

**Do individual attachment styles in the workplace affect
a follower's job satisfaction, engagement and
commitment?**

Jillian Ryan

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Higher Diploma in Arts in
Psychology at Dublin Business School, School of Arts, Dublin.

Supervisor: Dr. Barbara Caska

Head of Department: Dr. Sinead Eccles

Module Code: PSY787/A8RS014

Student: 1670309

April 2014

Department of Psychology

Dublin Business School

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank:

Dr. Pauline Hyland and Dr. Barbara Caska for their advice, guidance and kindness throughout;

David A. Richards of Lakehead University, Ontario, for advice in attachment scales;

My fellow classmates for continued support and companionship

and

all my friends and family for their patience.

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate if individual attachment styles of followers within the leader-follower relationship were associated with levels of job satisfaction, employee engagement and organisational commitment. A cross sectional sample of 70 employees ranging from entry level to middle management were included in the study. Participants completed an online self report survey covering demographic items, followed by 4 existing questionnaires covering attachment, job satisfaction, employee engagement and commitment in the workplace. Results supported a negative relationship between anxious attachment and job satisfaction ($R(65) = -0.295, p < 0.5$). A positive relationship was found between anxious attachment and continuance commitment ($R(59) = 0.383, p < .01$) and avoidant attachment and normative commitment ($R(59) = 0.269, p < .05$), which although was contrary to the supposed hypotheses with respect to commitment, serves to add to the growing literature regarding the application of Attachment Theory to the workplace. Findings suggest further research is required, however indicate that addressing attachment styles in the workplace could have a beneficial outcome for the organisation and the individual.

Introduction

Ireland is on the move again. Current analyses undertaken by the Economic and Social Research Institute (“ESRI”) reports growth in GNP and employment in Ireland, with a corresponding fall in unemployment which was not solely due to emigration (Duffy, FitzGerald, Timoney, & Byrne, 2013). It appears the job market is opening up as organisational demand for productive employees rises in order for businesses to continue in this phase of growth. Research has indicated that the degree of job satisfaction, employee engagement and organisational commitment can affect both performance and employee turnover within an organisation (e.g Yücel, 2012; Wang, Tao, Ellenbecker & Liu, 2012; Allen & Meyer, 1990; Shuck, Reio & Rocco, 2011), hence for an organisation to grow and retain a productive workforce to maintain growth, these are important areas to consider.

The present study examined attachment theory applied to leader – follower relationships to gain a better understanding of this workplace dynamic and its potential effect on job satisfaction, engagement and organisational commitment. The study focused on the follower in the relationship, their attachment styles and any associated links these might have on the follower’s levels of job satisfaction, engagement and organisational commitment. While attachment theory has not been extensively applied to the workplace, there is still a substantial amount of literature addressing attachment styles and their potential affect on worker attitudes and behaviour.

Attachment Theory

Attachment theory was introduced by John Bowlby, who first postulated that individuals are born with an innate desire to bond with a trusted significant other and develop a secure base (Bowlby, 1958, 1988). The ability to bond with a trusted other serves to form part of a child’s internal working model, which the child develops to form their representation of the world

and of themselves, and which it uses to explore the world with ease (Bowlby, 1988). When faced with threats while exploring the world, the child seeks proximity to the trusted other and returns to their secure base for safety and comfort (Bowlby, 1958, 1988; Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). The resulting success or failures define internal working models which could affect relationship behaviour across the lifespan into adulthood (Bowlby, 1988, Ainsworth, 1991), including adult relationships at home and within organisations (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Hazan & Shaver, 1990, Popper & Mayseless, 2003).

Research into attachment theory undertaken by Bowlby's peers and later researchers led to the development of categorised attachment styles. Three attachment styles in infants were originally classified by Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters and Wall, (1978), secure, avoidant, and anxious-ambivalent (the latter two being insecure attachment types). Based on these three childhood patterns and using Bowlby's idea of internal working models of the self and others, Hazan and Shaver (1987) devised a self report measure to measure adult romantic attachments which categorised adult attachment into three similar categories as those in childhood, secure, avoidant and anxious/ambivalent. Kim Bartholomew later noted there were two distinct forms of avoidance attachment, dismissing and fearful (Bartholomew & Shaver, 1998) and so expanded the categorisation into four basic attachment categories for adult attachment, secure, insecure/preoccupied, insecure/dismissing, and insecure/fearful (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). The four categories form a matrix based on the two types of internal working models identified by Bowlby, an internal model of self (whether a person deems themselves to be worthy of help) and an internal model of others (whether the attachment figure is responsive to calls for support and protection) (Bowlby, 1973; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991), and are derived from whether an individual has a positive model of self and positive model of others (secure attachment), a combination of either a positive view of self and a negative view of others or vice versa (insecure/dismissing and

insecure/preoccupied respectively) or a negative view of both (insecure/fearful) (Bartholomew & Shaver, 1998).

The following descriptions of each attachment type are outlined by Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) and Bartholomew and Shaver (1998). Securely attached individuals have a high sense of self worth, do not fear intimacy in close relationships and find it easy to trust and cooperate with others; insecure/dismissing (avoidant) individuals also avoid closeness with others as they do not expect a favourable response, but hold a high sense of self worth by dismissing the need for or value in such close relations; insecure/preoccupied (anxious) individuals have low self worth and consistently seek a favourable response from others to validate themselves and gain the sense of security they are looking for and lastly insecure/fearful (avoidant), like the preoccupied type rely highly on others attention for self validation, but avoid intimacy in close relationships for fear of rejection and are overall distrustful of others. More generally, insecure individuals are reluctant or unable to garner support and comfort from their attachment figures and unable to benefit from them in times of stress (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

What is important to note is the four categories are based on whether individuals are low in avoidance and anxiety (securely attached) or high in either avoidance, anxiety or both (insecurely attached) (see Figure 1 below), and later researchers argued that individuals fall somewhere along these anxious/avoidant dimensions rather than within separate category boundaries (Fraley and Waller, as cited in Brennan, Clark and Shaver, 1998). Hence, Brennan et al. (1998) developed a two dimensional model of attachment whereby the measure (called the Experiences in Close Relationships (“ECR”) Scale) assessed romantic attachment along a two continuous dimensions of Anxiety and Avoidance. They did relate their results back to Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) model, whereby “secure” participants scored low on both Avoidance and Anxiety, “dismissing” scored high on Avoidance and low on Anxiety,

“preoccupied” scored low on Avoidance and high on Anxiety those deemed fearful scored high on both Avoidance and Anxiety, however stressed that only the dimensional scores mattered and the categorical types were not “real” (Brennan et al., 1998, p. 61).

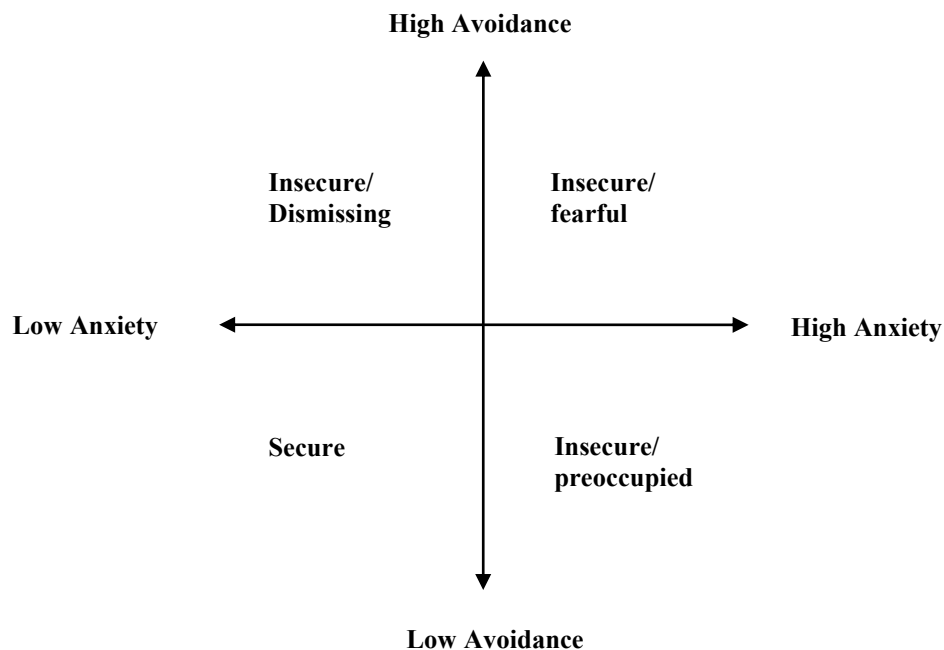


Figure 1: Adapted from Bartholomew (1990). Representation of Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) attachment categories against the Anxiety/Avoidance dimensions.

Attachment in the workplace

As outlined by Bowlby (1988), attachment theory is the birth of how individuals view themselves and others, which, as outlined by Richards and Schat (2011), is the very reason that individual attachment can be applied to individual functioning in the workplace as this can then affect how individuals “think about and behave toward others at work” (Richards & Schat, 2011, p. 170). Furthermore, the link between the attachment and reactions to stress in everyday life “is one of the basic pillars of this theoretical framework” (Mikulincer & Florian, 1998, p.144). The current workplace is a demanding and challenging place, with the

pace of technology and regulation demanding a proactive and flexible workforce, which can be stressful for the individual worker. Attachment working models include defensive strategies that guide individuals in coping with stress (Bowlby, 1988). The development of a secure base helps individuals build trust in the world and develop expectations that, although stressful situations can be taxing on the individual, they can be manageable (Bowlby, 1988). In times of need, securely attached individuals know there will be others to offer protection, help and comfort (Howe, 2011). However, attachment theory has not been widely applied in work situations, with some noting it has received “scant attention” from researchers (Davidovitz, Mikulincer, Shaver, Izsak & Popper, 2007; Harms, 2011, p. 285).

There has been progress in research supporting Ainsworth’s and Bowlby’s assertion that other individuals can fulfil the role of the significant other who provides the safe haven/secure base, however a lot of the research on adult attachment has primarily focused on romantic relationships (Harms, 2011). For example, one of the first to explore the possibility that adult love is similar to childhood attachment and work conceptually similar to childhood exploration were Hazan and Shaver (1990). In their seminal research in broadening attachment theory into the workplace, they measured adult attachment styles by asking adults to describe their feelings in the context of romantic love relationships, and then related the three attachment type outcomes to their corresponding dispositions in the workplace. They found “three distinct patterns of feelings regarding work” which were “functionally similar” to the three patterns of exploration in childhood as identified by Ainsworth; secure, avoidant, and anxious-ambivalent (Hazan & Shaver, 1990, p. 277). Securely attached respondents reported a positive approach to work and did not fear failure. Anxious/ambivalent preferred to work with others and were motivated by approval but felt misunderstood, underappreciated and feared rejection. Importantly, as the researchers had predicted, their focus on these interpersonal concerns interfered with work outcomes. The avoidant group also had

distinctive work orientations and were more likely to prefer work over their relationships. This research is somewhat limiting in its focus was on romantic relationships outside of work and their effect on work. Furthermore, it measured attachment by asking respondents to choose one of three alternatives to determine their attachment type which may be limiting given single –items are likely to be unreliable (Brennan et al., 1998; Bartholomew & Shaver, 1998) and could lead to bias such as social desirability (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee & Podsakoff, 2003) given it is more clear to the respondent what the measure is and which response looks more favourable.

Attachment theory has also been applied to leader –follower relationships in the workplace. A seminal paper in this area was that of Popper and Mayseless (2003), which described leader-follower relationships to be “asymmetrical in principle” with parent-child relationships (Popper & Mayseless, 2003, p. 56). This paper on applying attachment theory to leader – follow relationships described that, just as parents provide a trusted secure base for a child to go off into the world and explore, and a safe haven to which they can return in times insecurity, leaders too can provide this environment for their followers. The leader can build an environment of trust and security during which attachment activation remains low and the other behavioural systems such as “exploration” elevate allowing the employee “take risks” and develop in their work (Popper & Mayseless, 2003, p. 48). During stressful situations, workers may need protection or advice to enable them to cope with these situations. Popper and Mayseless’ paper highlighted that just like a child retracts to their significant caretaker when they feel threatened or are unsure of how to deal with a new event in their world, adults attachment systems are activated when posed with threats and the leader can fulfil the role of protector, hence serving as a follower’s safe haven (Popper & Mayseless, 2003), there to support their followers in coping with workplace challenges and uncertainty (Fraley & Shaver, 2000). If attachment seeking behaviours are responded to and fulfilled, the employee

feels secure once again and will return to normal functioning, however if the leader is not sufficiently available to give support to their followers, the follower will remain insecure and the attachment seeking behaviours will be maintained (Popper & Mayseless, 2003) and become the employees main focus. Davidovitz et al. (2007) extended Popper and Mayseless' theory and empirically examined leader attachment styles and reported that attachment anxiety among leaders was related to self serving motives and predicted poorer functioning among followers, attachment related avoidance among leaders with was related to failure to act as security provider and to poorer mental health among followers.

In their review of adult attachment styles in the workplace, Harms (2011) highlights that although there has been much written to link the effect of attachment styles in leader – follower relationships, there is little empirical research to support it. Furthermore, it's noted that much of the research Harms (2011) presents is about the attachment style of the leader and the effects of this, as opposed to the attachment styles of the followers and their related outcomes. However, the very fact that attachment styles of leaders can affect the behaviour and attitudes of their followers, suggests that the attachment styles of followers will similarly affect how they behave and react to situations in the workplace.

Job Satisfaction, employee engagement and organisational commitment

As mentioned above, job satisfaction, employee engagement and organisational commitment are important workplace attitudes which many experts believe can influence many areas of workplace behaviour, including work productivity, work effort, employee absenteeism and employee turnover. For example, in an empirical study of Turkish employees, results indicated that job satisfaction can result in higher levels of commitment and lowers intention to leave (Yücel, 2012). Job satisfaction and occupational commitment have been found to be significantly related to intention to stay within the organisation (Wang et al., 2012). In their

study across various job sectors, Shuck et al. (2011) found that employee engagement was significantly related to discretionary work effort, and those who were deemed engaged and affectively committed were less likely to have the intention to leave. Allen and Meyer (1990) outlined that employee commitment is negatively related to intention to leave and actual turnover. According to Suliman and Iles, as cited in Vilogen and Rothermann (2009), organisational commitment can affect employees' performance, improve relationships with superiors, enhance organisational development, improve the work environment, reduce turnover, tardiness and absenteeism and increase an employees' readiness to innovate and create. These links with workplace behaviour and outcomes make these employee attitudes important areas to research and gives import to researching if attachment is an antecedent to these attitudes.

Job satisfaction, engagement and commitment have also been linked to stress. High levels of stress can lead to low job satisfaction (Igbaria & Guimaraes, 1993), low levels of engagement (Sonnetag, Mojza, Demerouti & Bakker, 2010) and commitment (Viljoen & Rothmann, 2009). Furthermore, work engagement is considered to be the positive opposite of burnout (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Hence, if a leader is not providing security and support to their followers which is the primary function as outlined in some of the literature above, it's possible this could exacerbate lower levels of job satisfaction, engagement and commitment as the follower has no further resource or secure base to draw upon to help them cope with their demanding work conditions and feelings of stress.

Attachment and Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction can be defined as an individual's attitude towards work where they either "like (satisfaction) or dislike (dissatisfaction) their jobs" (Spector, 1997, p. 2). Some definitions mention specific facets of the job which determine job satisfaction, such as

relations with supervisors and quality of supervision (Werner, as cited in Bhatnagar & Srivastave, 2012), which, based on the overview of attachment above, suggest why attachment theory could be linked with a follower's level of job satisfaction. How a worker performs and assesses their work situation is often directly related to how his supervisor behaves and supports them. In their paper on dysfunctional leadership, Leary, Green, Denson, Schoenfeld, Henley and Langford (2013) discuss how dysfunctional tendencies of leadership such as being unavailable to and unsupportive of followers are negatively correlated with job satisfaction.

With reference to attachment and job satisfaction, there has been very little empirical research in this regard, especially in distinguishing levels of job satisfaction between insecure anxious and insecure avoidant individuals. Theoretical research has suggested that anxiously attached individuals would report less job satisfaction than secure individuals (Adshead, 2010; Harms, 2011). Many empirical studies found securely attached individuals reported higher levels of job satisfaction. Hazan and Shaver's (1990) research outlined earlier reported that anxious and avoidant attachment were associated with lower overall job satisfaction than secure attachment, with anxious attachment reflecting the lowest score of Hazan and Shaver's three attachment types (p. 274). In their study of computer science students, Krauz, Bizman, and Braslavsky (2001) found that those with secure styles were associated with significantly higher levels of overall job satisfaction than those in the insecure anxious/ambivalent and insecure avoidant groups. Contrary to Hazan and Shaver's study above, Krauz et al. (2001) did not find a significant difference in certain facet satisfaction between secure attachment styles and anxious/ambivalent, and avoidant styles actually scored lowest in this regard. This research used the same self-report measure as Hazan and Shaver (1990) whereby denotation of attachment style was based on one self judged single-item and so although the above supports the link of attachment to job satisfaction, similar limitations in their method could be

a concern and a more extensive attachment measure might be more appropriate to uncover an individual's true attachment style. As the research above is limited and overall and not facet satisfaction was being measured, this research looked to see if both insecure attachment styles were associated with lower levels of job satisfaction.

Attachment and Engagement

Employee engagement has been noted to represent a positive state of employee motivation (Kahn, 2010) whereby employees apply discretionary effort and act with vigour (high levels of energy and mental resilience), dedication (strongly involved and experience sense of enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge) and absorption (happily engrossed in work) to the benefit of the organisation's goals (Lin, 2010; Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, & Bakker, 2002). "An employee's manager strongly influences levels of employee engagement and discretionary effort" (Shuck et al., 2011, p. 442). This assertion resulted from their study across a broad range of workplace sectors which found that employees were more likely to engage in discretionary effort when they felt that their managers were supportive. Research by Kahn (1990) indicated that unsupportive leaders contributed to an unsafe environment for employees in which they couldn't adequately invest focused effort in their work as they got no support for unpredictable or threatening situations, and negatively affected personal engagement in work. Whereas supportive managers who allowed their followers to go off and try new things in work, without fear of punishment if they fail is associated with psychological safety (p. 703) and suggests increased engagement.

Other studies on teachers have found that supervisor support can act as buffer against the negative impact of work stressors on work engagement, such as pupil misbehaviour (Bakker, Hakanen, Demerouti, & Xanthopoulou, 2007; Xanthopoulou, Bakker, & Fischbach, 2013). Leary et al. (2013) outlined that similar to job satisfaction, an unavailable and

unsupportive leader can have an “insidious, negative impact on employee engagement” among followers (p. 117). Employees become preoccupied or avoidant of workplace relationships and direct energies towards self-preservation instead of organisational goals (Hudson, 2010; Leary et al., 2013). Leary et al. (2013) found that such covert dysfunctional leadership behaviours had a greater negative impact on employee engagement (and on job satisfaction) than some overt behaviours. Hence this highlights the importance of looking into the subtleties of leader-follower relationships and using attachment theory to identify the level of support or security the follower feels exists between themselves and their leader.

Advocates of attachment theory’s affect on workplace engagement have found supportive results in this domain. Hudson (2010) carried out a non sector specific study on attachment and engagement and while results did not show any great difference in engagement levels among those falling within the different insecure categories (i.e. preoccupied versus fearful or dismissing), results did show that secure individuals were significantly more engaged than their insecure peers, notably those in the fearful or dismissing groups. As mentioned previously, the activation of attachment systems elicits certain behavioural mechanisms in reaction to a perceived threat, which previous research suggests might inhibit workplace engagement, as the individuals focus is elsewhere. For example, Richards and Schat (2011) reported that “anxiously attached individuals tend to engage in fewer functional behaviours directed at the organization” (Richards & Schat, 2011, p. 179), which, as they suggest, may interfere with optimal work functioning as the individual becomes preoccupied with meeting their need for support and belonging. Although the authors do not refer to workplace engagement specifically, linking back to the definition of engagement above, an employees preoccupation with fulfilling their own needs for support and belonging could likely conflict with their ability to apply additional discretionary effort and to act in a way that benefits the organisation’s goals.

Attachment and Commitment

Organisational commitment can be seen as an attitudinal state in which people consider their relationship with the organisation they work for and something which links them to their organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Allen and Meyer (1990) outline a three component model of commitment which encompasses an individual's emotional attachment to and involvement in the organisation (affective commitment), an employee's need to remain within the organisation due to the cost associated with leaving (continuance commitment) and a commitment to the organisation due to an overall feeling of obligation or loyalty to that organisation (normative commitment). The authors are keen to point out that while they view each as separate elements of commitment, the three sub concepts should be viewed as components rather than different types of commitment, and so this study investigated attachment in relation to these three elements of commitment. Regardless of the definition, it is well noted that commitment has implications for the decision to continue working in the organisation and binds individuals to a particular course of action within their organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

Relationships with superiors can impact upon organisational commitment. Positive relationships can help the individual to cope with certain work stressors with the opposite effect seen in negative working relationships, which can directly affect organisational commitment (Vilgen & Rothermann, 2009). In their study of university employees, the authors found a negative relationship between various occupational stressors and organisational commitment. As outlined previously, attachment outlines that in times of stress, internal working models are activated and a person seeks out support from a significant other as a coping mechanism. Hence if a superior is or is seen to be unavailable to

help buffer the effect of these stressors, it could be deemed that poor attachment levels could directly affect organisational commitment.

Although attachment and organisational commitment are based on the same underlying concept, that of an overriding bond or linkage between the individual and another being or entity (Schusterschitz, Geser, Nöhammer & Stummer, 2011), there have been relatively few studies identifying a link between individual attachment and commitment. However there has been some previous research supporting the link. Researchers into attachment have found that the anxious and avoidance categories were related to lower levels of organisational commitment and the avoidance category in particular correlated with intentions to quit (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Similar results are presented by Richards and Schat (2011) who found that anxious attachment was linked with increased intentions to quit.

Schusterschitz et al. (2011) found an opposite effect to be related; insecure anxious and avoidant attachment were linked with higher levels of commitment. However, the sample set consisted of workers enrolled in degree programs at one management training centre in Austria and hence the sample set was fairly homogenous something which the authors themselves noted needed development. In addition, they used Allen and Meyer 's (1990) commitment scale to measure commitment levels which Allen and Meyer themselves deemed in need of more work - "more evidence is required before the Normative Commitment Scale can be used with as much confidence" [as the Affective and Continuance scales] (Allen & Meyer, 1990, p. 15). Furthermore, some studies show however that women seem to benefit more than do men from both work and family social support (Nelson and Burke, 2002) – the above study had a participant sample of 68% men and 32% female (Schusterschitz et al., 2011, p. 344), so it viable this may have distorted results. Hence, based on this and other prior research noted above which links secure attachment and supportive leaders in general with higher levels of commitment, this research maintained its proposal that anxious and avoidant

attachment would be linked with lower levels of commitment than secure attachment. Anxious individuals may feel they wish to leave if not getting the support they require in current relationships and Avoidant individuals may not value attachment or obligation to their organisation similar to the low value they place on bonds with attachment figures.

Study Rationale

This study aims to add to previous research and fill the gap in the limited empirical research carried out in this domain to date. Some of the aforementioned research linking attachment theory to the workplace has been theory based only (e.g. Ahshead, 2010; Harms, 2011; Hudson, 2013; Popper & Mayselless, 2003). Furthermore, while the stepping stone had been laid in applying attachment theory to leader-follower relationships, the focus of most research has been on the leader. Davidovitz et al. (2007) did broaden their study to measure follower attachment styles in their study of members in an Israeli military base, however it was mainly carried out to match against their leader's attachment styles and to identify if the follower attachment styles buffered against negative affects of insecure type leaders. For example, they found that the mental health of secure followers was less compromised than that of insecure followers when under the command of avoidant leaders (Davidovitz et al., 2007, p.646). Hence the research was not specifically with reference to followers and to the effect of such styles on specific workplace attitudes of followers which may affect their performance. In general and not just in attachment studies, there has been little attention paid to followers in the leader-follower dynamic (Blanchard, Welbourne & Bullock, 2009), even though the leader –follower contribution to organisational success is 20%-80% respectively (Kelly, as cited in Blanchard et al., 2009). Hence this gave further rationale to this study to focus on the follower within the relationship.

Another limitation with previous research was the specific measurement scale used in some studies as well as the study samples. Most of the previous research has focused on scales that refer to romantic relationships in general (e.g. Davidovitz et al., 2007; Hazan & Shaver, 1990; Krauz et al., 2001; Summer & Knight, 2001) thus dispelling Bowlby and Ainsworth's assertion that in adulthood, many types can fit the role of the caretaker or attachment figure, e.g. the leader (although the Davidovitz et al. (2007) study was with reference to the leader, the scale used was the ECR in its original form so terminology still references to partners and love). With this in mind, in this study follower attachment styles were measured whereby they were asked to consider their relationships with reference to their managers or leaders in general, and a scale more applicable to the workplace environment was used, which shall be described in detail in the methodology section.

From the seminal research of Hazan and Shaver (1990) to more recent research, there does seem to be clear indications that differences in adult attachment are related to corresponding differences in workplace attitudes and behaviours. Aspects such as job satisfaction, employee engagement and commitment to the workplace are important areas to research in relation to attachment given their link with deemed leadership support levels and the associated links to workplace outcomes as outlined earlier in this paper. To the best of current knowledge, no similar research has been conducted in Ireland, so it is important to examine attachment and related attitudes with respect to the Irish population, especially now that Ireland is in a unique situation of coming out of a serious recession (that will have been the first for most of those who took part in the research) and in a time where jobs are on the rise again and workers will have more opportunity to leave their jobs if they are not satisfied with their current role. As they have not received extensive attention with respect to the Irish workplace, this paper aims to add to the literature in this regard.

Hypotheses

H1: Anxious and/or Avoidant attachment (insecure attachment styles) will be negatively related to higher levels of job satisfaction and hence secure attachment (low levels of Anxious and Avoidant attachment) will be associated with higher job satisfaction.

H2: Anxious and/or Avoidant attachment will be negatively related to higher levels of employee engagement and hence secure attachment will be associated with higher levels of employee engagement.

H3: Anxious and/or Avoidant attachment will be negatively related to the following components of organisational commitment;

H3a: Affective commitment

H3b: Continuance commitment

H3c: Normative commitment

and hence secure attachment will be associated with higher levels of these commitment components.

Method

Design

A within-subjects correlational design was utilised to test for relationships between the variables. Each participant completed an online questionnaire which was designed to identify whether they were securely or insecurely attached, and to measure their levels of job satisfaction, engagement and commitment in the workplace. The predictor variable was insecure attachment style. The criterion variables were job satisfaction, employee engagement and commitment to the workplace.

Participants

Potential participants were personal contacts who were initially contacted via e-mail by the researcher and asked to forward a link to the online survey to others who might be interested in participating. The link was also posted to social networking sites. A control was set so that there could only be one return per IP address. This yielded surveys from 108 participants, 48 males and 60 females. Participants were of mixed gender, occupation and consisted of both public and private sector workers. To be included in the study, it was necessary that participants were over 18 years, in full-time employment in Ireland and in their current role for more than 6 months. The 6 month stipulation was included so that participants would have had time to settle into the organisation and have time to develop relationships at work and form a realistic expression of their workplace attitudes. Furthermore, the evaluation of some scales outline that the 6 month criteria is important. For example, the commitment scale was deemed inappropriate for use with new employees as results can be unstable during the first few months of employment (Vandenberg & Self, as cited in Meyer & Allen, 1997, p. 122).

Therefore, part-time workers, those under 18 years, those not working in Ireland or in their current role for less than 6 months were excluded from the present study. Participants were invited to take part in the study and were not paid for their involvement.

Materials

This study used a self – report survey conducted online via Survey Monkey. Each participant was asked to complete 5 initial questions covering consent and demographic items, followed by 4 existing questionnaires covering attachment, job satisfaction, employee engagement and commitment in the workplace. The titles of each measurement scale or what they were specifically measuring were not included in the questionnaire so as to avoid bias.

Attachment

Individual attachment was measured using a self report measure called the Experience of Relationships Scale (“ERS”) (Richards & Schat, 2011). This is a 36-item scale adapted from the Experience of Close Relationships Scale (“ECR”) (Brennan et al., 1998). The adapted version replaces references to romantic “partners” with “other people” or “others” and also alters questions so as to remove references to “love” so to make it more applicable to measuring attachment levels in the workplace. The scale measures attachment on a dimensional level, with 18 items measuring the anxiety dimension and 18 items measuring the avoidance dimension. Participants were asked to consider their relationships with their managers or leaders when answering the 36 items, examples of which include “I need a lot of reassurance that I am liked and appreciated by other people” (anxiety) and “I don’t feel comfortable opening up to other people” (avoidance). The items were rated on a 7-point Likert –type scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7). Scores were computed by averaging the 18 items linked with each dimension, after recoding reverse

items. The alpha coefficient, a measure of reliability for ERS was reported to be .91 for anxiety and .9 for avoidance (Richards & Schat, 2011), which satisfies reliability standards as both are above the widely accepted figure of .70.

Job satisfaction

Overall job satisfaction was measured using section three of the Short Form Job Diagnostic Survey (“JDS”) developed by Hackman and Oldham (1974). The JDS in its entirety measures several characteristics of jobs and people’s reactions to them, however only section three of the JDS was relevant to this study. Section 3 of the Short Form JDS contains 7 items which measure job meaningfulness, work motivation and overall job satisfaction. All 7 items were included in the questionnaire given to participants, however only the items related to employee job satisfaction in his or her work were then used for measuring overall job satisfaction, specifically items #2, #4 and #6 of the scale, which included “generally speaking, I am very satisfied with this job”, “I frequently think of quitting this job” and “I am generally satisfied with the kind of work I do in this job”. Participants were asked to indicate their personal feelings about their job by marking how much they agreed or disagreed with each item. Again the items were rated on a 7-point scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7), and the average of the 3 job satisfaction items were averaged to compute the overall job satisfaction rating. The JDS reported internal consistency reliability using Spearman-Brown procedures was .76 which is deemed satisfactory reliability (Hackman & Oldham, 1975).

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement was measured using Shaufeli and Bakker’s (2004) short form Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (“UWES-9”). The questionnaire uses three sub-scales to assess

engagement; vigour, dedication and absorption. The short form consists of 9-items, and with respect to each item, employees were asked to decide if they ever felt this way about their job. Examples included “At my work, I feel bursting with energy” (vigor), “I am enthusiastic about my job” (dedication) and “I am immersed in my work” (absorption). The items were rated on a 7-point scale ranging from *never* (0) to *always-every day* (6). The mean scale score of the UWES-9 is computed by adding the scores on each particular scale and dividing the sum by the number of items in the overall scale. Reported Cronbach’s alpha for the total 9-item scale was a median .92 across various countries, well above the acceptance value of .70 (Schaufeli, Bakker & Salanova, 2006).

Commitment

Commitment was measured using the revised three component model Commitment Scales of Meyer, Allen and Smith (1993) which measures affective, continuance and normative commitment. This 18-item scale is a revised version of the 24 item original scale (Allen & Meyer, 1990) and examples from the scales include “I do not feel ‘emotionally attached’ to this organization” (affective commitment, reverse coded), “If I had not already put so much of myself into this organisation, I might consider working elsewhere” (continuance commitment) and “I would feel guilty if I left my organisation now” (normative commitment). Participants were asked to consider each statement and respond to a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), based on the strength of their feeling to each statement with respect to the organisation with which they work. Reported alpha coefficient measures reliability of the sub-scales ranged between .73 to .87 (Meyer et al, 1993).

Demographic Variables

Questions relating to gender, position level and tenure within the organisation and whether the participants were full time employees working in Ireland were also included in the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

Data was analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 21. The online surveys were imported into SPSS via Microsoft Excel.

Procedure

Personal contacts and potential participants were sent an email notifying them of the study and containing a link to the online survey. The link was also posted to social networking sites. The online survey contained a cover page which briefly explained the study was exploring employee relationships with their leader or manager and their potential effect on workplace attitudes and behaviour, but it did not mention the specific attitudes to be measured so as to avoid biased responses. Participants were informed that participation was voluntary, anonymous and that it would take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Participants were made aware that completion of the questionnaire was deemed consent, but to further ensure consent, the initial question on the first page was to confirm the participant's consent. Participants were given details on how to withdraw should they wish, and given contact information for support services should participation cause them distress.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Sample characteristics

Table one outlines the main characteristics of the sample. 108 people participated in the online survey, out of which 11 were not working full time and in Ireland and a further 2 were working in their current role for less than 6 months, hence these were not included in the study. Those who indicated they were in at senior executive level were also excluded, as although they could have superiors, it was deemed more appropriate to only include mid-management levels and below to align more closely to the concept of followers within the workplace. 15 survey entries that were missing a substantial amount of data were also discounted from the study. This left a sample set of 70 people (N = 70) of which 31 were male (44.3%) and 39 were female (55.7%). 33 people (47.1%) belonged to middle management and 37 people (52.9%) were non managers (entry level to supervisor level). Only 11 (15.7%) were in their current role for 6 months to 2 years, with the remaining 59 (84.3%) in their roles for more than 2 years. This can be seen in Figure 2 following;



Figure 2: Percentage split of participants according to gender, occupational level and organisational tenure

Inferential Statistics

Tests for normal distribution showed that Shapiro-Wilk was non-significant for each of the scales ($p > 0.05$), which indicated that data was normally distributed. Hence Pearson's r was used in each hypothesis to test for correlation between variables. A reliability analysis was run on all the scales which resulted in a reliability factor over the acceptable 0.7 level for all except the JDS. However given this scale's reliability factor was .65 and previous research alpha as outlined earlier in the Methods section was over .7, the scale was deemed acceptable to use. The reliability scores along with the means and standard deviations for each scale can be noted in Table 1 below. The Pearson's correlation coefficients as described in the following paragraphs can be seen in Table 2.

Table 1: Means, standard deviations and reliabilities of the scales

	M	SD	α	N
1. Anxious Attachment	3.17	1.04	.92	67
2. Avoidant Attachment	3.21	0.88	.88	65
3. Job Satisfaction	4.95	1.22	.65	69
4. Employee Engagement	3.83	1.16	.94	67
5. Affective Commitment	3.85	1.16	.74	64
6. Continuance Commitment	3.85	1.45	.81	64
7. Normative Commitment	3.36	1.42	.84	64

α = Cronbach's Alpha

Hypothesis 1 – Attachment and Job Satisfaction

It was hypothesised that insecure avoidant and insecure anxious attachment would be negatively related to higher levels of job satisfaction. This was partially supported. A

Pearson's correlation found negative weak significant association between Anxious attachment and job satisfaction ($R(65) = -0.295, p < 0.5$). Therefore the null hypothesis was rejected for Anxious attachment. When split between middle management and non-managers, the association strengthened to a moderate association ($R(35) = -0.395, p < 0.5$). However, although a negative weak association was found between Avoidant attachment and job satisfaction ($R(63) = -0.089$), the relationship was not significant ($p > .05$). Therefore the null hypothesis was rejected for Avoidant attachment.

Hypothesis 2 – Attachment and Employee Engagement

It was supposed that insecure avoidant and insecure anxious attachment would be negatively related to higher levels of employee engagement. This was not supported. Although a Pearson's correlation found negative weak associations between employee engagement and both Avoidant attachment ($R(61) = -0.119$) and Anxious attachment ($R(63) = -0.185$), neither association was significant ($p > .05$). Therefore the null hypothesis was accepted.

Hypothesis 3 – Attachment and Commitment

Pearson's correlation was run separately for the 3 components of organisational commitment, affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment with the following results;

H3a. Anxious and/or Avoidant attachment will be negatively related to affective commitment

This was not supported for either of the insecure attachment types. Although a Pearson's correlation found negative associations between Avoidant attachment and affective commitment ($R(60) = -0.033$) and Anxious attachment and affective commitment ($R(60) = -$

0.13), both associations were very weak and neither association was significant ($p > .05$). Therefore the null hypothesis was accepted.

H3b. Anxious and/or Avoidant attachment will be negatively related to continuance commitment

This was not supported for either of the insecure attachment types, therefore the null hypothesis was accepted for both attachment styles. Conversely to the negative association hypothesised, Pearson's r correlation actually found a positive association between each of Avoidant and Anxious attachment and continuance commitment. While this was found to be non-significant for Avoidant attachment ($R(59) = 0.140, p > .05$), a positive moderate significant association was found between Anxious attachment and continuance commitment ($R(59) = 0.383, p < .01$). Hence, instead of higher levels of Anxious attachment being correlated with lower levels of continuance commitment as hypothesised, Pearson's r found higher levels of Anxious attachment to be correlated with higher levels of continuance commitment. This will be probed further in the Discussion section. When split between middle management and non-managers, Pearson's r found the relationship to be moderate with non-managers at a lower significance level ($R(31) = 0.428, p < .05$), with no significance with middle management.

H3c. Anxious and/or Avoidant attachment will be negatively related to normative commitment

This was not supported for either of the insecure attachment types, therefore the null hypothesis was accepted for each of the above. Again, Pearson's correlation actually found a positive association between each of Avoidant and Anxious attachment and normative commitment. A positive weak significant association was found between Avoidant

attachment and normative commitment ($R(59) = 0.269, p < .05$). This signifies that higher levels of Avoidant attachment are associated with higher levels of normative commitment as opposed to the hypothesised inverse being true. Again, this will be discussed further in the next section. Pearson's r found a positive weak association between Anxious attachment and continuance commitment, however the results were non significant ($R(60) = 0.149, p > .05$).

Table 2: Pearson's Correlation table reflecting correlations between Attachment variables and workplace attitude variables

Variable	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1. Anxious Attachment							
2. Avoidant Attachment	N/A						
3. Job Satisfaction	-.295*	-.089					
4. Employee Engagement	-.185	-.119	.641				
5. Affective Commitment	-.130	-.033	.459**	.516**			
6. Continuance Commitment	.383**	.140	-.143	-.018	-.017		
7. Normative Commitment	.149	.269*	.214	.222	.438**	.149	

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

Additional Analyses and results

Although the not specified hypotheses, the following was also noted from the data collected. An independent t-test was carried out across the variables to check for any differences in demographic variables, notably gender, occupational level within organisation and organisational tenure. With respect to these demographics, only gender presented with significant results in one variable. Females (mean = 4.21, SD = 1.363) were found to have higher levels of continuance commitment than males (mean = 3.46, SD = 1.46). An

independent samples t-test found that this difference between males and females was statistically significant ($t(59.6) = 2.114$, $p = .039$) (See Table 3 below).

Also, it was noted that Pearson's correlation found a positive strong significant association between employee engagement and job satisfaction ($R(65) = 0.641$, $p < .01$), and a similar positive strong significant association between employee engagement and affective commitment ($R(60) = 0.516$, $p < .01$). Pearson's r also found a positive moderate significant association between job satisfaction and affective commitment ($R(62) = 0.459$, $p < .01$).

Table 3: An Independent Samples T-test table displaying the differences between Gender for the continuous commitment variable

Variable	Group	Mean	SD	t	df	p
Continuance Commitment	Female	4.21	1.36	2.114	59.6	.039
	Male	3.46	1.46			

Discussion

The aim of this study was to examine further the relationship, if any, between attachment styles and workplace attitudes. More specifically, if there was a correlation between secure and insecure attachment styles and levels of job satisfaction, employee engagement and organisational commitment. The results partially supported the first hypothesis, where anxious attachment was inversely related to job satisfaction. None of the other hypotheses were supported, however other relationships between attachment styles and workplace attitudes were identified which are important to consider further.

Hypothesis 1

Results supported a negative relationship between anxious attachment and job satisfaction, indicating more anxiously attached individuals experienced lower levels of lower job satisfaction. The results do not confirm that anxious attachment causes lower job satisfaction or if the direction is the inverse, but it does signify and that a significant correlation exists between the two variables. It also suggests that secure attachment (i.e. low levels of anxious attachment) is associated with higher levels of job satisfaction. These findings support some previous research in this regard. A theoretical overview of attachment by Adshead (2010) and Harms (2011) suggested that anxiously attached individuals would report less job satisfaction than secure individuals, hence this research adds some empirical evidence to their theoretical suppositions. This research also supports Hazan and Shaver's (1990) empirical findings that anxiously attached individuals were linked with lower overall job satisfaction levels than secure and avoidant styles. Krauz et al. (2001) found that secure attachment had higher levels of overall job satisfaction than that both of the insecure styles, which is partially supported by this research given the supposition that if higher levels of anxious attachment is associated with lower levels of job satisfaction, lower levels of anxious attachment (i.e. more secure attachment) will be associated with higher levels of job satisfaction.

However, the results however are contradictory to another aspect of Krauz et al. (2001), who reported that avoidant attachment scored lowest with respect to job satisfaction in a test between two insecure groups which would suggest that higher avoidant attachment levels would be more significantly linked with lower levels of job satisfaction than would anxious attachment, however this research found the opposite to be the case. There could be various reasons for this. Although Krauz et al. (2001) used a similar job satisfaction measure to the JDS used in this research, the difference they found between the two insecure groups above resulted from looking at specific facets of job satisfaction, whereas this study measured overall satisfaction. Also, with respect to attachment, is it difficult to compare findings due to the numerous different scales used to measure attachment as well as the different approaches taken with respect to attachment, i.e. whether attachment is categorised into the 3 (Hazan & Shaver, 1990) or 4 (Bartholomew and Horvitz, 1991) attachment types, or whether attachment styles are deemed to lie within a continuum and not categorised into distinct and separate groups, as was the approach taken in this study. Hence the findings supporting this hypothesis as well as the null hypothesis need to be considered carefully as more research is needed to provide further evidence in this regard.

Hypothesis 2

With respect to employee engagement, no relationship was found between attachment styles and levels of employee engagement. The results are surprising given the previous research supporting the effect a supportive versus unsupportive manager can have on their subordinates engagement as well as specific research linking attachment styles to employee engagement. However, while Hudson (2010) found secure attachment to be significantly more engaged than their insecure peers, the research did not find any significant difference between the insecure types. As the measure in this research specifically measures anxious and

avoidant attachment and its measurement for secure attachment is not as precise, it's possible the results are reflective of this. Furthermore, much of the research outlined in the literature review specifically referred to the relationship between engagement and stress (it being the opposite of burnout) and how having a supportive manager helps buffer against stress and its affect on levels of engagement. This research did not carry out any measure of stress, and hence, as attachment seeking behaviours are usually only activated during times of stress, its possible participants were not experiencing stress to any significant degree to warrant any comfort from attachment figures and hence no noticeable affect on engagement levels were seen. Its also possible that some elements of the research method (outlined in the Limitations section) may also have contributed to the resulting hypothesis rejection.

Hypothesis 3

With respect to organisational commitment, hypotheses H3a, H3b and H3c were all rejected. Hence, this study did not find insecure attachment styles to be negatively associated with commitment. However, the results did find a correlation between insecure attachment styles and commitment. Results for H3b found a positive association between each of Avoidant and Anxious attachment and continuance commitment. While this was found to be non-significant for Avoidant attachment, it was significant for Anxious attachment, meaning those with higher levels of anxious attachment were associated with higher levels of continuance commitment, as opposed to what was hypothesised (that insecure attachment would be associated with lower levels of continuance commitment).

Although this is contra to hypothesised and to some previous research which supported the negative relationship between insecure attachment and commitment (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007), and more generally that positive relationships with managers increased commitment (Vilogen & Rothermann, 2009), the results do support a previous

study in this area as outlined in the introduction. Schusterschitz et al. (2011) found insecure anxious and avoidant attachment to be linked with higher levels of commitment. More specifically, they hypothesised and found insecure anxious attachment to be positively related to continuance commitment. The reasoning they give behind this is that even though their needs may not be met in their workplace relationships, anxiously attached employees prefer to stay as the costs associated with leaving are too high, given they would be faced with new and threatening environments (Schusterschitz et al., 2011). Testing also reflected that females in the study had a significantly higher level of continuance commitment than males. Although most of the research does not discuss any differences in male versus female attachment styles in relation to other variables, and there have been no consistent gender differences in classifications (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007, p. 104), this significant result is something to consider especially given the limited research to date in the workplace which could have different dynamics and outcomes.

Although they hypothesised that Avoidant attachment would also be positively related to continuance commitment as they would not like to have to develop or trust in new relationships, their results did not support this. The reasoning they behind this matches the justification this research had for determining that avoidant styles would actually correspond to lower levels of commitment, i.e. their high self of sense worth would not deter them from leaving the organisation. Hence, although this research did not fit its own hypothesis, it does support alternative hypothesis in the literature, that anxious attachment is positively related to continuance commitment.

Again, as opposed to the hypothesis, results for H3c found Avoidant attachment to be significantly related to normative commitment, signifying that higher levels of Avoidant attachment were associated with higher levels of normative commitment. Although Schusterschitz et al. (2011) did hypothesise this, they did not find support for this in their

results, so the findings in this research give support to their theory that Avoidant attachment would be correlated normative commitment on the basis of their inability to form attachment bond with others and instead direct their needs towards work, and hence build loyalty and a feeling of “ought to stay” towards the organisation. In general, given the limited research to date on attachment influencing commitment in the workplace, and the outlined conflicting evidence, its evident more research is needed in this regards.

Limitations and weaknesses of the present study

There are some limitations and weaknesses in the study which should be acknowledged. The study is correlational in nature only, and so only indicates a relationship between attachment styles and the relevant attitudes in question, and does not infer or confirm causality. That is, there is an indication that secure attachment is correlated or associated with job satisfaction, however its not certain that this secure attachment led to higher job satisfaction, or whether higher job satisfaction led to a better working relationship between the followers and their managers and hence to a more secure attachment. Furthermore, the study is not longitudinal in nature – hence it indicates a relationship between attachment and the relevant attitudes at a specific point in time, but not whether a change in attachment levels correspond with a change in attitudes or vice versa.

The research used the format of a self report measure, hence there could be problem with self – reporting bias such as social desirability (as outlined in Podsakoff et al., 2003). It also relies on the participant’s honesty and insight into their own feelings which they may not have. Use of longer scales, specifically the 36 item attachment scale, may overcome bias tendencies and depth of insight needed (Brennan et al, p. 68, 1998), however this is not case across all the measures used in this research. Furthermore, the attachment anxiety scale only has one reverse-scored item, and the UWES-9 has no reversely-scored items, which could

have made them vulnerable to acquiescence response bias which is “a tendency to agree with attitude statements regardless of content” (Winkler, Kanouse, and Ware, as cited in Podsakoff et al., 2003, p. 882) which means individuals could have given similar responses to similarly worded items even though they are measuring different concepts.

Lastly, the ERS measures the insecure attachment along the avoidant-anxious continuum, i.e. as dimensional constructs. It does not measure secure attachment directly, only indirectly whereby low avoidant and anxiety scores are deemed to signify more secure attachment. Hence any findings related to secure attachment are merely derived from the participants scoring low in the anxious and avoidant attachment scale.

Strengths and directions for future research

In spite of the study limitations, the current research had many strengths to note. Firstly the timing of this study gives unique insight into current attitudes in the Irish workplace, given Ireland is emerging from a long recession and jobs are on the rise. Most of attachment related research has been carried out in the US or Israel, hence its application to the Irish workplace during this period is useful to remove any cross cultural differences that may cloud its applicability to Ireland. What’s interesting to note is that 84.3% of participants were in their current role for more than two years, which is indicative of less movement in the market over the past few years since the recession, many were likely holding on to their jobs and either not taking the risk of moving role or its reflective of lack of job availability over the past few years. This means participants had ample time to try to create formative relationships in their current workplace and should have a few leader experiences as well as a considered view on their workplace attitudes.

The cross sectional design helped to obtain a more heterogeneous sample than some previous studies in this domain, many of which focused on a specific college or sector samples.

Another area which differentiates this study from previous studies is its focus on the follower in the leader-follower relationship, and the measure used to assess their attachment style. Previous research focused on non leader – follower relationships or on the leader in the relationship. Furthermore, many used a variety of attachment measurement types not specifically created with the workplace in mind. The ERS scale which takes out references to love interests was employed, which is more applicable to the workplace. Furthermore, the extension of the specific attitudes of job satisfaction, employee engagement and organisational commitment with respect to attachment styles of followers is not an area with much or any previous literature. The research found that insecure anxious styles among followers was correlated negatively with job satisfaction and positively with certain components of organisational commitment, which supports much of the literature outlining the applicability of attachment behaviour to the workplace, and specifically to leader-follower relationships.

Future research in the area might probe further into attachment and commitment in the workplace, and limit participants to those at lower levels within the organisation given that, when split between middle management and non-managers, the association with commitment increased from a weak to moderate significance. Although middle management would be at both sides of the attachment relationship, in that they are both care-givers to their reports and care-seekers from their own managers, perhaps the effects of insecure attachment with unsupportive managers are more pronounced at more junior levels. Furthermore, future research should consider a larger sample in order to appropriately split the testing between male versus females. As testing also reflected that females in the study had a significantly higher level of continuance commitment than males, this should be probed further as while there may not have been consistent gender differences previously, attachment theory has not been applied extensively in the workplace which could have significantly different dynamics and needs to areas in previous research.

Given that the current study was at a point in time, future researchers in the area might consider a longitudinal study, whereby attachment levels and attitudes are measured at the beginning of the study, and again at the end of the study after the sample group underwent some of the practical measures outlined in the next section. This would assist in measuring how changing attachment styles could affect workplace attitudes and thus behaviour. Lastly, as the ERS only measures insecure attachment along the avoidant-anxious continuum, development and testing of a dimensional scale applicable to the workplace which directly and more precisely measure secure attachment would be an excellent consideration for future researchers in this area.

Practical applications

Knowledge of the interaction between leaders and followers and its affect on work related outcomes is beneficial to organisations. As outlined earlier, high levels of job satisfaction, employee engagement and organisational commitment have many desired benefits, such as work productivity, a more conducive working environment and reduced turnover. Knowledge therefore of antecedents to these workplace attitudes would enable managers and the organisation to develop relationships conducive to follower attitudes and therefore behaviours. For example, measurement of attachment styles would enable identification of insecure attachment which could be probed to identify areas where followers don't feel supported by their managers. Training programs could thus be arranged for managers to enable them become better, more supportive leaders, which should lead to a more secure attachment among followers and thus help increase the job satisfaction and potentially staff retention.

It must be noted that that not all forms commitment are desirable, notably continuance commitment where employees are staying in the organisation because they feel they have to. Meyer & Allen (1991) outlined that continuance commitment may be negatively related to job performance (as cited in Meyer & Allen, 1993). So this may not be necessarily

something the organisation would wish to develop, but could be useful to identify in order to monitor job performance among this group.

Identification of employee attachment styles is beneficial in general to both the worker and the organisations and could be used in talent utilisation, staff retention, and organisational development (Riley, as cited in Hudson, 2013). Followers may wish to identify their attachment styles themselves to recognise where they may be misplacing focus (e.g. on gaining attention from manager if insecure, rather than increasing job performance which may garner the same results in the end) and to develop further in the organisation. Some studies have found that securely attached work members were more likely to emerge as leaders (Berson, Dan, and Yammarino, as cited in Harms, 2011) hence if followers find themselves to be insecurely attached and wish to progress in the organisation, identification of their insecure attachment style could be the first step into achieving their goal.

Conclusion

This research found support for previous research linking insecure attachment to lower levels of job satisfaction. While none of the other hypotheses were supported, the correlation found linking insecure attachment to higher levels of certain commitment components was beneficial and does support previous research in this regard, and serves to add to the growing body of literature linking attachment styles to the workplace. The specific application of the ERS to the Irish workplace and its interaction with other scales to measure job satisfaction employee engagement and workplace commitment was a novel undertaking, and the research aim of building upon previous research was achieved.

While there were certain limitations to the study, such as the specified scale weaknesses and point in time only feedback, the research gives insight into how Bowlby's Attachment theory can be applied to the workplace and how it interacts with workplace attitudes. Follower's can see their leader's as attachment figures, mirroring the child-parent relationship, and if certain needs

are not met and the leader is not there as a support figure, this can have negative consequences in the workplace. This research should be repeated and extended into other workplace attitudes to strengthen empirical evidence of the association of attachment relationships with follower attitudes so that organisations can have confidence in its merit and use it to strengthen leader – follower relationships in the workplace and thus improve workplace outcomes and employee retention.

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Appendix

Appendix I: Questionnaire

(note the following questionnaire was input into the online tool SurveyMonkey and not handed out in paper format and is outlined here in paper form for reader purposes. Furthermore, the titles of each questionnaire are input again for reader purposes only and were not included in the questionnaire submitted to participants – these are the titles noted within “[]” brackets below).

Workplace Attitudes in Ireland

Dear Participant,

I am a final year student conducting research which explores employee relationships with their leader/manager and their potential effect on workplace attitudes and behaviour in the Irish workplace. The research is being conducted for the Department of Psychology in Dublin Business School and will be submitted for examination.

You are invited to take part in this study by completing the attached survey which should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Participation is completely voluntary and so you are not obliged to take part. It is also anonymous so that responses can not be attributed to any one participant. To ensure this, responses are not allocated a code. However if you wish to withdraw your response at a later date, please keep note of the date and time you completed the survey and contact the researcher on the email address provided below.

While the survey asks some questions that might cause some slight negative feelings, it has been used widely in research. If any of the questions do raise any difficult feelings for you, contact information for support services are listed on the final page of this survey.

It is important you understand that by completing and submitting the questionnaire you are consenting to participate in the study.

If you have any questions regarding this survey, please contact me at [REDACTED] or my supervisor, Dr. Barbara Caska, [REDACTED]

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey

1. I consent to take part in this survey and I am over 18 years old*

Yes

2. What is your gender?*

Female

Male

3. Are you currently working full time within an organisation in Ireland?*

Yes

No

4. Please state your occupational status/ level with your organisation: *

Senior Executive

- Manager (e.g. mid management level)
- Non- Manager (e.g. entry level to supervisor level)

5. Please indicate your tenure in current company

- Less than 6 months
- 6 months to 2 years
- More than 2 years

On the following pages you will find several different kinds of questions about your job. Specific instructions are given at the start of each section. Please read them carefully. The questions are designed to obtain your perceptions of your job/organisation and your reactions to it.

There are no "trick" questions. Your individual answers will be kept completely confidential. Please answer each item as honestly and as frankly as possible and move onto the next question.

[Attachment: Experience of Relationships Scale (Richards & Schat, 2011)]

6. The following statements concern how you feel in relationships with your manager/leader. We are interested in how you generally experience relationships, not just in what is happening in a specific relationship.

Instructions: Please read each statement below and indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement by choosing the appropriate number based on the strength of your feeling to each statement. E.g. If you strongly disagree with this feeling, mark 1 in the option after the statement; If you strongly agree with this feeling, mark 7 in the option after the statement. Otherwise mark a number between 2-6 if you fall somewhere in between.

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please choose as appropriate:

1	I prefer not to show others how I feel deep down.	
2	I worry about being abandoned.	
3	I am very comfortable being close to others.	
4	I worry a lot about my relationships.	
5	Just when other people start to get close to me I find myself pulling away.	
6	I worry that other people won't care about me as much as I care about them.	
7	I get uncomfortable when others want to be very close.	
8	I worry a fair amount about losing my connections with others.	
9	I don't feel comfortable opening up to other people.	
10	I often wish that others' feelings for me were as strong as my feelings for them.	
11	I want to get close to others, but I keep pulling back.	
12	I often want to merge completely with other people, and this sometimes scares them	

	away.	
13	I am nervous when other people get too close to me.	
14	I worry about being alone.	
15	I feel comfortable sharing my private thoughts and feelings with others.	
16	My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away.	
17	I try to avoid getting too close to others.	
18	I need a lot of reassurance that I am liked and appreciated by other people.	
19	I find it relatively easy to get close to other people.	
20	Sometimes I feel that I force others to show more feeling, more commitment.	
21	I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on others.	
22	I do not often worry about being abandoned.	
23	I prefer not to be too close to other people.	
24	If I can't get others to show interest in me, I get upset or angry.	
25	I tell others just about everything.	
26	I find that other people don't want to get as close as I would like.	
27	I usually discuss my problems and concerns with other people.	
28	When I'm not connected to people, I feel somewhat anxious and insecure.	
29	I feel comfortable depending on others.	
30	I get frustrated when others are not around as much as I would like.	
31	I don't mind asking other people for comfort, advice, or help.	
32	I get frustrated if others are not available when I need them.	
33	It helps to turn to others in times of need.	
34	When other people disapprove of me, I feel really bad about myself.	
35	I turn to other people for many things, including comfort and reassurance.	
36	I resent it when others spend time away from me.	

[Job Satisfaction: Overall Job Satisfaction (Hackman and Oldham, 1975)]

7. Each of the statements below is something that a person might say about his or her job. You are to indicate your own, personal feelings about your job by marking how much you agree with each of the statements.

Instructions: Please read each statement below and indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement by choosing the appropriate number based on the strength of your feeling to each statement. E.g. If you strongly disagree with this feeling, mark 1 in the option after the statement; If you strongly agree with this feeling, mark 7 in the option after the statement. Otherwise mark a number between 2-6 if you fall somewhere in between.

Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Disagree Slightly	Neutral	Agree Slightly	Agree	Agree Strongly
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

How much do you agree with this statement?

1.	My opinion of myself goes up when I do this job well.	
2.	Generally speaking, I am very satisfied with this job.	
3.	I feel a great sense of personal satisfaction when I do this job well.	
4.	I frequently think of quitting this job.	
5.	I feel bad and unhappy when I discover that I have performed poorly on this job.	

6.	I am generally satisfied with the kind of work I do in this job.	
7.	My own feelings generally are not affected much one way or the other by how well I do on this job.	

[Employee Engagement: Short form UWES-9 (Shaufeli & Bakker, 2004)]

8. The following 9 statements are about how you feel at work.

Instructions: Please read each statement carefully and decide if you ever feel this way about your job. If you have never had this feeling, cross the '0' (zero) in the space after the statement. If you have had this feeling, indicate how often you feel it by crossing the number (from 1 to 6) that best describes how frequently you feel that way.

	Almost never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often	Always
0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Never	A few times a year or less	Once a month or less	A few times a month	Once a week	A few times a week	Every day

1.	At my work, I feel bursting with energy	
2.	At my job, I feel strong and vigorous	
3.	When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work	
4.	I am enthusiastic about my job	
5.	My job inspires me	
6.	I am proud on the work that I do	
7.	I feel happy when I am working intensely	
8.	I am immersed in my work	
9.	I get carried away when I'm working	

[Commitment: Affective, Normative and Continuance Employee- Organizational Commitment Scale (Meyer et al, 1993)]

9. The following 19 statements are about how you feel about the organisation with which you work.

Instructions: Please read each statement carefully and choose the appropriate number based on the strength of your feeling to each statement e.g. If you strongly **disagree** with this feeling, mark **1** in the option after the statement; If you strongly **agree** with this feeling, mark **7** in the option after the statement. Otherwise mark a number between 2-6 if you fall somewhere in between.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree						Strongly Agree

1.	I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career in this organisation.	
2.	I really feel as if this organisation's problems are my own.	
3.	I do not feel like "part of the family" at my organisation.	
4.	I do not feel "emotionally" attached to this organisation.	
5.	This organisation has a great deal of personal meaning for me.	
6.	I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my organisation.	
7.	It would be very hard for me to leave my organisation right now, even if I wanted to.	
8.	Too much of my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave my organisation right now.	
9.	Right now, staying with my organisation is a matter of necessity as much as desire.	
10.	I believe I have too few options to consider leaving this organisation.	
11.	One of the few negative consequences of leaving this organisation would be the scarcity of available alternatives.	
12.	If I had not already put so much of myself into this organisation, I might consider working elsewhere.	
13.	I do not feel any obligation to remain with my current employer.	
14.	Even if it were to my advantage, I do not feel it would be right to leave my organisation now.	
15.	I would feel guilty if I left my organisation now.	
16.	This organisation deserves my loyalty.	
17.	I would not leave my organisation right now because I have a sense of obligation to the people in it.	
18.	I owe a great deal to my organisation.	
19.	If I had not already put so much of myself into this organisation, I might consider working elsewhere.	

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. If any of the questions have caused you any concerns please contact the support services listed below

The Samaritans:

