



Avoidant Attachment Style And Emotional Competence As Predictors Of Subjective Well-Being Among University Students

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Abstract: The current research investigated the predictive value of avoidant attachment style and emotional competence on subjective well-being in a sample of university students. Avoidant attachment style is associated with the experience of discomfort in emotional proximity, and the emotional competence is the ability of recognition, expression, and successful management of emotions. Subjective well-being is an important measure of mental health that reflects individuals' feelings about their emotional state and overall life satisfaction. A sample of 104 students from a university in Agra city, aged between 18 and 23, was evaluated using standardized assessments: the Measure of Attachment Style (MOAS), the Emotional Competence Scale, and the Subjective Well-Being Inventory (SUBI). The results of the regression analysis showed that the avoidant attachment style did not significantly predict subjective well-being, while emotional competence had a positive and significant relationship.

Keywords: Avoidant Attachment Style, Emotional Competence, Subjective Well-Being, University Students

INTRODUCTION

The university represents a phase of growth where the primary shared outcome is the academic pressure felt; the formation of connections and a notable evolution of one's personality. The subjective well-being is very important at this critical stage to help the students cope with the stressful issues and to keep them motivated too as it helps them to have a feeling of life satisfaction. Among the psychological factors that lead to well-being, attachment style and emotional competence are very critical. The avoidant attachment style, characterized by the inability to feel at ease in emotional intimacy and a wish to maintain distance in human interaction can prevent the establishment of positive relationships, which reflects on the state of mental health. Conversely, emotional competence including proper recognition of emotions and perception of emotion and its expression as well as its control facilitate better interpersonal performance and resilience. The greater the emotional competence of the students, the easier they will break through the hurdle, enjoy good social relations and have inner satisfaction with life. Acquiring the information on how avoidant attachment pattern may relate to emotional competence and subjective well-being within the population of university students will become a valuable source of information as to how the interpersonal patterns and emotional skills may influence overall mental and emotional well-being.

The attachment theory developed by **Bowlby in 1969** outlines the historical roots of interpersonal patterns accompanying an individual throughout his or her life based on the relationship between primary caregivers and children. **Ainsworth et al. (1978)** developed the three canonical attachment orientations based on the formulations of Bowlby including industries in a system of attachment which are secure, anxious/ambivalent, and avoidant. The avoidant style is characterized by a feeling uncomfortable within intimacy, self-reliance preference, and hindering emotional needs (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) and is usually formed in case of unavailable or insensitive care systems (Bowlby, 1988; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). The research carried out by **Calvo, D Aquila, Rocco, and Carraro (2020)** investigates the important connection between attachment styles and subjective well-being in college students, indicating that a secure

attachment style correlates with higher quality of well-being, while insecure or avoidant styles are linked to distress and lower life satisfaction. Previous studies highlight that attachment plays a crucial role in determining both mental health and subjective well-being, particularly among students facing academic and social pressures.

Emotional competence contains the ability to understand emotions as well as the essential skills of expressing and controlling the emotions. According to **Goleman (1995)**, emotional competence consists of a conglomerate of capabilities and comprises of emotional intelligence along with self-management and inspiration and aspiration. With these abilities people can effectively manage not only their social relation but also stressful times by choosing the right path. Individuals who become emotionally competent have better subjective well-being since the capabilities increase their mental strength and enable them to relate effectively with others in aspects that make them satisfied with life. The findings from the study by Chowdhury, Mukherjee, and Debroy (2023) emphasize how emotional competence in young adults enhances resilience and overall life satisfaction. The results of the research reveal the evidence of emotional competencies as the main drivers to the enhanced mental health and overall well-being of the learners with academic and social issues.

Subjective well-being (SWB) refers to how individuals evaluate their own lives, encompassing both cognitive assessments of life satisfaction and emotional evaluations of positive and negative feelings (Diener, 1984; Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999). In their research, Diener et al. (2018) describe SWB as how people view and react to their lives and various aspects and processes within them. **Ryan and Deci (2001)** argue that it is an essential indicator of psychological well-being, as it involves experiencing a high degree of positive emotions, minimal negative emotions, and overall life satisfaction. In a study conducted by **Peng, Patterson, and Wang (2023)**, research involving 479 college students aged 18 to 25 in the United States showed that both attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance are linked to subjective well-being. With a narrow focus on empathy and emotional competence, the researchers were able to identify that the two attachment dimensions negatively impacted well-being, particularly among young women. A decline in reappraisal contributed to understanding this connection, while suppression indicated no mediating effect. Although there is a reinforcement of the relationship between empathy and attachment, empathy itself did not mediate the connection between attachment and well-being.

And the aim of this study was to describe the relationship between avoidant attachment style and emotional competency and subjective well-being in university students in order to understand the interpersonal and emotional consequences of such variables on well-being. The results indicated that avoidant attachment was associated with lower emotional competence and diminished well-being, while interestingly, emotional competence correlated with life satisfaction. These findings serve as essential guidelines for developing strategies to mitigate the effects of insecure attachment without compromising emotional skills, as these skills play a significant role in fostering psychological resilience and enhancing overall life satisfaction during the important years of university education.

METHOD

Problem

To study the inter-relationship among avoidant attachment style, emotional competence and subjective well-being among university students.

Conceptual Framework

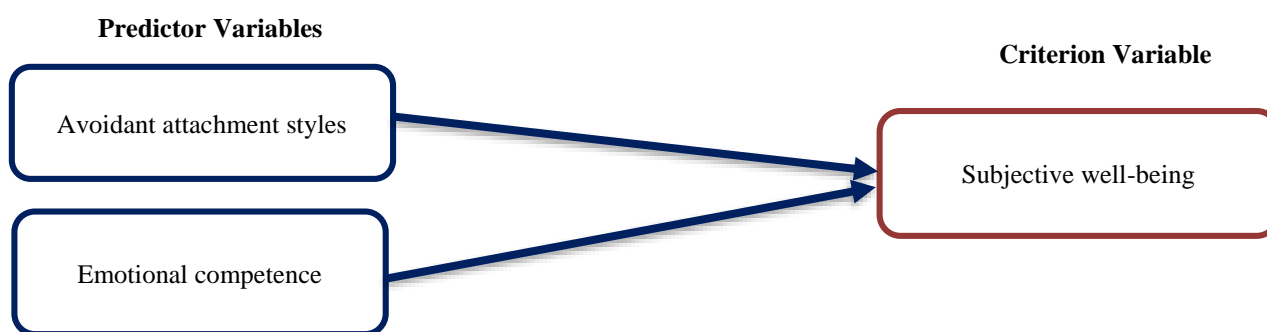


Fig 1. Conceptual framework is showing the contribution of attachment style, and emotional competence on subjective well-being.

Objectives

- 1) To study the relationship between avoidant attachment style and subjective well-being among university students.
- 2) To study the relationship between emotional competence and subjective well-being among university students.
- 3) To find out the relative contribution of avoidant attachment style and emotional competence in determination of subjective well-being among university students.

Hypotheses

- 1) Avoidant attachment style would be negatively related with subjective well-being among university students.
- 2) Emotional competence would be positively related with subjective well-being among university students.
- 3) Relative contribution of emotional competence would be much more remarkable as compared to avoidant attachment style in determination of subjective well-being among university students.

Variables

Predictor Variables

Avoidant attachment style and Emotional competence.

Criterion Variable

Subjective Well-being.

Design

A correlational research design was employed to examine the relationship between avoidant attachment style, emotional competence, and subjective well-being among university students.

Sample

104 university students (both males and females) were selected from Agra city.

TOOLS

1. **Measure of Attachment Style (MOAS)** – This is a 27-item scale developed by Ahmad, Jahan and Imtiaz (2016) which uses a 5-point Likert rating scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree). The Cronbach alpha of the scale is reported to be 0.80, and its validity was tested by using multi-collinearity and singularity tests through the determinant of the r -matrix (great than 0.00001).
2. **Emotional Competence Scale** – Sharma and Bhardwaj (1998) formulated a 30-item scale with a specific age range of participants of 13-44 years. Test-retest and split-half reliability were obtained which provided a coefficient of 0.76. It was validated by correlations with 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire (Factors A and C: 0.64 and 0.69).
3. **Subjective Well-Being Inventory (SUBI)** – This is a 40-item inventory of both positive and negative statements with ratings on a three-point scale; it was developed by Sell and Nagpal (1992). The reliability coefficients vary between 0.70 and 0.89, which means that the internal consistency is good and that stability across the time is good with the scores of 0.70 and 0.80. Related well-being measures have given 0.50 to 0.70 correlations that support the construct and concurrent validity.

Result and Discussion

Table 1

Correlation between Avoidant Attachment Style, Emotional Competence and Subjective Well-being

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	Avoidant attachment style	Emotional competence	Subjective well-being
Avoidant attachment style	28.64	4.378	1	.083	-.056
Emotional competence	87.68	14.372	.083	1	.454**
Subjective well-being	76.60	8.639	-.056	.454**	1

**p<0.01

The results of the Pearson correlation analysis (Table 1) demonstrated the statistically significant positive correlation between the emotional competence and subjective well-being ($r = 0.454$, $p < 0.01$). The avoidant attachment style and emotional competence showed a weak positive correlation ($r = 0.083$, $p > 0.05$) and the avoidant attachment style and subjective well-being had a weak negative correlation ($r = -0.056$, $p > 0.05$) that were not significant. This evidence indicates that emotional competence is positively correlated with the subjective well-being, and avoidant attachment style fails to demonstrate any meaningful connections with other variables.

Table 2

Results of Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple R	R square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error	Observations
.464	.215	.200	7.729	104

The value of Adjusted R square (0.200) (Table 2) denotes that 20% of the outcome of the variable depends on the predictor variables together. The multiple R value of 0.464 indicates a moderate positive correlation between the predictor and the outcome and at the same time the R square value (0.215) indicates that the model explains 21.5 percent of the total variance. A standard error of 7.729 depicts the average of the difference between the values that are predicted and those actually occurring.

Table 3

Analysis of Variance

ANOVA	df	SS	MS	F
Regression	2	1653.873	826.936	13.844
Residual	101	6033.165	59.734	

Table 4

Multiple Regression Coefficients

Variables	b	SE	Beta	t	r	Coefficient of Determination
Constant	57.552	6.592		8.731		
Avoidant Attachment Style	-0.185	0.175	-0.94	-1.062	-0.056	0.003
Emotional Competence	0.278	0.053	0.462	5.224	0.454**	0.215

**p<0.01

Multiple regression analysis showed that *Emotional Competence* had the highest contribution in determination of *Subjective Well-being*, with a coefficient of determination of 0.21.

REGRESSION EQUATION

$$Y = a + B_1X_1 + B_2X_2$$

$$Y = 57.552 + (-0.185) \times 28.64 + 0.278 \times 87.68$$

$$Y = 57.552 - 5.298 + 24.375$$

$$Y = 76.62$$

The obtained multiple regression equation stated that one unit increase in Avoidant Attachment Style (X_1) led to a decrease in Subjective Well-being scores by its respective coefficient (-0.185), while one unit increase in Emotional Competence (X_2) led to an increase in Subjective Well-being scores by its respective coefficient (0.278). The value of the constant is 57.552.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The first hypothesis which pointed out that Avoidant attachment style would have negative correlation with subjective well-being among university students was rejected. According to the results obtained in the present study, where the observed relationship between avoidant attachment and well-being was not significant ($r = -0.056$, $p > 0.05$), the students who tend to avoid might still obtain an appropriate level of well-being with the help of self-reliance or academic focus or independent goal-setting. This observation is aligned with that of Wei et al. (2005) who found that avoidant attachment did not always significantly predict low well-being because some individuals can build up compensation coping mechanisms. At the university level, there is a possibility that avoidant styles can be associated with students who are more interested in personal than interpersonal stressors, as measures to counterbalance the impact of attachment avoidance on well-being.

The second one, which was formulated as follows, Emotional competence would be found to be positively related to subjective wellbeing among university students), was accepted. A very strong positive correlation ($r = 0.454$, $p < 0.01$) shown that emotionally competent students enjoyed increased levels of well-being, as well. This is consistent with past findings by Brackett et al. (2006) who concluded that emotional awareness and emotional regulation skills are fundamental to well-being particularly in cases where there is an academic and social pressure. Being emotionally competent makes a student more resilient, handle the stress, and develop healthy relationships.

The third hypothesis, which was the relative contribution of emotional competence would be more than avoidant attachment style in predicting subjective well-being, was accepted. The emotional competence ($\beta = 0.462$, $p < 0.01$) contributed significantly and positively to the subjective well-being at 21.5 percent variance. Conversely, the avoidant attachment style ($\beta = -0.094$, $p > 0.05$) did not add significant values. These findings are consistent with the findings of Lopes et al. (2005), who proposed that emotional skills are more influential on well-being as opposed to attachment avoidance, especially among youthful adults. The regression equation for predicting subjective well-being was:

$$Y = 57.552 - 0.185 (X_1) + 0.278 (X_2)$$

where X_1 represents avoidant attachment style and X_2 represents emotional competence. This means that for each one-unit increase in emotional competence, subjective well-being scores increase by 0.278 points, while a one-unit increase in avoidant attachment style decreases well-being by 0.185 points.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The results of the current research reveal a few important implications on universities, counselors, and policymakers. As the emotional competence was revealed to be significantly and positively correlated with subjective well-being, universities are also advised to develop courses and workshops devoted to helping students become more emotionally competent in their awareness, regulation, and empathy. Group discussions, emotional intelligence training, and mindfulness sessions are some of the activities that could assist students to overcome stress and establish better interpersonal relationships.

There was no statistically significant relationship between avoidant attachment style and other variables, hence students with avoidant attachment style tend to seek self-reliance and autonomy in coping strategies very often. At the same time, this subgroup could have problems developing good interpersonal relationships. As a result, counseling centers may be facilitated as secretive areas where students may train their emotional openness and express their feelings of affection without constraint.

Emotional rather than cognitive competence turned out to be a better predictor of well-being. This means that there is a significant intervention point during this critical period of transition into university life that is a potentially less emotionally demanding time in the event of higher emotional demand in the future. Peer

mentoring plans, carefully arranged role plays, and reflective journals are just a few examples of planning strategies to be integrated into carefully designed curriculum to develop emotional competence.

Even in the study areas that require teamwork, leadership or decision systems that involve complicated processes, academic institutions can include emotional learning in the curricular frameworks. Universities are able to foster both emotional competence and high academic achievement by means of purposeful pedagogical design. This dual emotional-academic growth leads to self-sustainability in adults and will eventually result in long-lasting well-being.

CONCLUSION

The current research revealed a significant positive correlation between emotional competence and subjective well-being ($r = 0.454$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that students with high emotional competence are considerably more likely to experience higher levels of life satisfaction and psychological health. Conversely, no significant correlations were found between avoidant attachment style and either emotional competence or subjective well-being, suggesting that self-reliance, personal coping strategies, or academic focus may allow students to maintain their well-being despite tendencies toward avoidance. The regression analysis also indicated that emotional competence serves as a strong predictor of subjective well-being, accounting for 21.5 percent of the variance, while avoidant attachment style had minimal impact. These findings emphasize that fostering emotional skills in university students could be an effective approach to enhancing their well-being, resilience, and life satisfaction.

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