

The Impact of Social Media and Attachment Style in Long-Distance Intimate Overall Relationship Satisfaction and Conflict

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Abstract. Social media has become a prevalent channel for communication in the modern era. Long-distance couples must keep or improve their overall level of relationship satisfaction. Most earlier studies examined how an individual's attachment types and use of social networking sites (SNS) affect the evaluation of long-distance relationship satisfaction separately. There is insufficient data for identifying how satisfaction is affected when subjective (attachment styles) and objective (social media) factors are combined. This study aims to examine the shortcomings of past studies. According to this analysis, the couple's assessment of how satisfied they are with their relationship and their personal decisions made on social media are moderated by attachment style. Individuals with diverse attachment styles might disclose themselves in different ways, require varying degrees of intimacy, and view love relationships in various manners. Additionally, this article, including various methodological and hypothesis suggestions, will lay the groundwork for future research.

Keywords: Attachment Style; Social Media; Long-distance Relationship.

1. Introduction

Admittedly, the most prevalent methods of communication with others are by phone or in person [1]. With the advancement of social networks, communication technologies have become inevitable in daily life, offering a convenient way to share personal experiences or resolve conflicts between partners, whether they are geographically close or distant. People who are separated by cities or nations owing to their pursuit of academic or business success with their partner or family members have become increasingly popular in recent years, and they rely significantly on digital communication platforms like as Twitter, TikTok, and WeChat. Long-distance relationship (LDR) satisfaction is determined by objective and subjective characteristics [2], namely communication channels [3], and attachment type [4].

Most studies examine the independent effects of attachment types and social networking sites (SNS) on LDR satisfaction. Yet, social media categories are external independent factors that affect relationship satisfaction, while coping strategies and attachment patterns moderate this interaction. When the personal attachment and social media they use frequently are combined, it suggests that people actively exploring themselves are more satisfied in love relationships [5]. For instance, texting improves relationship happiness [6], while email prevents couples from having deeper conversations [7]. The correlation between social media forms and satisfaction with relationships could be moderated by personal attachment styles. Specifically, anxious individuals tend to prefer texting and sending emails to their partner [8], whereas those with a fearful attachment style are more prone to SNS addiction [9] and experience stress regarding their romantic relationships [4]. Whereas individuals who are securely attached do not show a preference for specific social media [9].

Other than attachment style and social media, there are additional variables that affect the varying degrees of relationship satisfaction assessments of persons who are close by and separated. In other words, the communication strategy is essential. It appears that people who are separated by distance do not perceive their relationship as being less satisfying than couples in geographically close [2], and some couples who live in different cities and countries can benefit from distance [10]. Given that words can sometimes misrepresent context, phone or text communications can either enhance or

diminish couples' relationship satisfaction [3]. In total, this paper would examine the limitations of earlier research that measured the satisfaction of long-distance relationships through media platforms or attachment styles separately. The analysis would provide methodological suggestions and hypotheses for future research, such as determining the impact of combining social media forms and attachment styles on relationship satisfaction and using the Uncertainty Management Theory (UMT) and the communication techniques provided by Maguire [11] and du Plooy & de Beer [12], couples can have more productive and positive talks about the future or everyday life.

2. The Elements that Would Affect the Satisfaction Assessment of Long-Distance Relationship

The four different attachment styles hold different attitudes toward relationship satisfaction. For instance, a secure attachment style is associated with greater trust, satisfaction, less stress, and less anxiety than an insecure attachment style in LDR [4]. Dainton and Aylor's [3] study states that telephone use is positively linked with relationship maintenance behaviors as well as commitment and satisfaction in the relationship. Given the insufficient findings on the combination of attachment style and social media use, diversity impacts long-distance intimate relationship satisfaction. This paper will analyze the previous article that proposes attachment style and different media use influence relationship satisfaction respectively and offer suggestions for future studies that attachment style serves as the moderator that would influence an individual's social media choice and then impact the overall evaluation of satisfaction.

2.1. Objective Factor: Social Media

Intimate relationships significantly impact people's lives, with both positive and negative outcomes. The most common way for individuals to communicate is via their phone or in person [1]. However, people who are in a long-distance relationship tend to rely heavily on social media for interaction. Alinejad [13] notes that social media offers emotional affordance, enabling individuals to emotionally connect with distant family members. Thus, emotional affordance—which gives people the emotional experience of communicating with their distant family members via social media—mediates the emotional connection between family members when they engage digitally. Furthermore, relationship satisfaction is linked to variance in communication methods, that is, the richer communication technology is used the more people would be satisfied in their lives and relationships while the strength of evaluation depends on different kinds of relationships. However, the variety of social media used is not the mere reason to enhance satisfaction [14]. The limitations of reduced physical contact and daily communication make long-distance relationships challenging. The relationship maintenance behavior (RMB) is essential in intimate relationships because it refers to the positive behavior that promotes trust and closeness between couples. Rabby [1] identified four groups to categorize participants: Cyber Emigrant, Pinocchios, Real World, and Virtuals. The result states that all participants in each group perform more RMBs when the commitment level is high. Virtual groups, which are made up of individuals who have only ever met online, report engaging in fewer RMBs, which indicates a lower level of commitment.

2.2. Subjective Factor 1: the Coping Strategy

Considering the instability of long-distance relationships, couples often need coping strategies to maintain their satisfaction levels. Maguire [11] conducted a study on the impact of uncertainty on long-distance couples. According to the study, when people are unsure about whether to live in the same city, they become more distressed and less satisfied, and rate communication coping mechanisms lower. When future assessments are taken into consideration, uncertainty is not a problem. Participants in the certain group claim that openness and assurance approaches are more beneficial than those in the slightly uncertain and uncertain groups. This finding indicates a correlation between maintenance strategies and decreased relationship uncertainty.

2.3. Subjective Factor 2: Attachment Style

Aside from coping methods causing the couple to evaluate relationship satisfaction differently. The parallel element, attachment style also functions as the moderator to the satisfaction, which could be associated with negative RMBs for example, jealousy, spying or infidelity [15] as well as influence mental health in married couples that would cause depression and anxiety for both female and male before and after giving birth if they have insecure attachment style. Also, males receiving insufficient partner support are more likely to be diagnosed with anxiety [16]. Bouchard et al. [17] employed the actor-partner interdependence mediation model to explore the influence of RMB and attachment style on relationships. By using the RMBs as the mediator between participants with anxious or avoidant attachment style and their relationship quality, the obtained statement is that the quality of a relationship is influenced by the actions, perceptions, and emotions of the partner. Individuals who belong to different attachment styles would require different levels of intimacy and involvement while the people with Preoccupies and Secures style would convey more trust, vocal pleasantness and attentiveness [18]. Conflicts are common in long-distance couples daily; it could result in positive outcomes if individuals engage in problem-solving via social media or could be negative to relationship satisfaction if couples are unwilling to communicate. The problem-solving behavior of each attachment style would be varied. Jang et al. [19] argue that when deciding whether to continue or terminate the relationship after notice of deception, secure individuals tend to talk about the issue, while Anxious people are more likely to talk around the problem and avoidant people are most likely to avoid their partner after notice they have deceived by the partner. When finding how the attachment style impacts conflict resolution behavior, Shi [20] stated that anxiety and avoidant can predict dominating and obliging in conflict resolution behavior and males tend to avoid conflict more than females.

3. Communication Patterns and Social Media Choices in Connection to An Individual's Attachment Style and Their Effect on Relationship Satisfaction

Guerrero [18] studied the differences in attachment style and their link to closeness and participation. It indicated that attachment style differences became more obvious during longer conversations and in more personal circumstances. As an instance, some LDR persons are likely to choose a day on the weekend when they are both free and make a phone or video chat to discuss their weekday activities. Given the parallel influence of coping strategies and attachment styles on the degree of relationship satisfaction. Thus, the attachment style would be the candidate moderator in addition to coping strategies. The forthcoming analysis will assess relationship satisfaction in relation to an individual's social media and communication strategy choices, influenced by their distinct attachment style.

3.1. Secure Attachment Style

Individuals with a secure attachment to their partner do not use or prefer a specific type of social network site (SNS) and increasing their usage of the online website has a negative correlation with their perceived loneliness while increasing their evaluation of life satisfaction [9]. Lin's [21] study, however, discovered that people who are higher in secure attachment tend to have a greater possibility to use Facebook since it leads to a better level of satisfaction with connection desires and greater beneficial psychological effects. Moreover, Oldmeadow et al. [22] stated that securely attached individuals use Facebook positively, being outgoing, sociable, and more open to online self-disclosure. For instance, they are more willing for others to view their online profile and hold an optimistic attitude toward their profile, also, to browse or post on Facebook when they are in a good mood. This scenario demonstrates that people who continuously express information about themselves are associated with openness and enthusiasm toward Facebook, and this propensity leads them to continue using Facebook. Given the high level of expressiveness among individuals in the secure attachment group, Weger and Polcar [23] demonstrated that secure people are more comfortable in their ability to form and sustain relationships through communication. Using the Affinity-seeking competence sub-scale, secure individuals have a stronger belief that they are

attractive to others when socializing. Being outgoing [22], they prefer communicating in relaxed settings, finding discussions more rewarding by assuming honesty and authenticity in others. Moreover, the systems for interpreting others for secure persons are more sophisticated than for insecure folks. As a result, their comparatively higher self-confidence could help them cope with anxiety while also trusting others and believing in their potential to establish and maintain personal relationships. Self-disclosure, which is incorporated in couples' everyday conversations, is a crucial factor that influences their relationship satisfaction. Imai et al. [5] employed an actor and partner model to investigate how women's and men's self-disclosure and self-uncertainty affect relationship satisfaction. The findings imply that when women are less confused about themselves, their self-disclosure is favorably related to their view of relationship satisfaction. Meanwhile, when females discuss themselves more, their partners' confusion about themselves decreases, and the woman's relationship satisfaction improves.

3.2. Anxious Attachment Style

For individuals with an anxious attachment style, using social networking sites is crucial, as frequent social media use is linked to greater intimacy and support [8]. Another reason would be that those who have relationship anxiety always look for confirmation from their spouse; social media provides them with a means of sustaining their love relationship while also allowing them to receive comments from others to prevent exclusion [24]. Rejection and criticism from other people can have unfavorable effects. Evolutionary psychology suggests that being rejected by one's group can have catastrophic consequences in the wild, including death. Individuals strive to avoid isolation and rejection by heeding the signals from others. Therefore, to be accepted by family, friends, or a spouse, a person must continue to gain the favor of other group members. People also need to avoid acting in a way that would make them unpopular with others and find solutions to any issues that may arise. Daily criticism is prevalent and often delivers negative value, which affects a person's acceptability and relational valued traits. Even when criticism is directed at a specific person, it still shows that the critics do not respect their rapport with the target [25]. In line with those who feel secure, anxious people report spending more time on Facebook, which gives them the chance to interact with others [21]. However, because they are sensitive to criticism, those with an anxious attachment type use Facebook more when they are feeling down and pay closer attention to how other people view them on social media platforms [22]. When communicating with their spouse who is separated by distance or when they are less devoted, worried people with addictions often text; yet the quantity of texts sent each day relates to the couple's age and degree of separation [26]. According to Morey et al. [8], the preference for Facebook and messaging stems from earlier postings that are documented by a letter or photo. This allows nervous people to reread these posts and feel more secure about their spouse during times of dispute or uncertainty. Holtzman et al. [6] found that longer-distance couples who text their partners more often report higher levels of satisfaction with their relationships. Even while texting cannot provide the same visual and auditory clues as a video call, anxious people nevertheless utilize it. Despite its limitations, couples in long-distance relationships willingly use texting to mimic the engagement of in-person interactions.

3.3. Avoidant Attachment Style

Individuals with high levels of avoidant attachment tend to avoid intimacy and closeness. According to Blackwell et al. [24], people might think they have no reason to utilize social media and are not as engaged in establishing and sustaining relationships. In the study by Morey et al. [8], avoidant people communicate with their partners via email daily, which increases the likelihood of conflict. Concerning the possibility that a disagreement might undermine marital happiness, email is less personal and allows one to maintain emotional distance from a partner because it primarily consists of non-verbal communication, making it difficult for recipients to discern their partner's mood and attitude. Nevertheless, the avoidant attached person's spouse might have used a communication technology other than email to engage in self-disclosure, which could lead to conflict with differing opinions about social media choices. People with high avoidance attachments report using Facebook

less because they are overly worried about what other people will think of them, even autonomous [22]. Additionally, avoidant users use SNS less frequently and concentrate more on parasocial contact, which is linked to a higher degree of SNS addiction. It makes sense that dismissive users would choose asymmetric connections on social networking sites since they tend to distance themselves from other people, and more compulsive usage of social networking sites [9]. Texting and email are alike in transmitting non-verbal communication. It is a practical way for people in LDR to keep connected in that they may express their immediate thoughts with their spouse yet cannot focus on a deeper level. Due to a lack of verbal cues and interaction, avoidant persons are likely to be unwilling to discuss the issue in their relationship, which can lead to a false idealization and perception of their perception. Contrary to emails or texts, phone calls allow voice and tone to be conveyed, enhancing communication accessibility and leading to greater satisfaction in personal relationships [7].

3.4. Fearful Attachment Style

Fearful attachment can lead to anxiety and avoidance in long-distance relationships [4]. They prefer online platforms for social contact and collective behavior because they constantly worry about being abandoned by others, and they are less likely to affiliate with people [9]. Ma et al. [27] use a mixed factorial design to assess the degree of self-disclosure at various levels of intimacy, including whether the poster is anonymous and how close the relationship is to the poster. The findings indicated that online social relationships lead to greater self-disclosure by the poster compared to situations where the audience is closely related. Meanwhile, when posters are required to use their actual identities while posting, it demonstrates a regulating effect of intimacy on self-disclosure, which would lead to individuals being more comfortable sharing positive valence items than negative ones. Similar to the argument made by Baek et al. [9], while disorganized individuals are less nervous and fearful while interacting with others on SNS than in in-person face-to-face situations, it can nevertheless lead to a higher risk of addiction. Furthermore, there is remaining a higher likelihood that they may endorse increased stress in intimate relationships [4], which would lower relationship satisfaction.

4. Recommendation for Future Research and Long-Distance Couples

Considering the limitations of the earlier research, which failed to examine how merging social media and attachment styles affected LDR satisfaction. This article examines how an individual's attachment style affects their choices on social media platforms, which in turn affects the couple's satisfaction. It shows that Individuals with secure attachment do not show a significant tendency on particular social media [9] and are more likely to disclose themselves on Facebook; those who are anxiously attached are more likely to use Facebook but are more concerned about how they presented in social media [22] and constantly need confirmation from their partner [24]; those with the avoidant attachment style use email frequently [8] and are unwilling to discuss the problem in their relationship [7], which could probably worsen their relationship while people who belong to the fearful attachment style prefer to use social media for social interaction and are more relaxed from them to discuss online rather than in person [9] Couples in the Long-Distance Relationship (LDR) who report a lesser degree of distress, greater distance, and greater relationship confidence also report better levels of proximity, loyalty, and disclosure in their sexual interactions [2].

Dainton & Aylor [3] found that increased phone use boosts commitment and satisfaction in LDRs. Couples that engage in face-to-face communication, such as video calls, are more likely to maintain their shared tasks, promises, and openness. People who are insecure about their intimate relationships would rather get vocal promises rather than in writing. However, for couples who are separated by country and cannot afford the high cost of a plane ticket, in-person meetings are difficult. As a result, people depend increasingly on inexpensive templates that allow them to express their emotions via letters. Considering that people who are anxious and attached are more willing to use texting [3], Researchers Schade et al. [28] discovered that relationship satisfaction is negatively correlated with people who use text messages to hurt their partners, but partner attachment can help mediate the negative relationship effect and positively associated with people who show affection. This trend

varies depending on the gender of the participants: women who use texting to manage their relationships are negatively correlated with their contentment, but men's attachments are likely to foster expression and relationship satisfaction. According to this study, women may be able to communicate in ways other than words because they have fewer helpful cues to gauge their partner's feelings or thoughts. Nonetheless, not all couples are eager for frequent meetups or daily phone conversations, even without financial constraints. They view the distance as a benefit since it allows them to concentrate more on their own needs, whether those are related to their family, their career, or their studies. One participant, for example, mentioned that seeing their partner during the only school break—when they are meant to be spending time with family—costs both time and money [10].

Regarding uncertainty, Maguire [11] notes that the Uncertainty Management Theory (UMT) proposes that future possibilities should be evaluated prior to determining whether uncertainty is problematic. Furthermore, research by Cameron and Ross [29] on negative affectivity (NA) and relational security predicts the ending of long-distance relationships. The results indicate that males' higher security evaluations have a significant association with relationship continuity and that negative affectivity has a greater impact on relational stability only in geographically remote situations. The explanation offered is that women typically have more enthusiasm about the future of their relationships, have a greater trust in their spouses, and expect their partners to be more supportive.

Communication between partners is crucial for maintaining or enhancing their relationship happiness. According to du Plooy & de Beer [12], a couple ought to initiate small talk and show passion with both verbal and nonverbal cues. The explanation for this is that people would interpret nonverbal clues more to better understand their partner's main idea and the context of the conversation [30]. Couples are also encouraged to engage in positive interactions and practice constructive communication techniques, such as actively responding, expressing affirmation, and switching the pronoun "you" to "I" throughout a conversation [12].

Finally, this study provides the researcher with a methodology and hypothesis that evaluate the future effects of the combination of media platform kinds and attachment styles on satisfaction. Specifically, Fearful people may use more social media platforms to stay satisfied with their relationships., social media is the independent variable that would be moderated by an individual's attachment style, while satisfaction is the dependent variable. The frequency, duration, and forms of use of social media by various sorts of attached individuals can be documented in the research data. The following hypothesis could be: 1) Relationship satisfaction is better in secure individuals who communicate with their partner less frequently. 2) Those who are anxiously attached have a greater variety for communicating with their partners on media sites. This would provide an explanation indicating if attachment type influences which social media an individual would use to connect with partners. Further, an experiment could be conducted. The participant is in control of how often and for how long they use the network; they can connect with their partner on one or more different kinds of communication platforms. Individuals with fearful attachment might use multiple social media platforms to maintain relationship satisfaction. This study can show a relationship between LDR happiness and the amount of social media use that is regulated by attachment style.

5. Conclusion

Future research would expand on the work presented in this study. According to the examination, the LDR couple's assessment of their overall relationship satisfaction and their own social media decisions to communicate with their partner are influenced by their attachment style. Specifically, people have a predilection for particular categories of social network sites based on their attachment styles and intimate connection sentiments might also differ across individuals with different attached patterns. Furthermore, the coping strategy is essential for maintaining or enhancing the enjoyment of a relationship. However, this paper does not examine the moderating impact of coping strategies and relationship maintenance behaviours (RMBs) on the LDR. As a result, this report presents some

theories for additional research. Future studies would need to concentrate on the possible effects of the combination of social media and attachment styles on couples' assessments of their degree of relationship satisfaction.

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