisal more, to gain more attention, protection and care from attachment figures. Also the study done by Domic-seide et al. (2023), states that it’s avoidant individuals that show greater impact on REAP, due to following reasons, 1. avoidant individuals are prone to deactivate or repress emotions hence it can be difficult to use reappraisal as REAP requires knowledge and acceptance of one’s own emotions. 2. AAV find it difficult to identify and express emotions, 3. they have limited range of regulatory methods, due to not developing required resources to use REAP. 4. negative beliefs related to emotions, which makes using ER strategies difficult.

Finding 3- Both attachments had a positive impact on using ESUP while avoidance showed a significant greater positive impact on ESUP.

Supporting above finding 3, both attachments had a positive impact on ESUP, avoidance was linked with positive suppression and lower emotional communication due to lesser prohedonic goals (goal of changing emotions in order to feel more positive and less negative), also AAX was linked with suppression and rumination due to increased “impression management” and “performance goals”. Also, AAX used thought suppression, related to self-worth and negative experiences as a method to evade negative internal experiences. As self-compassion naturally includes dealing with a person’s own vulnerability with equanimity, it makes sense that AAX is compatible with tactics of evading vulnerability and thought suppression. *Also supporting finding 3*, avoidant individuals recorded higher emotion suppression than AAX. attachment theory states “avoidant attachment” is associated with deactivating techniques like suppression, that allow individuals to keep the attachment system in the state of low engagement, mostly through inhibition processes.

However, other factors like culture plays an important role in ESUP. *this can explain the weak impact attachment styles has on suppression.* Iran and other Middle Eastern countries use greater ESUP compared to Western countries, which are more supportive towards emotional expression, and provide greater social support. Thai culture, can support “insecure attachments” which can help romantic relationships, but indirectly led to psychological distress, however suppressing positive emotional experiences and being humble are valued more in Asia. hence suppression, a norm in Thai culture can be a regular emotional response, which happens when situations and cultural contexts require such ER.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study expanded the literature by examining the link between attachment styles and ER in an understudied Srilankan sample. The finding of the present study is built on extensive literature and makes significant contributions towards understanding ER and how attachment styles influences ER. mental health practitioners working at counseling centers in universities can enhance client ER by educating them on reducing emotional suppression and improving cognitive reappraisal for those with attachment problems. The finding of this study is important for parents, in that to understand importance of practicing constructive parenting skills, so that parents would learn to recognize their child's problems and develop effective responses. Present study has implications for those in romantic relationships to improve understanding about partners and their behaviors.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion the present study investigated the relationships between attachment styles and ER dimensions and found that both anxious and avoidant attachments had a significant negative impact on reappraisal but anxious attachment had a higher negative impact on reappraisal and also both attachments had significant positive impact on suppression but avoidant attachment had a higher impact on suppression. The current research adds to literature on attachment by contributing better informed understanding of how differences in Attachment are connected with ER.

FUTURE RESEARCH AND LIMITATIONS

The current research was not able to find out the impact of secure attachment on ER dimensions due to the questionnaire used, therefore future research should examine the impact of secure attachment on ER dimensions. The present study also did not take into consideration any psychological disorders of participants as these disorders can significantly impact ER (Margansaka et al., 2013; Pollock et al., 2016), therefore future research should consider any psychological disorders of participants. Also, present study shows a low model fit and sample sizes less than 200 can cause low model-fit (Cohen & Swerdlik, 2018), therefore future studies can use a higher sample size

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