

**Adult Attachment Styles and  
Mental Well-Being in Relation to  
Romantic Relationship Satisfaction**

Sladjana Radulovic

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School of Arts, Dublin.

Supervisor: Cathal O'Keeffe

Head of Department: Dr. S. Eccles

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Department of Psychology

DBS School of Arts

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### **Abstract**

The aim of the present study was to explore the relationship between anxiety and avoidant attachment styles, mental well-being and romantic relationship satisfaction. A between-subjects cross-sectional correlational design was utilised. Attachment orientations were measured with the Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised (ECR-R) Scale; mental well-being was measured with the WEMWBS (Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale); and relationship satisfaction was measured with the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS). 118 students (50.5% female and 49.5% male), recruited through opportunity sampling, participated. Attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance were negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction, while increased well-being was positively correlated with it. The theoretical and practical implications of the results contribute towards the effort for global improvement in affective human relationship functioning.

## Introduction

Bowlby (1969) recognized that throughout evolution human beings formed close affectionate bonds that lasted for a lifetime. Over the past three decades Bowlby's (1979) attachment theory has become a major framework in the study of romantic relationships, personality development, emotion regulation (Fraley, Heffernan, Vicary, and Brumbaugh, 2011) and psychopathology (Fraley and Shaver, 2000). Attachment styles have also been related to conflict styles, jealousy, coping responses, parental drinking, sexual activity, neuroticism, depression, well-being and relationship satisfaction (Shaver and Hazan, 1993; Griffin and Bartholomew, 1994).

Attachment studies today are divided into two different perspectives. The first focuses on child-parent attachments, while the other focuses on the attachment processes of romantic and marital relationships (Dinero, Conger, Shraver, Widaman, and Larsen-Rife, 2011). The studies of romantic relationships contributed towards the understanding of intimacy and closeness and to the establishment of the intimacy degrees that people feel comfortable with (Fraley and Shaver, 2000). Simpson (1990) found in his study that the degree of relationship satisfaction could be linked to the individual's mental model, rather than being based on experiences from within the current relationship. Simpson (1990) further suggested that adult attachment styles influence the individual's well-being and that secure attachment determines one's mental well-being.

In addition, Demir (2008) found that there is an ongoing trend of empirical evidence that romantic relationships make people happy. However, he argued that such findings should be interpreted with caution since it is not certain if their outcomes are correctly labeled as happiness. Furthermore, he pointed out that personality factors account for 50% of happiness which suggests that a large part of the individual's life events are influenced by the individual

difference factor. This also supports current findings, according to which personality traits highly correlate with adult attachment (Fraley et al., 2011). Happiness is an important factor in people's lives, which is also associated with various domains of success and positive mental health (Demir, 2008).

Moreover, Ryan and Deci (2001) support the idea that well-being does not mean an absence of mental illness. This notion reflects current awareness in psychological research, whereas earlier research was mainly focused on the absence of illness and unhappiness (Diener, 1984). Mental well-being presently refers both to affect and psychological functioning which also relates to the hedonistic perspective (subjective experiences of happiness and life satisfaction) and the eudaimonic perspective (related to cognitive functioning and self-realisation (Tennant, Hiller, Fishwick, Platt, Joseph, Weich, Parkinson, et al., 2007)).

The World Health Organization (2004) defines mental health as a state of well-being in which the individuals are able to: cope with normal life stressors, work and provide a living, self-actualize and contribute to the community. In addition, the studies of Global Mental Health are working towards and placing priority on the improvement of mental health for all people worldwide (Patel, Collins, Copeland, Kakuma, Katontoka, Lamichanne, Naik et al., 2011). In addition, Patel and Prince's (2010) research demonstrates the inequalities and lack of respect between rich and poor countries and points towards the gap in people's treatment since poorer countries lack the means for improving their citizens' mental well-being, which consequently has a negative effect for both the individual and the country.

### *Attachment theory*

Bowlby (1979) drew his theories from psychiatric and psychoanalytic practice while working in understaffed orphanages and nurseries where he first noted a lack of bonding between the child and the caregiver, usually the mother (Crain, 2011). Later on, Bowlby (1979) concluded that bonds are instinctual needs which are important for one's survival and failure to receive such attachment can result in lifelong emotional and behavioural problems. In addition, he named the proximity to an attachment figure and the various attachment behaviours (crying, searching, separating and uniting) attachment behavioral systems (Fraley, 2004).

Mary Ainsworth (1978) was the first to categorize individual differences into patterns of attachment that are developed during infancy and childhood. Based on her laboratory study *Strange Situation* (1978) on infant-parent attachment, she provided empirical evidence for three model categories of adult attachment: *secure*, *insecure anxious* and *insecure avoidant* attachment. The study was assessed through four interactive behavior scales: contact maintenance, proximity seeking, avoidance and resistance. Furthermore, it revealed that secure infants were upset when they were left alone in a room with a stranger but easily comforted on their mother's (caregiver's) return, whereas anxious infants were hard to comfort upon their mother's return and avoidant infants displayed no evident upset, neither by separation, nor upon return (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters and Wall, 1978).

Moreover, "...healthy personality functioning at every age reflects, first, an individual's ability to recognize suitable figures willing and able to provide him with secure base and, second, his ability to collaborate with such figures in mutually rewarding relationships" (Bowlby, 1979, p. 104). The primary function of attachment theory lies in the construction of mental representations, or working models, of the self and others, based on

previous knowledge or interpersonal experiences (Fraley, et al., 2011). These working models provide crucial grounds for the understanding of personality, emotions, and interpersonal relationships, including all close relationships, such as those between parents, friends and romantic partners (Fraley et al., 2011).

### *Adult Attachment Theory and Adult Romantic Attachment*

Evidence from longitudinal developmental studies shows that childhood attachment relationships are extended into adulthood and are evident in parenting, peer and romantic relationships (Bartholomew and Shaver, 1998). Furthermore, romantic relationships are guided and driven by the same motivational systems that control attachment behavior in infancy (Fraley and Shaver, 2000). This suggests that attachments in infancy are necessary prerequisites for the formation of attachments in adulthood when the intimate partners' attachments exists to facilitate the raising of their offspring (Fraley and Shaver, 2000). Romantic love involves additional behavioral systems, such as caregivers and sex, whereupon, although they are guided by the same motivational system, the infant and adult motivational systems serve different functions in their entirety (Fraley, 2004).

Hazan and Shaver (1987) were the first to explore the nature of romantic relationships, and based on Ainsworth and her colleagues' (1978) theory, they developed a self-report measure to test individual differences. The researchers assessed the measures of the three categories of infant attachment and applied them to adult romantic relationships (Hazan and Shaver, 1987). Furthermore, Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) introduced a fourth model of attachment in which attachment is evaluated on two dimensions: the model of the self and the model of the others, representing avoidance and dependence. Their study proposed that the *secure* type of attachment would rate low on avoidance of intimacy and low

on dependence, and that the *preoccupied* type of attachment would rate low on avoidance and intimacy and high on dependence. In addition, the *fearful-avoidant* attachment type would rate high on avoidance and high on dependence and the *dismissing* attachment type would rate high on avoidance of intimacy and low on dependence.

Brennan, Clark and Shaver (1998) noted that attachments vary during the different stages of our lives; they developed a measure in which individual differences are obtained dimensionally, rather than categorically. Fraley and Spieker (2003) also noted that the majority of researchers imply that the variations of attachment, such as security and insecurity, are a matter of kind, rather than degree, thus assuming that individual differences are categorical. They suggested that the use of a categorical coding system over a dimensional one could be due to chance. However, it is important to recognize that both factors (categorical and dimensional) underlie individual differences and that continuous measures and interpretations of these variations are needed (Fraley and Spiker, 2003).

Hazan and Shaver's (1978) proposition that adult romantic relationships work in the same way as infant-caregiver relationships poses further implications (Fraley, 2004). Although their findings helped towards the understanding of relationship functioning in terms of attachment, a few gaps have been found in their theory. In long-term romantic relationships attachment and caregivers' roles are interlinked and hard to separate (Fraley and Shaver, 2000). Although there are some similarities in these patterns of behavior, the behaviors are not always constant. To begin with, not all individuals are paired with secure partners (Fraley and Shaver, 2000). Although adult secure attachment seems to follow the infant-caregiver pattern, the adult insecure attachment can worsens during or after conflict situations with their partner, for example (Simpson, Rholes and Phillips, 1996).

Moreover, researchers were able to detect the physical behavior of *avoidant* children through measures of heart rate and stress hormone levels, noting that children were in distress when separated and reunited with their caregiver, even though they did not express obvious upset behavior (Fraley, 2004). In addition, Fraley and Shaver (1997) found that adult's *fearful-avoidant* and *dismissing-avoidant* attachment types varied in their intensities of defense mechanisms. They noted that although both types were found to be in a state of distress, the *dismissing-avoidant* individuals were able to suppress their thoughts and emotions better than the *fearful-avoidant* attachment type.

However, one of the biggest arguments in adult attachment theory is the stability of individual differences (Fraley, 2004). Longitudinal studies are best for answering such questions but the study of romantic attachment is in its early development and few questions have been addressed (Fraley, 2004). Furthermore, Hazan and Shaver (1978) underlined the controversial outcomes of studies on the relationship between early attachment experiences and romantic attachment orientation (Fraley, 2004). For instance, Owens, Crowell, Pan, Treboux, O'Connor, and Waters (1995) found that child-parent-adult attachment patterns are moderately related and that secure romantic relationships do not necessary recall positive experiences from early childhood. Therefore, insecure romantic relationships do not always recall negative experiences either. Moreover, measuring adult attachment stability poses another dilemma since different life events can have different effects on people. This can lead to short- or long-term changes, such as divorce or separation, as well as transitional changes, such as marriage and parenthood (Fraley et al., 2011).

Fraley and Shaver (2000) showed that it takes approximately two years for a romantic relationship to develop. This poses the question of the validity of research involving couples in an intimate relationship for less than two years. Moreover, the measures of attachment

assume that all romantic relationships are attachment relationships, therefore new measures are needed to separate attachment from nonattachment relationships (Fraley and Shaver, 2000).

### *Attachment Styles*

Kim Bartholomew (1990) has identified four attachment styles: *secure*, *fearful*, *preoccupied* and *dismissing*. Bartholomew and Horwitz (1991) further proposed that the attachment patterns are used on a dimensional level, reflecting the person's self image (positive or negative) and their image of others (positive or negative). In addition, these styles are designated in a prototypical manner; they are not intended to categorize individuals but to be measured on a continuum instead.

*Securely* attached individuals have a positive view of themselves and others, feel comfortable with dependency (autonomy) and intimacy, and find it easy to engage in emotionally close relationships (Bartholomew, 1990). *Secure* individuals are also comfortable depending on others and having others depend on them, and they can turn to others without hesitation when they are experiencing distress (Bartholomew and Horwitz, 1991).

*Fearfully/Anxiously* attached individuals have a negative view of themselves and a negative view of how others perceive them (Bartholomew, 1990). They have a tendency to avoid intimacy due to their fear of rejection, even though they desire intimacy (Bartholomew and Horwitz, 1991). The *fearful* type is vulnerable, insecure, has low self-confidence, high self-consciousness, high emotional dependence, and does not approach others for support. Moreover, the *fearful* type struggles with separation anxiety, has jealousy issues and finds it difficult to trust others. They have difficulties in maintaining romantic

relationships because they are uncomfortable in social situations and in intimacy.

*Preoccupied* attached individuals have a negative view of themselves and a positive view of how others may perceive them (Bartholomew, 1990). These individuals are highly emotionally expressive and can overreact to problems. They are preoccupied with relationships and they are highly dependent on others which explains their low confidence and low self-esteem. When in intimate relationships, they display a number of emotional extremes, such as jealousy, possessiveness, anger and passion. They constantly seek company and attention and can turn to others for support, however, they do not expect to reciprocate the support they receive (Bartholomew and Horwitz, 1991).

*Dismissingly/Avoidantly* attached individuals have a positive view of themselves and a negative view of how others perceive them (Bartholomew, 1990). They are independent, and appear to be highly confident. They are often cynical, overly critical of other people, prefer to be alone in stressful situations and therefore avoid seeking support. Their friendships tend to be superficial and they can often be impulsive. Moreover, such people deny and suppress their feelings, have difficulties with intimacy and with their need for closeness when in a relationship. Bartholomew and Horwitz (1991) clarify that the *avoidant* type tends to deal with rejection by distancing themselves from the source of rejection, such as their romantic partner.

### *Mental Well-Being*

Positive mental health has major consequences for health and social outcomes (Morris, 2003). Nowadays, the term mental health is also used as mental well-being and covers the hedonic and eudaimonic perspectives. It relates to positive affect, satisfying interpersonal relationships and positive functioning (Tennant et al., 2007). Positive mental

health is currently under-researched because of lack of appropriate measures (Tennant et al., 2009). The measures with negative focus divert people from such studies because they refer to people with mental health problems only and therefore cannot be used to support the concept of positive mental health (Tennant et al., 2007). Researchers emphasize that depression and anxiety, for example, are common among the general population and that different methods are needed in order to address and help such existing problems (Tennant et al., 2007).

The link between people's environment and their health has been addressed for centuries in legislative attempts to provide adequate housing and sanitation to citizens (Morris, 2003; Glesler, 1998). Morris (2003) pointed out that the environment and landscapes have a positive impact on our species through things such as the provision of clean water and the maintenance of plants and animals, whereas hazardous exposures negatively affect human health. Morris (2003) concluded that cultural development and the community enhance mental health as they reduce isolation and foster economic and social development. Ryan and Deci (2001) also make this connection between the physical and social environment and they relate it to the individual well-being. The researchers acknowledge that of the greatest importance for psychological theorists, and for humanity, would be: “the study of the relations between personal well-being and the broader issues of the collective wellness of humanity and the wellness of the planet” (Ryan and Deci, 2001, p. 161).

### *Hedonic and Eudaimonic Perspectives of Mental Well-Being*

The concept of well-being exists since ancient times and revolves around two philosophies: hedonism and eudaimonics (Ryan and Deci, 2001). The hedonic view, as proposed in the fourth century B.C. by the Greek philosopher Aristippus, focuses on

happiness, pleasure and pain avoidance, which are perceived as one's life goals (Ryan and Deci, 2001). Aristotle argued that the eudaimonic ways emphasize self-realization and fulfillment of one's potential, with the view that the latter determine life satisfaction (Ryan and Deci, 2001).

Breuer and Freud's (1893-1895, p. 305) psychoanalytic notion that "...much will be gained if we succeed in transforming your hysterical misery into common unhappiness. With a mental life that has been restored to health, you will be better armed against that unhappiness", further ties to the eudaimonic school of thought in which all good and bad in life is understood, felt and dealt with from a realistic and profound point of view. On the other side, the hedonic view can be summed up as focused on bodily pleasures and self-interests (Ryan and Deci, 2001). The researchers further suggest that hedonic psychologists' view of well-being encompasses subjective well-being but also includes the good and bad life experiences. Moreover, Ryan and Deci (2001) also state that most of the studies within hedonic psychology have used the assessment of subjective well-being (SWB) that contains three characteristics: presence of positive mood, absence of negative mood and life satisfaction, which are supposed to account for happiness.

Aristotle regarded hedonism as a vulgar idea in which people are slaves to their desires and proposed that true happiness is found in doing, rather than being (Ryan and Deci, 2001). Moreover, the eudaimonic view of well-being could be seen almost as the opposite of happiness because some of the fulfilled desire outcomes may not necessarily lead to happiness, despite the possibility of being experienced as pleasurable (Ryan and Deci, 2001). For example, Nix, Ryan, Manly and Deci (1999) found that the accomplishment of an activity while feeling under pressure results in happiness of a hedonic nature or subjective well being, while at the same time it lacks in vitality (a feature of a eudaimonic nature). Moreover,

Waterman (1993) pointed out that the eudaimonic existence requires from the individual to live in accordance with one's true self, and it is fulfilled when people pursue and act upon their deeply held values that make them feel intensely alive and authentic, as well as fully engaged in their holistic existence.

Ryff and Keyes's (1995) model of psychological well-being encompasses six distinct components: Self-Acceptance, Environmental Mastery, Purpose in Life, Autonomy, Positive Relation with Others and Personal Growth. This model suggests that the process of fulfilling one's goals requires effort and discipline and does not always correlate with short-term happiness (Ryff and Keyes, 1995). The self-determination theory (SDT), proposed by Ryan and Deci (2001), also favors the eudaimonic perspective and focuses on self-realization. Their model conceptualizes three basic human needs: autonomy, competence and relatedness. The fulfillment of those needs is crucial for psychological growth, integrity, well-being and vitality. SDT also emphasizes the importance of the social environment as an inevitable facet of psychological growth. Therefore contextual, cultural and developmental factors are all contributing towards "well-being at both between-person and within-person level of analysis" (Ryan and Deci, 2001, p. 147).

However, other pieces of evidence suggest that well-being is a multidimensional phenomenon and that both the hedonic and the eudaimonic concepts are essential for overall happiness. For example, research by McGregor and Little (1998) showed that when individuals were pursuing personal goals and were feeling happy, they lacked deeper meaning at the same time. Therefore, the researchers concluded that both happiness and meaning are necessary for mental well-being. Moreover, Martin Seligman (2000), the father of positive psychology, found that material possessions and wealth or marital status do not secure and determine happiness (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). It has been

historically proven that people who lead difficult, poor and unjust lives are not less happy (Becker, 1992).

In addition, Viktor Frankl's (2004) theories enabled him to survive the Holocaust experience and further strengthen his theories that gave rise to logotherapy. Logotherapy focuses on finding meaning in life and further emphasizes that life has a meaning under all circumstances, even the most miserable ones (Frankl, 2004). Moreover, there has been increased support for the benefits of spirituality regarding mental health and the proposal that the aspects of spirituality should be supported within clinical settings (Borneman, Ferrell, and Puchalsky, 2010). Furthermore, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR) (2000) has added a diagnostic category for religious and spiritual problems, therefore, supporting the latter. However, some evidence suggests that religion and spirituality, in some cases, can in fact worsen the individual's mental state (Curlin, Lawrence, Odell, Chin, Lantos, Koeing and Meador, 2007).

#### *Attachment, Mental Well-Being and Relationship Satisfaction*

Dissatisfaction within relationships, marital conflicts and divorce often cause anxiety in adults and children and can result in mental health problems (Afifi, Cox and Enns, 2006). Divorce can also put an economic strain on the family which causes additional implications for those involved (Smock, Manning and Gupta, 1999).

Empirical research suggests that the quality of a relationship is an important source of well-being (Demir, 2008). Simpson (1990) states that attachment styles are predictors of well-being. However, some argue that the ways in which adult attachment relates to relationship satisfaction remain unknown (Fraley and Shaver, 2000). Based on previous findings of infant and adult attachment, Simpson (1990) conducted a study with 144

participants to examine the effects of attachment styles on romantic relationships. The study consisted of two parts and the second part involved a six-month follow up. During the second part, the researcher was able to detect if couples were still dating, and if not, to what degree the participants were emotionally distressed.

He noted that the individual attachment styles varied in emotional tone, regarding the intensity of positive and negative aspects. Simpson (1990) also found that individuals with *secure* attachment styles had more satisfying relationships and were able to express more trust, commitment and interdependence following a break up. On the other hand, individuals with *avoidant* attachment styles reported the least emotional upset following a break up in comparison to the other styles. In addition, the *avoidant* attachment type also exhibited less commitment, trust and interdependence.

Furthermore, Simpson (1990) noted that different emotional experiences corresponded to different attachment styles. The reoccurring pattern of adult attachment showed that men with an *avoidant* attachment style reported experiencing very little emotional upheaval after a break up. This led the researcher to the conclusion that the perceived experience from the relationship was related to one's own experiences, particularly those related to attachment, rather than to the current relationship itself.

Overall, the adult attachment and mental models based on these attachment types influenced the perceptions of the individuals' relationship experiences. This leads to such questions as: to what extent are these working models influenced by attachment? And if they are, how can the individuals be made aware of these repetitive patterns in order to contribute towards their mental well-being? Possibly, the person's awareness could be explored in psychotherapeutic settings, such as couple, marriage, relationship and sex therapies, in order to help handling potential misunderstandings that arise among couples in conflict situations.

### *Aim of the Study*

The present study aims to highlight the importance and contribution of attachment theory for human relationships, individual differences and individual well-being. Since further research in the area of attachment is needed in order to globally improve affective human relationship functioning, the present study aims to contribute towards this end. There are certain gaps within the extant literature in relation to adult attachment, such as the lack of research in the context of all three domains that will be explored in this study. The existing research has focused on each of these domains separately or involving different domains but has not as yet explored the context of attachment, mental well-being and relationship satisfaction.

Also, the majority of studies focused mainly on subjective well-being (which is mostly related to the hedonic perspective) and was not conducted in the context of mental well-being, which looks at overall well-being. Both the hedonic and eudaimonic dimensions of mental well-being have been shown to be significant for a number of outcomes, however, they may not be equally important among different attachment styles and as a result can have an effect on relationship satisfaction.

Therefore, the aim of the current study is to explore which of these factors can act as a predictive variable in the development of relationship satisfaction, and to check for correlations between predictors and how they could aid towards an improvement in satisfaction with human relationships. The proposed hypotheses are:

H<sub>1</sub> Attachment anxiety will have a negative effect on relationship satisfaction.

H<sub>2</sub> Attachment avoidance will have a negative effect on relationship satisfaction.

H<sub>3</sub> High levels of mental well-being will have a positive effect on relationship satisfaction.

## Methodology

### *Materials*

The present study utilised three separate pencil and paper measures and also included a combined demographic sheet and consent form (see **Appendix A**). The order of the questions in the questionnaires was randomized and all questionnaires were self administered. The human resource comprised 118 participants and 1 researcher. All participants were given a pen, a copy of the questionnaires, and a copy of the combined demographic sheet consent form.

### *Adult Attachment Scale*

The attachment orientations were measured with the Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised (ECR-R) Scale, developed by Fraley, Waller, and Brennan (2000) (see **Appendix B**). The ECR-R is derived from item response theory (IRT), which focuses on the analysis of most of the existing self-reported measures of adult attachment (see Brennan et al., 1998). The ECR-R is designed to separately measure individual differences of multiple domains: relationships with the partner, the mother, the father and the (non-romantic) best friend. The present report focuses on the first domain. Within each domain, the ECR-R assesses two dimensions: attachment related anxiety and attachment related avoidance. The Chronbach alpha coefficient for the ECR-R anxiety score is 0.88, while the Chronbach alpha coefficient for the ECR-R avoidance score is 0.92 (Fraley et al., 2000; Fraley et al., 2011). The test-retest reliabilities (for a 3-week interval) for both sub-scales are 0.70 (Brennan, Shaver and Clark, 2000). The ECR-R is also designed to measure individual differences dimensionally, rather than categorically (Fraley et al., 2000).

The questionnaire consists of 36 items that describe how one feels in close

relationships. The first 18 items measure attachment anxiety. An example item is, “I’m afraid that I will lose my partner's love”. The remaining 18 items measure attachment avoidance. An example item is, “I find it relatively easy to get close to my partner” (Reversed). The items are rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from (1) “*strongly disagree*” to (7) “*strongly agree*”, in which 4 represents a neutral answer. Items 1 to 36 were randomized before they were presented to the participants. Because items 9 and 11 are “reversed keyed” (high numbers represent low anxiety, rather than high anxiety), the answers had to be reversed before the responses were averaged. (If someone answered with a “3” to item 11, it was necessary to re-key it as a “5” before averaging). Items 20, 22, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, and 36 also had to be reversed before they were averaged. The ECR-R scale can be used to differentiate between the four adult attachment styles as proposed by Bartholomew and Horowitz's model (1991). Low scores in anxiety and avoidance are typical for a *securely* attached person, whereas high anxiety and high avoidance scores are typical for the *anxious* type. High anxiety and low avoidance applies to the *preoccupied* style, and low anxiety and high avoidance are related to the *avoidant* attachment style.

### *Mental Well-Being Scale*

The present study utilised the WEMWBS (Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale) questionnaire to measure mental well-being. The questionnaire was developed by researchers at the Warwick and Edinburgh Universities (Tennant, Hiller, Fishwick, Platt, Joseph, Weich, Parkinson, Secker, and Stewart-Brown, 2007) (see **Appendix C**). WEMWBS has a test-retest reliability of 0.83 after an interval of one week. The scale measures the overall positive mental health of the adult population. It is composed of 14 positively worded items on a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from (1) “*all of the time*” to (5) “*none of the time*”).

An example item is, “I’ve been feeling optimistic about the future” or “I’ve been feeling loved”. It covers the hedonic (self realization, subjective experiences of happiness and life satisfaction) and the eudaimonic (psychological functioning and positive relationships with others) perspectives. The overall scores range between 14 and 70; the higher the score, the higher the mental well-being of the person. They are calculated by adding up the total scores of the sub-scales. The scale is not designed to identify the extremes of positive or negative mental health. Therefore, there are no cut off points in the scoring of the scales. WEMWBS can be used to calculate the mean scores for different groups of people or for the same group of people at different periods of time. The obtained mean scores and standard deviations can be compared within or between groups. Moreover, the provisional population mean score for Scotland has been established to be 50.7 (S.D.  $\pm$  0.4), based on the 2006 national survey data (Tennant et al., 2007) and can be used as a certain basis for comparison.

#### *Relationship Satisfaction Scale*

The Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS), developed by Hendrick (1988), was used to measure relationship satisfaction as it can be used for different types of relationships (see **Appendix D**). RAS is found to have high internal consistency (0.86) and good test-retest reliability (Fischer and Corcoran, 1994; Hendrick, 1988; Hendrick, Dick and Hendrick, 1998). A sample item is, “How well does your partner meet your needs? ”. RAS consists of 7 items on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) “*Hardly at all/Poorly*” to (5) “*Extremely well/Completely*”. It shows moderate to high correlations with measures of marital satisfaction, as well as consistent measurement properties across samples of age- and ethnically-diverse couples.

#### *Participants*

118 undergraduate and postgraduates students from an Irish college participated in the present study. The participants were recruited through opportunity sampling. 39 participants were recruited from psychology courses and 79 were recruited from business and management courses. However, data for only 104 of the participants were used in the present study. Participants, who failed to complete at least 33 items from the ECR-R scale and did not respond to 2 items from the remaining scales, were omitted from the study. The demographics factors were assessed with PASW (Version 18). The mean age was 29.18, standard deviation 7.29, range 20-49. 50.5% of the participants were female and 49.5% were male.

### *Design*

The research utilised a between subjects cross sectional correlational design, in order to account for correlational outcomes. The measured variables included predictor variables and a criterion (outcome) variable. The predictor variables were: attachment styles and mental well-being. The criterion variable was romantic relationship satisfaction. The demographic variables of age and gender were also taken into account.

### *Data analysis*

All analyses were carried out using PASW (Version 18). The data were first explored for distribution type and homogeneity. Based on the outcome (normal distribution), multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses. Pearson's correlations were computed to test the interactions between all the variables and an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test the correlation between the predictor variables and the criterion variable. Furthermore, a series of hierarchical parametric tests were examined to determine how well

the chosen model fits the current research data. Testing for individual predictors requires a minimum sample size of  $104 + k$  (number of predictors) (Green, 1991). In the present study there are 3 predictors, therefore the current sample size was short of 3 participants.

### *Procedure*

To participate in this study, the participants were required to be engaged in a romantic relationship of at least 3 months' duration. They also had to be over 18 years of age which was noted on the sign-up sheet for the study and was confirmed before they had started to fill in the questionnaires. The participants were approached in person before the beginning of their designated lecture and with the support of the lecturer. They were handed a battery of questionnaires, including the WEMWBS, RAS and ECR-R questionnaires, which took approximately ten minutes to fill in. A combined consent form and demographic information sheet with the basic demographic variables (gender and age) was also included.

The participants were told that their participation is strictly anonymous, that no names are required, and that they can withdraw from the study at any time. In addition, the participants were politely asked to sit apart for the duration of the survey, if they happened to be sitting beside their partner at the time of the survey, to avoid any uncomfortable feelings that may arise. Upon the completion of the survey, the participants were informed of the purpose of the study and they were reminded that they will be debriefed via e-mail later on. The participants were thanked for their participation; they were not offered rewards.

## Results

### *Descriptive statistics*

Descriptive statistics of the mean and standard deviation for each variable were obtained. Relationship satisfaction had  $Mean = 4.1121$ ,  $SD. = 0.77765$ , attachment anxiety had  $Mean = 2.4964$ ,  $SD. = 1.04829$ , attachment avoidance had  $Mean = 2.5706$ ,  $SD. = 1.06016$  and mental well-being had  $Mean = 3.5495$ ,  $SD. = 0.39668$ .

### *Inferential Statistics*

The raw data from all the questionnaires were entered into PASW and the variables data from the three questionnaires were transformed to represent the average scores of the participants for each questionnaire. Then, regression analysis was run to examine which of the predictors were correlated to the outcome, and multiple hierarchical regression analysis was rerun, including the most important variables only. Since there were more than two significant predictors, hierarchical stepwise and forced entry, the analysis was also run in order to find the individual contribution of each predictor. In addition, matrix correlations were produced (see Table 1). The Pearson's correlation coefficients between every pair of variables were significant among all three variables. Attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance had a negative correlation with relationship satisfaction, and mental well-being had a positive correlation with relationship satisfaction. The scores were: attachment anxiety ( $R = 0.525$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), attachment avoidance ( $R = -0.472$ ,  $p = 0.005$ ), and mental well-being ( $R = 0.282$ ,  $p = 0.005$ ). One-tailed significance for each correlation is present when  $p < 0.001$ . The number of cases contributing to each correlation was  $N = 104$ .

Table 1. *Pearson Correlation for Regression Analysis*

		Rel. Sat.	Att. Anx.	Att. Av.	MWB
Pearson Correlation	Relationship Satisfaction	1.000	- 0.401	- 0.472	0.282
	Attachment Anxiety	- 0.401	1.000	0.525	- 0.127
	Attachment Avoidance	- 0.472	0.525	1.000	- 0.183
	Mental Well-Being	0.282	- 0.127	- 0.183	1.000
Sig. (1 – tailed)	Relationship Satisfaction	-	0.000	0.000	0.002
	Attachment Anxiety	0.000	-	0.000	0.100
	Attachment Avoidance	0.000	0.000	-	0.032
	Mental Well-Being	0.002	0.100	0.032	-

The hierarchical approach method, within the current study, represents each set of summary statistics repeated for each stage in the hierarchy. The model summary described a multiple correlation ( $R$ ) between relationship satisfaction and the three predictors which is moderately strong  $R = 0.540$ . The combination of the three predictors accounted for 29% of the variation of relationship satisfaction. The regression equation was significant ( $F 9.283 = 13.742, p < 0.005$ ).

Cross-validation has been examined to test whether the current model generalises across the wider population.  $R^2$  values variability in the outcome is accounted for in terms of all three predictors. The adjusted  $R^2$  value indicates that this model generalises across the wider population, as it is very close to the value of  $R^2$  ( $R^2 = 0.292 - \text{adjusted } R^2 = 0.271 = \sim 0.021\%$  less variance in the outcome). Durbin and Watson's (1951) statistic also points to reliability regarding generalisation, as the value is close to 2 which signifies that the assumptions have been almost certainly met (Durbin-Watson = 2.128). A sample size of a minimum of 104 participants was needed in order to test for individual predictors (Green, 1991). Moreover, all variable types are quantitative and the variability outcome shows no constraint (0.021%). All the predictors have some variations in value and none of them have a

variance of 0. Furthermore, in each level of predictor variables, the variance of the residuals is constant, indicating homoscedasticity. Also, the residuals in the model are normally distributed variables, the values of the outcome variable are independent, and the relationship of the current model is linear.

Next, a one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was carried out to test the correlation between predictor and criterion variables and to indicate the overall significance fitting of the data. Statistically significant results were found in relation to romantic relationship satisfaction. All predictors had a significant effect on romantic relationship satisfaction,  $F$ -ratio 13.742,  $p < 0.001$ , indicating a significant result in predicting the outcome variable. The change of  $R^2$  value (0.292) and whether is it significant ( $< 0.05$ ) is identified in the Significant  $F$  Change (0.000). The ANOVA significance for overall data indicated significance for all the values ( $< 0.05$ ).

#### *Coefficients.*

A hierarchical regression (stepwise, forced entry) method was chosen. The forced entry for predictors was selected based on the previously conducted analysis. The stepwise forced entry were selected for attachment anxiety (step one) and the forced entry method was selected for attachment avoidance and mental well-being (step two). The coefficients (see *Table 2*) show estimates of beta (b) values, indicating the individual contribution of each predictor. The b values also indicate to what degree each predictor affects the outcome (Field, 2005). Moreover, each b-value is associated with the shown standard error (SE) and indicates to what extent the value would vary across different samples (Field, 2009). Furthermore, t-test measures show whether the predictor is making a significant contribution to the model (Field, 2009). The larger the value of t and the smaller the value of Sig. ( $< 0.05$ ),

the greater the contribution (Field, 2005). In Table 2 attachment avoidance ( $t(44.105) = -3.302, p < 0.001$ ), mental well-being ( $t(44.105) = 2.286, p < 0.001$ ), and attachment anxiety ( $t(44.105) = -2.051, p < 0.001$ ) are all significant predictors of relationship satisfaction, with attachment anxiety having slightly less significance in comparison to the other two predictors.

It was also found that attachment avoidance had a significantly negative effect on relationship satisfaction ( $\beta = .33, p = 0.001, 95\% \text{ CI} = -0.387 - 0.097$ ); mental well-being had a significantly positive effect on relationship satisfaction ( $\beta = .20, p = 0.024, 95\% \text{ CI} = 0.051 - 0.717$ ); and attachment anxiety had a significantly negative effect on relationship satisfaction ( $\beta = .20, p = 0.043, 95\% \text{ CI} = -0.296 - 0.005$ ). Standardised beta values ( $\beta$ ) provide the number of standard deviations (SD) that the outcome will change as a result of one SD change in the predictor (Field, 2009). Furthermore, beta values are all measured in SD units and are directly comparable. Therefore, they give a better insight of the predictors in the model. The standardised beta value for attachment avoidance ( $\beta = .33$ ) indicates a moderately strong relationship with relationship satisfaction, whereas attachment anxiety and mental well-being ( $\beta = .20$ ) imply small change regarding relationship satisfaction within the model.

Table 2. *Coefficients for Attachment Anxiety, Avoidance and Mental Well-Being*

	B	SEB	$\beta$	t	Sig.
Constant	3.745	0.658		6.692	0.000
Attachment Anxiety	-0.151	0.073	-.20*	-2.051	0.043
Attachment Avoidance	-0.24	0.073	-.33*	-3.302	0.001
Mental Well-Being	0.027	0.012	.20*	2.286	0.024

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

To test the generalisability about a population based on a regression analysis, several assumptions of the model have been considered. To test for the normality of the residuals, a histogram, a normal P-P (probability plot), and partial plots of all the variables were performed and examined (see **Appendix E**). The histogram indicated that the data for relationship satisfaction are normally distributed. The straight line in the normal probability plot represents a normal distribution, and the points represent the observed residuals. The partial plots (scatter plots) for attachment anxiety showed a weak negative relationship to relationship satisfaction. For attachment avoidance there was a medium strong negative relationship to relationship satisfaction. Lastly, mental well-being showed a weak to medium positive relationship to relationship satisfaction. There were two outliers present in all of the partial plots, otherwise indicating homoscedasticity. In addition, no violations and biased regression coefficients were detected regarding outliers as the regression line was not influenced by the two outliers.

Also, a test for multicollinearity has been carried out to assess whether there is collinearity in the data. It indicated that a very low level of multicollinearity was present (variance inflation factor (VIF) = 1.382 for attachment anxiety, 1.407 for attachment avoidance, and 1.036 for mental well-being). VIF averaged values of 1.274 indicate no multicollinearity since the result is very close to 1 (Bowerman and O'Connell, 1990).

Another way to check for collinearity problems is the condition index which represents the square root of the ratio of the largest eigenvalue. If there are massive differences between the final dimension (in the condition index) in comparison to other dimensions that would indicate the presence of collinearity. There were no massive differences in the current model.

Furthermore, casewise diagnostics point to any standardised residual cases that have values of less than -2 or greater than 2. The latter represent residuals that might influence the regression model. The current sample of 104 participants indicated 4 cases outside of limits (around 2.5 %) which is within 1 % of what is expected. Moreover, a Mahalanobis distance value greater than 15, presents a problem for a sample of 100. In the present model, the Mahalanobis value is 18.505. Moreover, there are two influential cases (outliers) which could account for this outcome. Out of the four, two cases had values more than 3 standardised residuals (case 34 = 3.956; case 96 = -3.792). Therefore, the latter were treated as outliers. In addition, the value of Cook's distance is 0.112 which suggests that the Mahalanobis value does not present a problem in the current model. However, the influential cases would need to be examined further, in order to make such conclusions.

#### *Demographic Factors.*

Finally, an independent t-test was carried out to check for demographic factors, in particular gender, in relation to attachment styles (anxiety and avoidance) and relationship satisfaction (see **Appendix F**). On the average, female participants experienced greater anxiety ( $M = 2.534$ ,  $SE = 0.163$ ) than male ones ( $M = 2.458$ ,  $SE = 0.125$ ). However, the difference was not significant  $t(102) = -0.369$ ,  $p > 0.05$ . Cohen's d value also showed an effect size which indicates weak effect,  $r = 0.07$  (Cohen, 1988).

In relation to attachment avoidance, on the average, male participants experienced greater avoidance ( $M = 2.782$ ,  $SE = 0.14495$ ) than female participants ( $M = 2.367$ ,  $SE = 0.14471$ ). This difference was significant  $t(102) = 2.026$ ,  $p = 0.045$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . Cohen's d value also suggested that the effect size indicates a medium to strong size effect,  $r = 0.39$ , which reflects its real-world presence.

Lastly, an independent t-test was carried out to check for differences in the levels of relationship satisfaction between males and females. On the average, females experienced greater satisfaction ( $M = 4.21$ ,  $SE = 0.0978$ ) than males ( $M = 4.01$ ,  $SE = 0.1171$ ). However, this difference was not significant  $t(102) = -1.251$ ,  $p > 0.05$ . Cohen's d value also showed that the effect size indicates a weak effect,  $r = 0.24$ .

## Discussion

The aim of the present study was to test whether attachment styles (particularly *anxious* and *avoidant*) and mental well-being have an effect on romantic relationship satisfaction in order to contribute towards human relationships, individual differences and the development of a broader understanding of mental well-being. The results from the statistical analysis provide evidence in support of all three hypotheses: that the *attachment anxious* and *attachment avoidant* type will be negatively associated with relationship satisfaction, and that high levels of mental well-being will be positively associated with relationship satisfaction. Moreover, the power analysis and the estimated effect sizes revealed the presence of medium to large effects of 0.29 (0.15 being the threshold for a medium effect size and 0.35 being the threshold for a large effect size (Cohen, 1988)) and strong power in the detection of the genuine presence of the effect in the population.

In the present study, 55% of the participants classified themselves as *secure*, 16% as *anxious* and 29% as *avoidant* in terms of their attachment type. These figures are similar to the proportions reported in Hazan and Shaver's (1987) study of romantic love as an attachment process (56% *secure*, 19% *anxious* and 29% *avoidant*). Thus, the results provide support for the hypothesis that *insecure anxious* and *insecure avoidant* attachment styles are less satisfied within the romantic relationship and that high levels of well being are positively associated with relationship satisfaction. The present findings indicate that people with *insecure attachment* styles can have negative associations regarding relationship satisfaction, and that mental well-being can contribute toward relationship satisfaction.

The findings also support the notion, originally proposed by Bowlby (1969) and Ainsworth (1978), that *securely attached* people can experience and provide love, care and support which subsequently has a positive effect on all other intimate relationships in their

adult existence. Moreover, the present study integrated mental well-being (previously untested) as an additional domain, thus expanding the literature on adult attachment and romantic relationship satisfaction. It also added support for the multidimensional approach for measuring relationship satisfaction and the insightful theory for predicting the latter.

The first hypothesis stated that *attachment anxiety* will have a negative effect on relationship satisfaction; it was supported and thus it succeeded in replicating previous findings in this area (e.g., Brennan and Shaver, 1995; Simpson, 1990). However, the current support for *attachment anxiety* had a small effect on relationship satisfaction and it was not found to be a significant predictor of relationship satisfaction. Yet, other findings supported the idea that *attachment anxiety* alone could not account for overall relationship dissatisfaction and it was actually the number of different domains, coupled with anxiety, that could have an impact on it (Fraley et al., 2011). There are many factors which could influence such outcomes, such as personality traits, temperament, individual differences, interpersonal and personal factors, relationship closeness, relationship duration, current relationship events and so on.

Consistent with the findings of previous research (e.g., Fraley and Shaver, 1977; Hazan and Shaver, 1978; Simpson, 1990; Bartholomew and Horowitz, 1991; Shaver and Hazan, 1993; Brennan and Shaver, 1995;; Bartholomew and Shaver, 1998; Brennan, Clark and Shaver, 1998; Fraley and Shaver, 2000; Fraley, 2004; Dinerro at al., 2011), the second hypothesis was supported. It states that people of the *avoidant attachment* type are more likely to experience relationship dissatisfaction in comparison to those of the *secure attachment* type. One of the reasons for such outcomes could be due to the fact that the *avoidant* type lack in trust and intimacy, and they subsequently hold a negative view of relationships (Bartholomew and Horowitz, 1991). On the other hand, some researchers

suggest that the *avoidant type* are likely to report being satisfied in their relationships because of their denying or dismissive nature (Simpson, 1990). In addition, they tend to engage in frequent, short term relationships, mostly experiencing the positivism of the initial stages and thus believing that they are satisfied. However, the short lived relationships and superficial involvement further deprives them of the opportunity to be intimately engaged with their partner (Fraley et al., 2011).

The third hypothesis that high levels of mental well-being will have a positive effect on relationship satisfaction was also supported by the results. Meyers and Landsberger's (2002) study was found to be interesting in terms of its relevance to the last hypothesis and its connection to the other hypotheses. In their study, they found that psychological distress (mental well-being) and social support were mediators of adult attachment and marital satisfaction. In addition, they found that psychological distress was associated with the *anxious attachment* type in terms of people's marital dissatisfaction, whereas social support was found to have a mediating effect in terms of the *avoidant* type and marital dissatisfaction.

Lastly, the correlations between the demographic variable of gender, attachment anxiety and relationship satisfaction were insignificant. This suggests that there was no major difference between males and females in relation to their levels of anxiety. However, there was a differences between males and females in terms of their levels of avoidance. Males were found to be more prone to avoidant behaviour than females which is in line with previous research (Brennan and Shaver, 1995; Simpson, 1990). In addition, it was found that there is no significant difference between males and females regarding relationship satisfaction which also supports previous research (Simpson, 1990).

Overall, the results analogously confirmed that the *secure attachment* style is the best predictor of relationship satisfaction, followed by high levels of mental well-being. Thus,

people of *insecure attachment*, such as the *avoidant* type, were found to be the best predictor of relationship dissatisfaction. The findings from the present study also supported the idea that one's well-being matters and has consequences for human relationships in general. In addition, it explored the idea that attachment styles cannot be held solely responsible for the overall outcome of one's relationship satisfaction as a variety of other variables are also of significance for determining such outcomes. However, the importance of individual differences, such as attachment styles, however small it may seem, cannot be overlooked.

The introduction of mental well-being to attachment theory in the present study was done for a number of reasons. Firstly, since the forming of one's attachment style stems from one's caregiver, then the caregiver and the care-giving circumstances also play a major role in the shaping of the person's attachment style. Secondly, depending on context, the individual mental well-being is more likely to be shaped by the particular circumstances. Thirdly, individual differences and individual well-being participate to some degree in the shaping of the future generations. Therefore, new interpretations of the concepts of mental well-being and happiness are necessary contributors towards such changes. The re-evaluation of these concepts could reduce the stigma regarding mental illness and potentially introduce other ideas, values and alternative approaches in terms of treatments and interventions, for example. Freud's (1955) intake on *common unhappiness* attempted to serve as such a direction towards the meaning of happiness, however, Viktor Frankl (2004) complemented this idea by adding the dimension of purpose and meaning to the concept of happiness.

Moreover, the psychiatrist Thomas Szasz (1961) suggested that labelling or the notion of mental illness should be abandoned. He argued that illness is physical and afflicts only the body, claiming that mental illness is a myth. Although Szasz's concepts are arguably food for thought, using labels places situations under the control of clinicians, counsellors,

psychiatrists and physicians, and it is regarded as an important facet towards the application of treatment programs (Macionis and Plummer, 2005).

In addition, Ryan and Deci's (2001) and Morris' (2003) findings that the environment is linked to health and individual well-being are well supported. In the *Black Report* (1980): *The Report of the Working Party on Inequalities in Health* (updated in 1992 as *The Health Divide*) study it was found that material deprivations, such as poverty, low income, bad housing conditions and pollution at work can shape one's experiences of health. In addition, cultural explanations, for example, certain class-dictated ways of life, such as increased smoking, poorer diets and little exercise, can also affect one's health (Macionis and Plummer, 2005). Moreover, working class patients tend to be treated differently; for example, within the NHS they may be given less time and less resources, while more time and better resources are given to a different class of patients, whose needs are less urgent (Tudor-Hart, 1971).

Patel and Prince's (2010) research also pointed towards the gap in treatment in terms of poor and rich countries. However, the trends of inequality are evident within countries themselves and until some radical changes are made, such as free and equal health care for all, as well as free education, those issues will continue to be the case. Therefore, as Ryan and Deci (2001) proposed, there is a need for a collective wellness of humanity on a global level (since such issues are global), as well as a need for individual contributions, such as making causes towards this kind of changes. Present-day children are no more citizens of a particular country, but citizens of the world (Santrock, 2011).

### *Methodological Flaws and Limitations*

There are a number of limitations within the current study which had an impacted on the outcome. Firstly, random sampling of participants and random assignment of middle aged couples who are in a relationship for more than two years, of long term and of cohabiting couples, would have been a better sampling approach. Secondly, the design of the study did not include follow-ups, which is also a limitation to the validity of the findings. However, the test-retest reliability of the measures has been supported by a number of studies (e.g., Fraley, Waller and Brennan, 2000; Fraley and Shaver, 2000; Fraley et al., 2011). Thirdly, a larger number of participants could have produced a larger effect power. Moreover, the study took place on St. Valentine's evening, indicating the possibility of increased positive associations than usual towards the partner. This could have been a confounding variable that might have created a bias regarding relationship satisfaction

Furthermore, the study attempted to measure attachment styles and mental well-being as predictors of relationship satisfaction through self-report measures. Self-report questionnaires may be problematic because people may be reporting what they believe to be socially desirable answers, rather than their truthful responses. Even though self report measures are widely accepted as a valid tool, when designed properly (Harrison, McLaughlin and Coalter, 1996), one cannot establish cause and effect relationships based on them. Moreover, although the ECR-R is a reliable measure of attachment, it focuses on the *insecure* attachment end of the spectrum and cannot assess the *secure* and *preoccupied* attachment styles with the same precision. Therefore, future research should focus on developing measures that discriminate among attachment styles with greater precision. Another problem with this self report measure that future research should address is that it captures the individual's current feelings and may not capture other aspects of attachment, which could

have been more typical of the particular person.

In addition, the current study relied on individual responses, while a survey based on couples' responses would possibly be more accurate as it would not be based on one-sided views of relationships. The duration of the relationship is another aspect to be taken into account. It could have impacted the outcome from the study since it has been suggested that it takes two years for the relationship to develop and for the attachment styles to exhibit themselves. Also, the participants could have been provided with a definition of romantic relationships and then asked to state if they consider their relationship to be an attachment relationship, as some individuals may be in a relationship for other reasons and may not be emotionally engaged with their partners. Such clarity would eliminate the listed methodological flaws and would depict the attachment styles and their impact better.

Furthermore, the study could be extended by comparing dating couples to married couples, as well as long term couples to cohabiting couples, to see if there are significant differences. Also, the socioeconomic status (SES) could be introduced as another variable (particularly relevant for the current study) to check for correlations. Although attachment styles are found to be similar across cultures (Fraley et al, 2011), nationality is another variable that could be explored.

In addition, most of the research on attachment has been performed on heterosexual couples. Therefore, more research including homosexual, lesbian or bisexual couples is needed firstly to determine if there are ethical issues involved and secondly, to check if there are any differences regarding the impact of attachment styles. The addition of relationship orientation as a variable by means of such studies would be a valuable contribution which could improve the understanding of the effects of attachment styles in this context and in comparison to other contexts, thus highlighting similarities and differences.

### *Applications and Directions for Future Research*

Based on the methodological flaws and limitations of the present study, several directions for future research can be proposed. Firstly, replication with a truly random sample, rather than a sample comprised of college students, is needed. Secondly, a larger sample size would show better effect. Thirdly, future research with follow-ups would be useful to test the stability of attachment styles, as well as to check for relationship dynamics in conjunction with attachment styles and well-being in order to explore what change might ensue. Ideally, future research will assess attachment security in different relationships, not just romantic ones, in order to make a comparison across relationships for more meaningful results.

In addition, since self-reports are more likely to offer prompt socially desirable answers, different types of measurements, such as interview based measures, should be used in future research regarding attachment, mental well-being and relationship satisfaction. An important method for perusing interview based measures for attachment would be the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI; George, Kaplan and Main, 1985). Moreover, the studies of romantic attachment are relatively new and future research could examine attachment relationships and mental well-being longitudinally in children, adolescents and adults, using age appropriate measures.

The findings from the present study had several theoretical implications. They provided support for the *secure* and *insecure* adult attachment effects regarding romantic relationship satisfaction and dissatisfaction. The results provided correlational evidence that enhances the validity of extant research on attachment styles and relationship satisfaction, and expands the generalizability of previous findings of adult attachment regarding romantic relationships (as first suggested by Hazan and Shaver, 1978). Although the current findings

meet the criteria of the intended arguments, other hypotheses, other tests, and other combinations of different predictors could be examined in order to further clarify the central ideas of the study. For example, it would be relevant to see what outcome would mental well-being have as a criterion. Moreover, exploring attachment and mental well-being from a multidimensional approach would be important when considering the implications for personal growth and personality development.

Therefore, future research could explore associations between *secure* attachment, *insecure* attachment and mental well-being in conjunction with a number of variables, such as SES, level of education, religious affiliations, spirituality and others. A number of different variations regarding mental well-being and attachment could be examined. Future research could hypothesise that people who experience attachment insecurity and relationship dissatisfaction could nonetheless have high levels of mental well-being. This could test the idea that well-being does not necessary represent absence or presence of happiness; instead it is related to the value of deep meaning for well-being which cannot be categorized.

Moreover, the current research did not explore the hedonic and eudaimonic aspects of the individual responses and how they could have corresponded to attachment styles and relationship satisfaction. It would be valuable to see if the *avoidant attachment type* would positively correlate to the hedonic aspects of well-being, since some of the *avoidant type* characteristics are geared towards instant gratification. Following this direction of research, it would be also valuable to explore if the *anxious type* would correlated with the eudaimonic aspects and if the *secure attachment type* would have equal correlations with the hedonic and eudaimonic aspects of well-being.

The results from this study have practical implications as well. The main aim of the study was to highlight the importance and contribution of attachment theory for human relationships, individual differences and individual well-being in order to contribute to the global improvement in affective human relationship functioning. Although, it could be said that its significant findings could not thoroughly account for the desired goals, at least, they are a step in this direction. Furthermore, extant literature likewise offers some alternatives regarding clinical and psychotherapeutic treatment for couples or individuals. The clinicians and psychotherapists can work with *insecurely* attached couples and individuals to change their cognitive structures by increasing their self-efficacy (Simpson, 1990).

In addition, future research could focus on the values and meanings of happiness and mental well-being, as this could be potentially helpful for reducing stigma and enhancing overall knowledge that people with mental illness experience well-being. This, in turn, could help reduce the anxiety and fears regarding mental health in general. Future research could also focus on attitudes towards the importance of one's environmental factors, such as economic and social development, as well as ecological factors. In addition, it could examine the influence of religion and spirituality regarding attachment organization and mental well-being to see if such aspects could be beneficial. Moreover, since there is a steady increase of cohabiting couples, the studies of attachment could benefit from such samples. Another area that needs more research in the clinical and psychotherapeutic framework is treatment approaches for the *attachment avoidant type* in particular, as this attachment type is still the most difficult personality type to treat because of its denying nature (Simpson, 1990).

*Conclusion*

The most important finding from the present study is that attachment styles have an effect on relationship satisfaction. The results are in line with previous research. It has been suggested that environmental factors, such as SES and education, can have an effect on mental-well being and therefore on attachment formation; thus they have been listed as directions for future research. Although other measures are needed to improve the methodology of future studies in this area, the present study has made a step towards contributing to the extant research base on adult attachment and the area of mental well-being in relation to their impact on relationship satisfaction.

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## Appendix A: Combined Demographic Sheet Consent Form

Dear Participant,

Thank you for showing an interest in taking part in my study. I am currently a final year student at Dublin Business School (DBS). All research conducted by final year students is done for the purpose of meeting course requirements. My research aims at examining people's relationships.

Please say what you really think and try to be as honest and accurate as possible. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers to these questions. The questionnaires will take around 10 minutes to fill in.

All responses will be treated with the strictest confidentiality and are anonymous. Do not write your name on this booklet. You may withdraw from participation at any time. Please, feel free to ask any questions during or after the survey relating the research.

You must be 18 years old to participate in this study, and you must have been involved in a romantic relationship for the duration of at least 3 months.

Please circle or write the following information:

**Gender:**                      Female    Male

**Age:**

If you would like to receive the results of the study, please provide your email address below:

[1239309@mydbs.ie](mailto:1239309@mydbs.ie)

Many Thanks

Sladjana Radulovic

## Appendix B: Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised (ECR-R) Scale

**Instructions:** The statements below concern how you feel in emotionally intimate relationships. We are interested in how you experience relationships. Respond to each statement by circling a number to indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statement.

**Strongly  
Disagree**

**Strongly  
Agree**

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7

23	I don't feel comfortable opening up to romantic partners.	
	1            2            3            4            5            6            7	
2	I often worry that my partner will not want to stay with me.	
	1            2            3            4            5            6            7	
20	I feel comfortable sharing my private thoughts and feelings with my partner.	
	1            2            3            4            5            6            7	
4	I worry that romantic partners won't care about me as much as I care about them.	
	1            2            3            4            5            6            7	
16	It makes me mad that I don't get the affection and support I need from my partner.	
	1            2            3            4            5            6            7	
28	I usually discuss my problems and concerns with my partner.	
	1            2            3            4            5            6            7	
7	When my partner is out of sight, I worry that he or she might become interested in someone else.	
	1            2            3            4            5            6            7	
33	I feel comfortable depending on romantic partners.	
	1            2            3            4            5            6            7	
9	I rarely worry about my partner leaving me.	
	1            2            3            4            5            6            7	
10	My romantic partner makes me doubt myself.	

	1            2            3            4            5            6            7	
31	I talk things over with my partner.	
	1            2            3            4            5            6            7	
12	I find that my partner(s) don't want to get as close as I would like.	
	1            2            3            4            5            6            7	
11	I do not often worry about being abandoned.	
	1            2            3            4            5            6            7	
14	My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away.	
	1            2            3            4            5            6            7	
15	I'm afraid that once a romantic partner gets to know me, he or she won't like who I really am.	
	1            2            3            4            5            6            7	
35	It's easy for me to be affectionate with my partner.	
	1            2            3            4            5            6            7	
8	When I show my feelings for romantic partners, I'm afraid they will not feel the same about me	
	1            2            3            4            5            6            7	
5	I often wish that my partner's feelings for me were as strong as my feelings for him or her.	
	1            2            3            4            5            6            7	
19	I prefer not to show a partner how I feel deep down.	
	1            2            3            4            5            6            7	
1	I'm afraid that I will lose my partner's love.	
	1            2            3            4            5            6            7	
21	I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on romantic partners.	
	1            2            3            4            5            6            7	
22	I am very comfortable being close to romantic partners.	
	1            2            3            4            5            6            7	
3	I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me.	
	1            2            3            4            5            6            7	

24	I prefer not to be too close to romantic partners.	
	1            2            3            4            5            6            7	
25	I get uncomfortable when a romantic partner wants to be very close.	
	1            2            3            4            5            6            7	
26	I find it relatively easy to get close to my partner.	
	1            2            3            4            5            6            7	
27	It's not difficult for me to get close to my partner.	
	1            2            3            4            5            6            7	
28	I worry a lot about my relationships.	
	1            2            3            4            5            6            7	
29	It helps to turn to my romantic partner in times of need.	
	1            2            3            4            5            6            7	
30	I tell my partner just about everything.	
	1            2            3            4            5            6            7	
13	Sometimes romantic partners change their feelings about me for no apparent reason	
	1            2            3            4            5            6            7	
32	I am nervous when partners get too close to me.	
	1            2            3            4            5            6            7	
17	I worry that I won't measure up to other people.	
	1            2            3            4            5            6            7	
34	I find it easy to depend on romantic partners.	
	1            2            3            4            5            6            7	
18	My partner only seems to notice me when I'm angry.	
	1            2            3            4            5            6            7	
36	My partner really understands me and my needs.	
	1            2            3            4            5            6            7	

### Appendix C: WEMWBS (Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale)

Below are some statements about feelings and thoughts.

Please tick the box that best describes your experience of each over the last 2 weeks

STATEMENTS	None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling useful	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling relaxed	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling interested in other people	1	2	3	4	5
I've had energy to spare	1	2	3	4	5
I've been dealing with problems well	1	2	3	4	5
I've been thinking clearly	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling good about myself	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling close to other people	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling confident	1	2	3	4	5
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling loved	1	2	3	4	5
I've been interested in new things	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling cheerful	1	2	3	4	5

### Appendix D: Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS)

**Please circle the number for each item, which best answers that item for you.**

1. How well does your partner meet your needs?

1	2	3	4	5
Poorly		Average		Extremely well

2. In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?

1	2	3	4	5
Unsatisfied		Average		Extremely satisfied

3. How good is your relationship compared to most?

1	2	3	4	5
Poor		Average		Excellent

4. How often do you wish you hadn't gotten in this relationship?

5	4	3	2	1
Never		Average		Very often

5. To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?

1	2	3	4	5
Hardly at all		Average		Completely

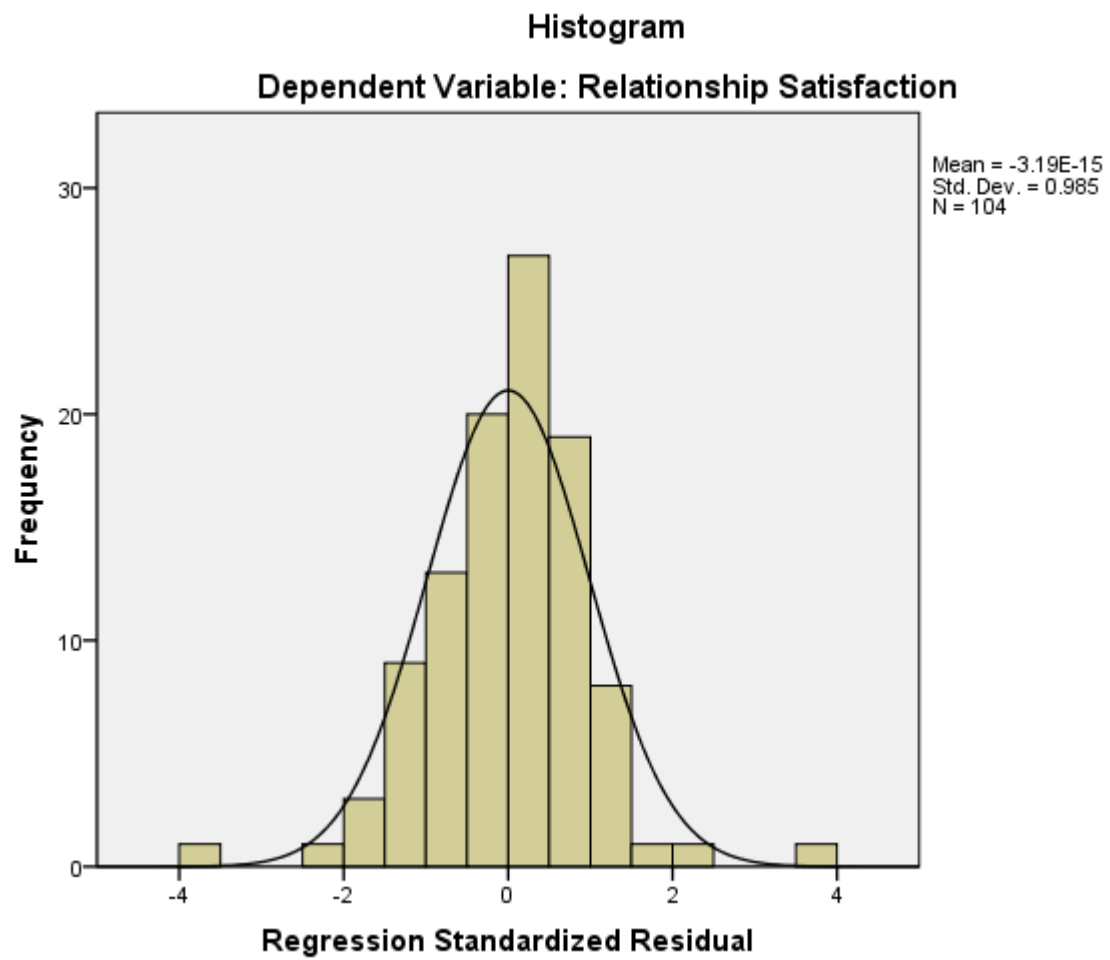
6. How much do you love your partner?

1	2	3	4	5
Not much		Average		Very much

7. How many problems are there in your relationship?

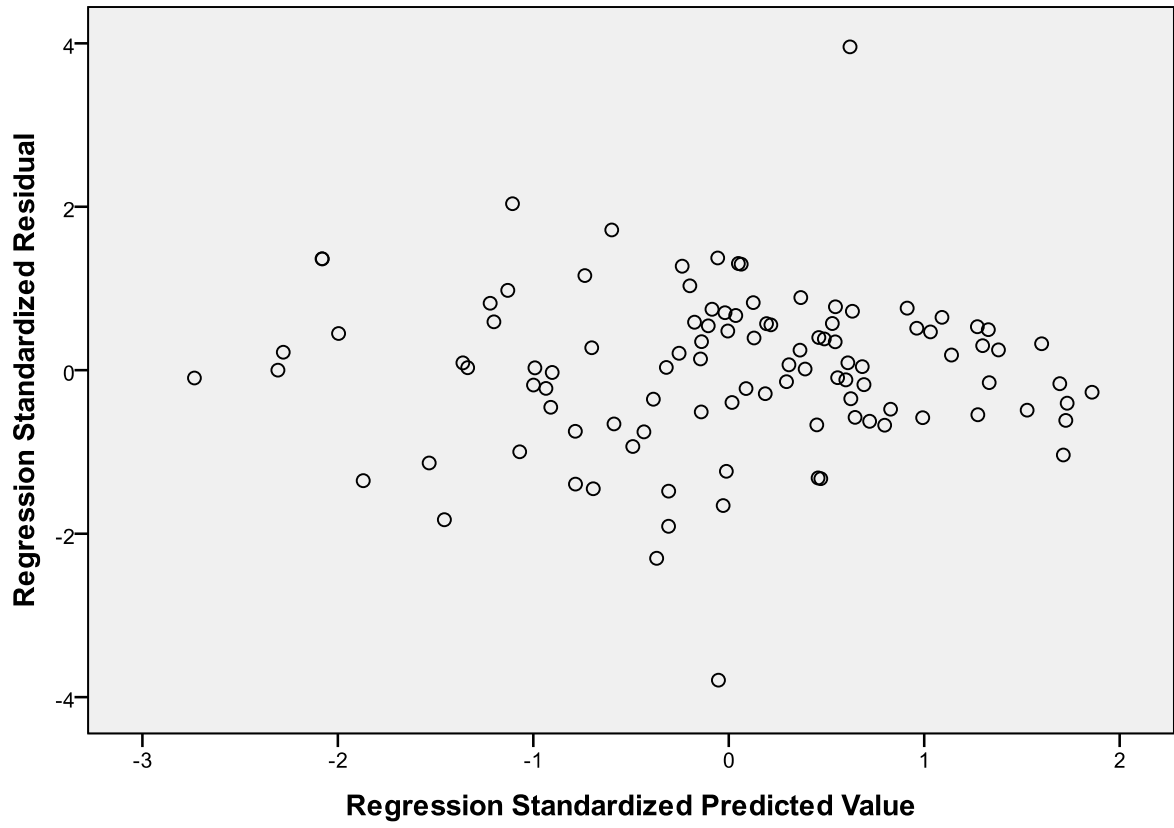
5	4	3	2	1
Very few		Average		Very many

Relationship Satisfaction as outcome (DV) variable,



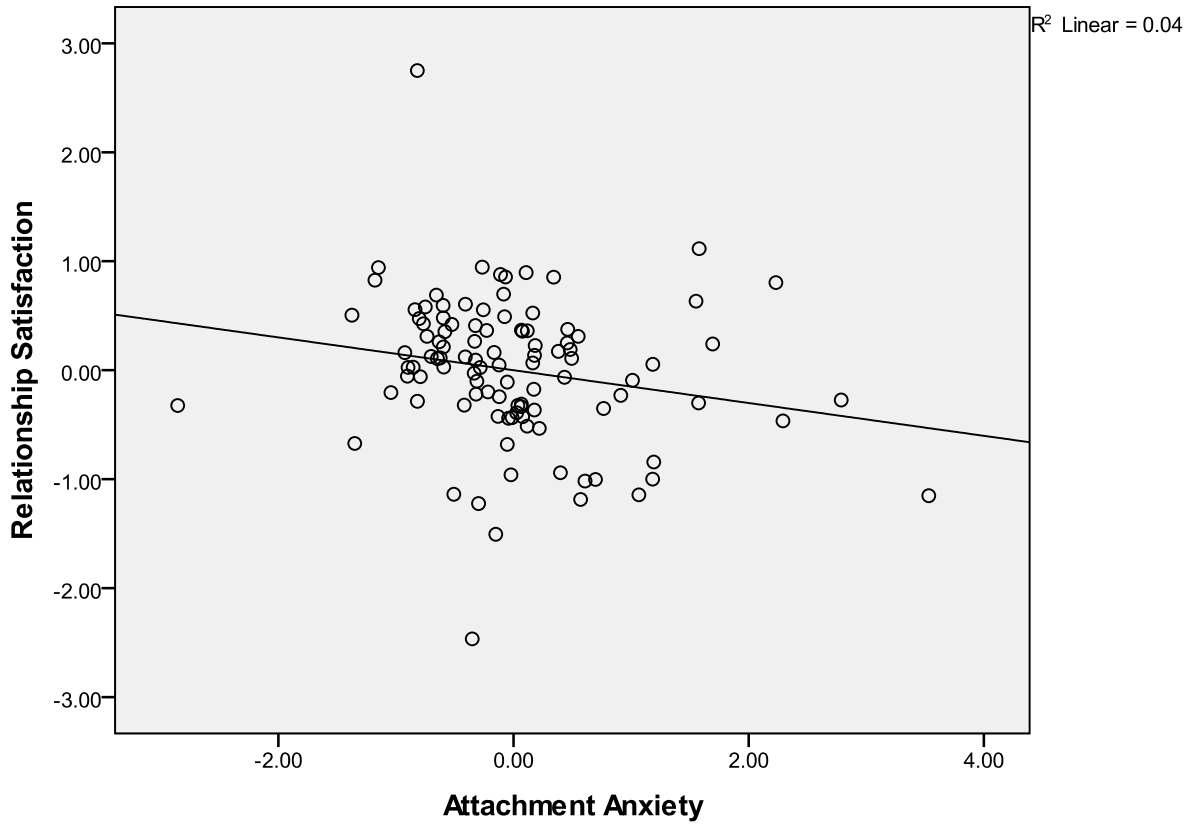
# Scatterplot

Dependent Variable: Relationship Satisfaction



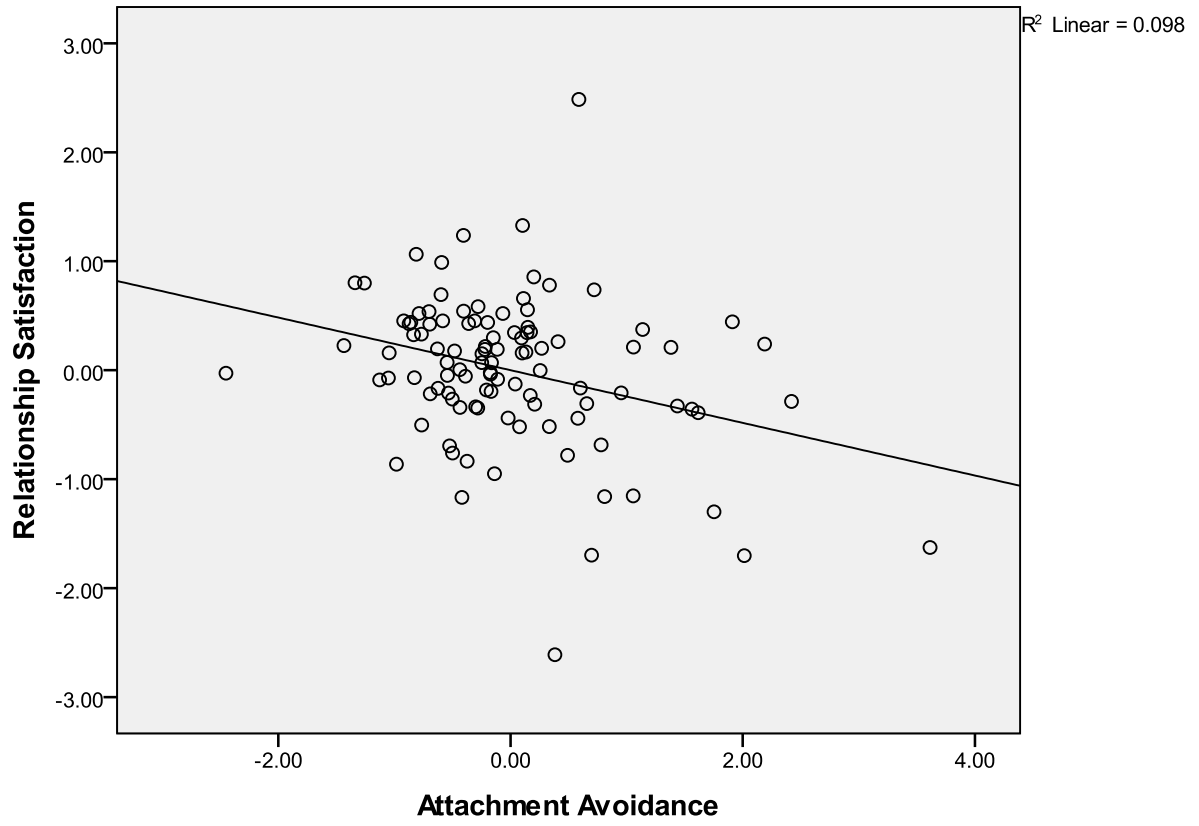
# Partial Regression Plot

Dependent Variable: Relationship Satisfaction



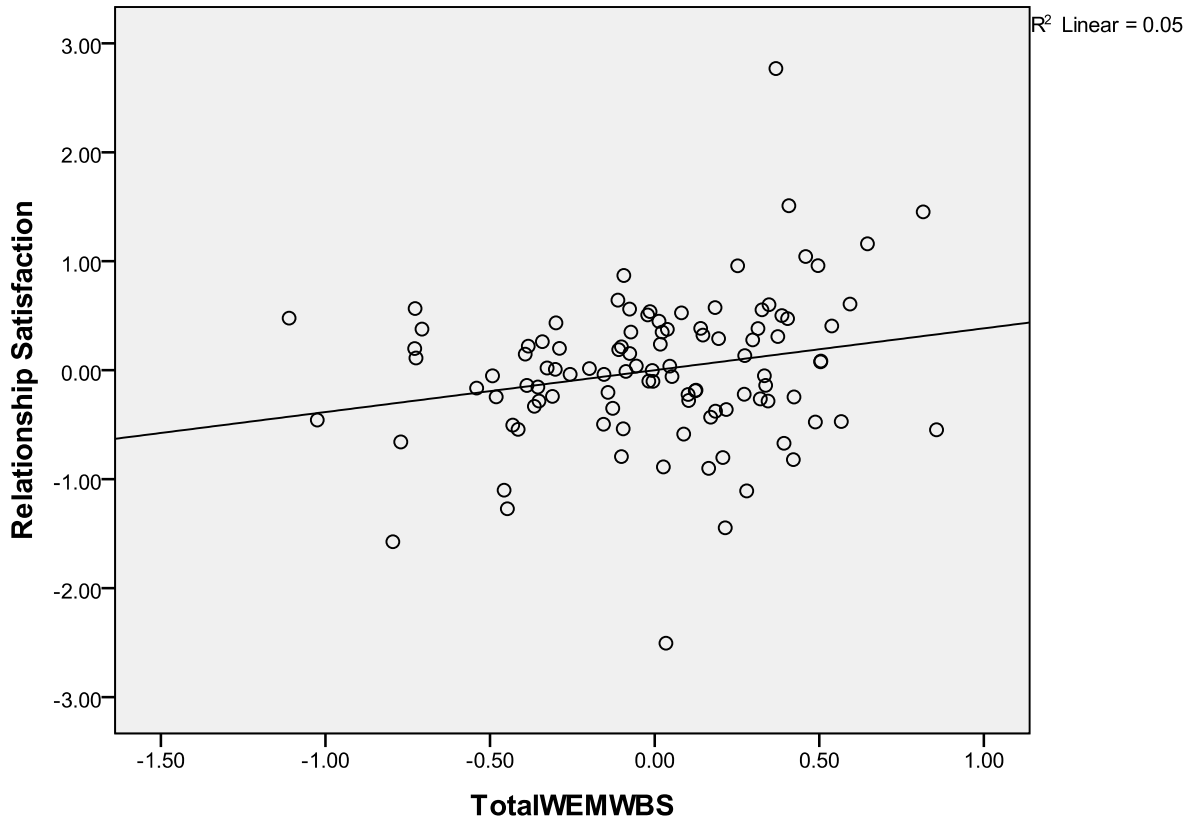
### Partial Regression Plot

Dependent Variable: Relationship Satisfaction



### Partial Regression Plot

Dependent Variable: Relationship Satisfaction



Total WEMWBS: Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale

## **Appendix F: PASW Output**

REGRESSION

```

/DESCRIPTIVES MEAN STDDEV CORR SIG N
/MISSING LISTWISE
/STATISTICS COEFF OUTS CI(95) R ANOVA COLLIN TOL CHANGE ZPP
/CRITERIA=PIN(.01) POUT(.10)
/NOORIGIN
/DEPENDENT Average_RAS
/METHOD=ENTER AnxietyECRR
/METHOD=ENTER AvoidanceECRR Average_WEMWBS
/PARTIALPLOT ALL
/SCATTERPLOT=(*ZRESID ,*ZPRED) (*ZRESID ,*ZPRED)
/RESIDUALS DURBIN HISTOGRAM(ZRESID) NORMPROB(ZRESID)
/CASEWISE PLOT(ZRESID) OUTLIERS(2)
/SAVE PRED ZPRED ADJPRED MAHAL COOK LEVER ZRESID DRESID SDRESID SDBETA SDFIT.

```

**Regression**

**Descriptive Statistics**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Relationship Satisfaction	4.1121	.77765	104
Attachment Anxiety	2.4964	1.04829	104
Attachment Avoidance	2.5706	1.06016	104
TotalWEMWBS	3.5495	.39668	104

**Correlations**

	Relationship Satisfaction	Attachment Anxiety	Attachment Avoidance	TotalWEMWBS	
Pearson Correlation	Relationship Satisfaction	1.000	-.401	-.472	.282
	Attachment Anxiety	-.401	1.000	.525	-.127
	Attachment Avoidance	-.472	.525	1.000	-.183
	TotalWEMWBS	.282	-.127	-.183	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Relationship Satisfaction	.	.000	.000	.002
	Attachment Anxiety	.000	.	.000	.099
	Attachment Avoidance	.000	.000	.	.031
	TotalWEMWBS	.002	.099	.031	.
N	Relationship Satisfaction	104	104	104	104
	Attachment Anxiety	104	104	104	104
	Attachment Avoidance	104	104	104	104
	TotalWEMWBS	104	104	104	104

**Variables Entered/Removed<sup>b</sup>**

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Attachment Anxiety <sup>a</sup>	.	Enter
2	TotalWEMWBS, Attachment Avoidance <sup>a</sup>	.	Enter

a. All requested variables entered.

b. Dependent Variable: Relationship Satisfaction

**Model Summary<sup>c</sup>**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.401 <sup>a</sup>	.161	.152	.71599	.161	19.505	1	102	.000	2.128
2	.540 <sup>b</sup>	.292	.271	.66409	.131	9.283	2	100	.000	

a. Predictors: (Constant), Attachment Anxiety

b. Predictors: (Constant), Attachment Anxiety, TotalWEMWBS, Attachment Avoidance

c. Dependent Variable: Relationship Satisfaction

**ANOVA<sup>c</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	9.999	1	9.999	19.505	.000 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	52.289	102	.513		
	Total	62.288	103			
2	Regression	18.187	3	6.062	13.746	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	44.101	100	.441		
	Total	62.288	103			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Attachment Anxiety

b. Predictors: (Constant), Attachment Anxiety, TotalWEMWBS, Attachment Avoidance

c. Dependent Variable: Relationship Satisfaction

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Correlations		
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part
		1	(Constant)	4.854							
	Attachment Anxiety	-.297	.067	-.401	-4.416	.000	-.431	-.164	-.401	-.401	-.401
2	(Constant)	3.746	.657		5.699	.000	2.442	5.050			
	Attachment Anxiety	-.151	.073	-.203	-2.052	.043	-.296	-.005	-.401	-.201	-.173
	Attachment Avoidance	-.242	.073	-.329	-3.300	.001	-.387	-.096	-.472	-.313	-.278
	TotalWEMWBS	.384	.168	.196	2.288	.024	.051	.717	.282	.223	.192

a. Dependent Variable: Relationship Satisfaction

**Excluded Variables<sup>b</sup>**

Model		Beta In	t	Sig.	Partial Correlation	Collinearity Statistics		
						Tolerance	VIF	Minimum Tolerance
1	Attachment Avoidance	-.361 <sup>a</sup>	-3.577	.001	-.335	.725	1.380	.725
	TotalWEMWBS	.235 <sup>a</sup>	2.644	.010	.254	.984	1.016	.984

a. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), Attachment Anxiety

b. Dependent Variable: Relationship Satisfaction

**Collinearity Diagnostics<sup>a</sup>**

Model	Dimension	Eigenvalue	Condition Index	Variance Proportions			
				(Constant)	Attachment Anxiety	Attachment Avoidance	TotalWEMWBS
1	1	1.923	1.000	.04	.04		
	2	.077	4.986	.96	.96		
2	1	3.798	1.000	.00	.01	.01	.00
	2	.127	5.470	.02	.22	.20	.03
	3	.070	7.387	.00	.76	.75	.00
	4	.005	26.380	.98	.01	.05	.97

a. Dependent Variable: Relationship Satisfaction

**Casewise Diagnostics<sup>a</sup>**

Case Number	Std. Residual	Relationship Satisfaction	Predicted Value	Residual
34	3.956	7.00	4.3728	2.62720
64	-2.302	2.43	3.9571	-1.52852
70	2.037	5.00	3.6471	1.35292
98	-3.792	1.57	4.0899	-2.51851

a. Dependent Variable: Relationship Satisfaction

**Residuals Statistics<sup>a</sup>**

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	2.9634	4.8932	4.1121	.42020	104
Std. Predicted Value	-2.734	1.859	.000	1.000	104
Standard Error of Predicted Value	.069	.289	.122	.045	104
Adjusted Predicted Value	2.9727	4.9016	4.1122	.42357	104
Residual	-2.51851	2.62720	.00000	.65435	104
Std. Residual	-3.792	3.956	.000	.985	104
Stud. Residual	-3.815	4.011	.000	1.006	104
Deleted Residual	-2.54864	2.70043	-.00011	.68281	104
Stud. Deleted Residual	-4.107	4.357	.000	1.035	104
Mahal. Distance	.110	18.505	2.971	3.294	104
Cook's Distance	.000	.112	.011	.022	104
Centered Leverage Value	.001	.180	.029	.032	104

a. Dependent Variable: Relationship Satisfaction

**INDIPENDENT T-test**

GET

```
FILE='D:\WenSreda.sav'.
DATASET NAME DataSet1 WINDOW=FRONT.
SAVE OUTFILE='D:\WenSreda.sav'
/COMPRESSED.
```

```
T-TEST GROUPS=Gender(1 2)
/MISSING=ANALYSIS
/VARIABLES=AnxietyECRR AvoidanceECRR
/CRITERIA=CI(.95).
```

[DataSet1] D:\WenSreda.sav

## T-Test

t-test

**Group Statistics**

	Sex	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Attachment Anxiety	Male	51	2.4577	.89376	.12515
	Female	53	2.5335	1.18563	.16286
Attachment Avoidance	Male	51	2.7821	1.03511	.14495
	Female	53	2.3671	1.05352	.14471

**Independent Samples Test**

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	t-test for Equality of Means									
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
									Lower	Upper	
Attachment Anxiety	Equal variances assumed	3.027		.085	-.367	102	.714	-.07581	.20649	-.48539	.33377
	Equal variances not assumed				-.369	96.538	.713	-.07581	.20539	-.48348	.33186
Attachment Avoidance	Equal variances assumed	.006		.941	2.026	102	.045	.41505	.20489	.00865	.82145
	Equal variances not assumed				2.026	101.954	.045	.41505	.20482	.00879	.82131