

## Impact of Attachment Style and Gender on Commitment Level and Attitude Toward Marriage among College Students

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Attachment styles, which are formed in initial interactions with caregivers, influence our emotional regulation, behaviour and attitudes throughout our lives. The purpose of this study is to investigate impact of attachment style as well as gender on commitment level in romantic relationships, along with attitude toward marriage among college students. The participants of this research were 300 college students (134 female and 166 male) selected by multistage sampling. The participants were heterosexuals aged 19 to 21 who had been romantically involved for a minimum of 6 months. Relationship Scales Questionnaire, developed by Griffin & Bartholomew, was utilized to assess the attachment style. Investment Model Scale developed by Rusbult, and General Attitudes toward Marriage Scale developed by Park and Rosén were utilized to measure the commitment level and attitude toward marriage, respectively. Data has been analysed by descriptive as well as inferential statistics. The study's findings showed there has been a significant relationship between Investment size, Satisfaction level, Commitment level and Attitude toward marriage among male as well as female college students. Results of ANOVA showed that Females invest to a greater extent and they have more positive attitude regarding marriage than Males. According to results, there is significant impact of Attachment style on commitment level as well as attitude toward marriage. The securely attached individuals have a positive attitude toward marriage.

**Keywords:** Attachment style, Romantic relationship, Commitment level, Attitude toward marriage.

John Bowlby first formulated the concept of Attachment in 1950s, additionally, it was later expanded by Mary Ainsworth and subsequent scholars. According to John Bowlby, attachment is "lasting psychological connectedness between human beings." Attachment is a type of emotional bond which infants build with their caregivers during their early stages of life. As the infants feel comfortable and protected with their caregivers, secure attachment is developed. Attachment theory offers a structure for comprehending how early bonding with caregivers impacts the expectations of individuals and their behaviour in intimate connections across their lives. The term

Attachment style refers to the unique way in which people connect with other people. Childhood attachment styles may have impact on individual's capacity to establish close ties with people as an adult. The attachment style could regulate the behaviour, emotion and thoughts of a person toward their partner. Four attachment styles, including Fearful, Secure, Preoccupied, as well as Dismissing, are based on expectations about self-worth and availability of others. An internalized feeling of self-worth is a characteristic of secure people. They are also comfortable being intimate in a close relationship. People who have a preoccupied attachment style feel unworthy, but they want

excessive closeness in personal relationships. People who are afraid are very dependent on other people to validate their importance. They also try to keep away from intimacy to avoid from pain of rejection. Dismissing people who have strong sense of self-worth while avoiding intimacy with others. They want to be detached and independent.

In general, people who are securely connected exhibit positive views of themselves and also their relationships. They feel at ease in intimacy as well as individuality, and have good communication skills, which assist them in resolving disagreements in their relationship. Conversely, people who have anxious-preoccupied attachment styles frequently exhibit a high dependence on their partners and develop rejection fears and may exhibit obsessive or demanding behaviours. Dismissive and avoidant people restrict their feelings and difficulties with intimacy. Fearful-avoidant attachment type individuals frequently have conflicting desires for autonomy and connection, which can lead to feelings of doubt and problems expressing trust in other people.

Stanley et al. (2010) state that commitment is described as a willingness to maintain a present relationship and make investments in it in order to make sure it continues. As per Johnson et al. (1999), fundamental concept of commitment comprises 3 separate experiences of commitment rather than being a single entity. First and foremost is personal commitment, indicating a strong desire to maintain a relationship. A few things that might lead to more personal commitment in a partnership include romantic attraction as well as relationship identity. Second, moral commitment is the belief that relationships ought to be maintained for moral reasons. People's moral commitment levels may be influenced by moral beliefs related to the

dissolution of a relationship and their propensity to conduct consistent lifestyles. Structural commitment is the third kind of commitment, which is feeling compelled to continue in a relationship despite one's personal or moral commitment.

According to the investment model, three key criteria influence whether a person is devoted to their romantic relationships, which in turn predict likelihood that the relationship will last: investment amount, quality of alternatives, as well as satisfaction level. (Rusbult, 1980)

By individual experiences with spouse, through seeing one's parents, or by witnessing others go through seeking as well as process of marriage, one might develop attitudes along with expectations regarding married life. Strongly rooted marital beliefs may have an impact on behaviour, and a strong negative marriage attitude can have an impact on relationship perspectives. Marital relationships are seen as pleasant and successful by individuals with deeply ingrained positive attitudes, whereas negatively established mindsets have fewer expectations for happiness (Riggio & Weiser, 2008).

Goslin (2014) explored young individuals' attitudes about marriage and plans to marry. The quantitative analysis method has been selected for this study, which comprised 200 participants: 100 males as well as 100 females between the ages of 19 and 33. Intent to Marry, General Attitude to Marriage, and Attitude Towards Marriage scales by Park and Rosen (2013) were administered, and demographic information was acquired. Results found that female participants reported a stronger propensity to marry someday than male participants. Women also favoured getting married before men. Additionally, it shows that youth with separated or divorced parents don't have a bad opinion of marriage. Though there is little

difference found among participants in terms of attitude toward marriage.

In another research, which was done by W. Matthew Shurts and Jane E. Myers in 2012, examined associations between university students' MMR (Marital Messages Received), RSE(romantic relationship self-efficacy), as well as marital attitudes. Sample of this research consisted of young individuals, aged 18 - 25, who had never married. Relationship Self-Efficacy Scale (RSES; Lopez & Lent, 1991), Marital Attitudes Scale (MAS; Braaten & Rosén, 1998), Marital Messages Scale (MMS; Shurts, 2005), as well as a demographic form, were used in this study. The study's findings revealed that gender-related differences were found to be significant. Women had a high score in Marital messages from other organizations, friends, and a total number of marital messages received; in terms of marital attitudes, women scored higher on average than men.

Bhavana and Roopa (2015) studied the attitudes of adolescents regarding marriage as well as its evolving tendencies. Sample comprised 300 adolescents (150 males as well as 150 females) aged 18 to 23. The investigator developed a questionnaire on different aspects of marriage and recent changes regarding the concept of marriage. The chi-square test and t-test were used in the analysis. According to the poll, most adolescents had a moderately positive perspective on marriage. Female respondents had more positive opinions on marriage and shifting marital trends than did male respondents. In comparison to female responses, male respondents revealed that this is on a moderate level. Additionally, attitudes toward marriage, social expectations, and evolving marital trends did not significantly differ between male and female respondents; however, perceptions of sexual relationships, marriage types, standards for selecting a life mate, as well

as particular intentions for a happy marriage, did differ significantly between male and female respondents.

Cheolwoo Park and Victor W. Harris in 2022 found out how different attachment styles (avoidant, secure, as well as anxious or ambivalent) influence attitudes toward marriage. They also investigate whether emotional intimacy mediates the relationship. The study included a sample of university students who completed various questionnaires, such as AAS(Adult Attachment Scale) to measure attachment types, MAS to assess perspectives on marriage, and EIS(Emotional Intimacy Scale) to assess levels of emotional intimacy. Results revealed that people who have a stable attachment style had a higher positive Attitude toward Marriage. This is due to their comfort with closeness and intimacy, as well as their trust in others. Those with avoidant attachment type were less likely to have positive attitude toward marriage, most likely because they were uncomfortable with proximity and preferred independence. People with anxious/ambivalent attachment style have contradictory attitudes. Need for intimacy conflicted with fear of rejection.

Purpose of this research is to examine Impact of attachment style along with gender on level of commitment in couple relationships, as well as attitude towards marriage among college students of Kolkata, as well as the interaction effects of the independent variables. Correlation among level of commitment in couple relationships along with attitude towards marriage in terms of attachment style, as well as gender among college students of Kolkata.

### **Hypotheses**

1. There will be no significant difference between Secure, Preoccupied, Fearful and Dismissing attachment style of college students of Kolkata in terms of Level of commitment in couple

relationship and Attitude towards marriage.

2. There will be no significant difference between Female and Male college students of Kolkata in terms of Level of commitment in couples and Attitude towards marriage.
3. There will be no significant difference among college students of Kolkata combining their attachment style and gender in terms of Level of commitment in couple relationship and Attitude towards marriage.
4. There will be no significant correlation between the variables (namely Level of commitment and Attitude toward marriage) among Secure, Preoccupied, Fearful and Dismissing attachment style college students of Kolkata.
5. There will be no significant correlation between the variables (namely, Level of commitment and Attitude toward marriage) among Male and Female college students of Kolkata.

### Method

#### Research Design:

A factorial research design is used in this present study to gain more understanding of the factors. To analyse both the main effect and interaction effect of attachment style along with gender commitment level in couple relationships, as well as attitude towards marriage among undergraduate college students of Kolkata, factorial research design is used.

Correlational Research Design is also employed to find out the Correlation between commitment level in couples' relationships and attitude towards marriage.

#### Sample

Sample consists of male as well as female college students of Kolkata who are in

romantic relationship for at least 6 months. Participants in this study had been from different colleges of North, Central and South zones of Kolkata. The participants included 300 students (134 Female and 166 Male; 159 secure, 51 preoccupied, 51 Fearful, 39 Dismissing) selected by multi-stage sampling. The age range of the sample is 19-21 years.

#### Tools

*The Relationship Scales Questionnaire (RSQ)*: This scale was developed by Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994. Reliability coefficients of 4 subscales (fearful, secure, preoccupied, as well as dismissing) are 0.69, 0.86, 0.88, 0.85

*Investment Model Scale (IMS)*- In 1998, Rusbult and his colleagues developed this scale. Alphas for Commitment Level, Satisfaction Level, Investment Size, as well as Quality of Alternatives varied from 0.91 to 0.95, 0.92 to 0.95, 0.82 to -88, and 0.82 to 0.84, respectively.

*General Attitudes toward Marriage Scale (GAMS)*: This 10-item measure has been formed by Park and Rosén (2013). The scale has an excellent consistency between items, 0.84 Cronbach's alpha

*General Health Questionnaire – 28 (GHQ-28)*: Goldberg created GHQ-28 in 1979. There have been reports of strong test-retest reliability (0.78 to 0.9), although it has been demonstrated that both intra-rater and inter-rater reliability are excellent, with 0.9 to 0.95 Cronbach's  $\alpha$

*Modified Kuppuswamy Socio-Economic Status Scale 2021*: The scale was constructed in 1976 by Kuppuswamy.

#### Results

The results of ANOVA for Level of commitment are presented in Table 3. As indicated in the table, there has been a significant effect of gender on Investment Size ( $F = 18.575$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $P < 0.000$ ). However, no significant effect of Gender has

been seen on Quality of Alternatives, Satisfaction Level, along Commitment Level. It is also observed that the Attachment style has significant impact on Satisfaction Level ( $F=510.936$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $Pd^*0.000$ ), Investment Size ( $F=98.343$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $Pd^*0.000$ ), Commitment Level ( $F=13.09$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $Pd^*0.000$ ). However, there has been no

significant impact of Attachment Style on Quality of Alternatives.

Moreover, results also show that there has been no significant interaction effect of Gender along with Attachment Style on Investment Size, Quality of Alternatives, Satisfaction Level, Commitment Level.

Table 1: Showing Mean along with SD(Standard Deviation) for variables (Satisfaction, Quality of Alternatives, Commitment Level, Investment size, Attitude toward Marriage) across Gender & Attachment Style:

Variables	Gender				Attachment style							
	Female		Male		Secure		Preoccupied		Fearful		Dismissing	
Level of commitment	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Satisfaction level	36.66	9.37	38.92	8.70	45.58	3.22	29.02	3.48	26.84	4.41	32.69	4.12
Quality of alternatives	12.28	4.32	14.80	5.75	12.75	5.28	13.61	5.17	14.94	5.17	15.87	4.96
Investment size	40.27	5.28	38.42	4.75	42.02	3.55	39.39	4.79	35.71	3.59	32.36	2.22
Commitment	35.87	5.63	34.12	5.53	36.30	5.29	34.22	4.54	34.39	6.21	30.77	5.37
Attitude Towards Marriage	37.01	8.55	36.43	8.31	43.25	4.72	30.57	5.31	30.08	3.39	26.59	4.21

Table-2: Showing main effect along with interaction effect of Attachment style and Gender on quality of alternatives, satisfaction level, investment size, and commitment level on college students' romantic relationships. (N=300)

Variables	Satisfaction Level			Quality of Alternatives			Investment Size			Commitment Level		
	F	df	Sig.	F	Df	Sig.	F	df	Sig.	F	Df	Sig.
Gender	1.42	1	.234	5.03	1	0.026	18.575	1	.000	3.16	1	0.076
Attachment Style	510.936	3	.000	1.160	3	0.325	98.343	3	.000	13.09	3	.000
Gender*Attachment style	0.187	3	0.905	0.107	3	.956	.565	3	.639	1.816	3	.144

Table-3: Showing main effect and interaction effect of Attachment style and Gender and Marriage attitudes on Kolkata College Students (N =300)

Variables	Attitude toward Marriage		
	F	Df	Sig
Gender	12.712	1	.000
Attachment Style	227.584	3	.000
Gender*Attachment style	1.370	3	.252

The results of ANOVA for Attitude toward marriage are presented in Table 4. As indicated in the table, there has been a significant effect of gender on Attitude toward Marriage ( $F=12.712$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $P d^*.000$ ). It is also observed that the Attachment style have significant impact on Attitude toward Marriage ( $F=227.584$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $P d^*.000$ ). Moreover, the results also revealed that there has been no significant interaction impact of Gender along with Attachment Style on Attitude toward Marriage.

Table-4: Showing the Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients Between Attitude Toward Marriage and Level of Commitment Among Undergraduate Students with diverse Attachment styles (Preoccupied, Fearful, Secure, Dismissing).

Variables Correlated with Attitude Toward Marriage	Secure (n=159)	Preoccupied(n=51)	Fearful(n=51)	Dismissing(n=39)
Satisfaction level	-.043	.053	-.007	.100
Quality of alternatives	.075	.025	.003	.134
Investment size	.111	-.104	.005	.179
Commitment level	.000	.204	-.151	.168

Pearson correlation coefficients between subscales of Level of Commitment, along with Attitude toward marriage, are presented in Table 4. According to what table shows that among various attachment styles, i.e. Preoccupied, Fearful, Secure, Dismissing, there is no significant relationship present between subscales of Level of Commitment and the Attitude toward marriage.

Table-5: Showing the Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients Between Attitude Toward Marriage and Level of Commitment Among Female and Male Undergraduate Students

Variables correlated with Attitude Toward Marriage	Female (n=134)	Male (n=166)
Satisfaction level	.695**	.773**
Quality of alternatives	.023	-.052
Investment size	.478**	.598**
Commitment level	.333**	.162*

\*  $p < 0.05$  level \*\* $p < 0.01$  level

Pearson correlation coefficients between the subscales of Level of Commitment and the Attitude toward marriage are presented in Table 5. As can be observed from table, there is a significant relationship between subscales of Level of Commitment and the Attitude toward marriage present among Female as well as Male students.

## Discussion

Results of ANOVA revealed that there is significant impact of Gender on Investment size and Attitude toward marriage, but there is no significant impact of Gender is found out on Commitment Level, Satisfaction level, as well as Quality of Alternatives. So, one may say that in a relationship, Females invest to a greater extent and they possess more positive attitude regarding marriage than Males. According to Perllioux's (2008) research, women experience more emotional loss after a breakup in a romantic relationship than men do. This is because women are more invested in maintaining a parental relationship, celebrating their partner's birthday, exhibiting care, as well as sharing more personal information. Males, on the other hand, are more committed to short-term mating relationships. The study found that women have a higher average score than males on measure of attitude toward marriage, which aligns with earlier research indicating that female students have more favourable marriage attitudes in comparison with male students (Klein, 2006). In another research, it was also found that compared to men, women have more positive sentiments regarding marriage (Bajaj & Vithal, 2021). It may be because women believe marriage can provide emotional support, company, and a sense of stability, which many women consider important and valuable in their lives. It is also observed that there is significant

impact of attachment style on Commitment Level, Satisfaction Level, Investment Size, and Attitude toward marriage. So, it can be said that significant differences were observed among Fearful, Preoccupied, Secure, along with dismissing attachment styles, regarding Satisfaction Level, Commitment Level, Investment Size, as well as Attitude toward marriage. In case of both males as well as females with secure attachment style, mean score is higher than other attachment styles. Result is aligned with the previous research where relationship between adult attachment types and Rusbult's investment relationship model was investigated. According to responses from 239 participants, those who are firmly attached have higher levels of satisfaction, lower costs, as well as greater commitment to their relationships compared to other attachment groups. (Pistole et al., 1995). People with secure attachment styles have positive relationship experiences with caregivers starting from their childhood, and they also develop a sense of trust. This sense of trust creates a foundation for committing to a partner without fear or insecurity. Results also revealed that persons having a stable attachment style have a more optimistic attitude toward marriage than the dismissing individuals. Attachment theory's underlying working models can explain these findings. Internal working models are created during childhood tend to persist over time as well as continue to shape behaviours in intimate, close, romantic relationships throughout one's life (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). People usually use their prior relationship experiences to predict, along with interpret, the emotions and behaviours of others towards them while they are establishing new relationships. Additionally, the romantic attachment styles of adults as well as actions closely resemble early forms of attachment. Because they perceive themselves as close, dependable, and supportive to others, as well as because they have an internal working

model based on a sense of felt-security, securely connected participants tend to have positive opinions of themselves along with their marriage partner, which results in favourable attitudes for marriage, according to research outcomes of current study. However, no significant combined impact of Gender and Attachment style was found on Satisfaction Level, Commitment Level, Quality of Alternatives, Investment Size, as well as Attitude toward Marriage.

Results of correlation analysis show a significant relationship exists among Attitude toward Marriage, as well as Investment size, Satisfaction level, Commitment level among Female as well as Male college students, but in case of various attachment styles, no significant correlation exists among Attitude toward Marriage as well as Level of commitment.

### **Conclusion**

The attachment style developed in childhood may have an impact on people's capacity to build deep relationships with others as adults. The attachment style could regulate the behaviour, emotion and thoughts of a person toward their partner. From the study, it can be concluded that there is significant impact of Attachment style on Commitment level as well as Attitude toward Marriage. It was also revealed that females invest more in a romantic relationship, and they also have more positive attitude toward marriage. This research can be key takeaways for policymakers and community leaders who want to reach younger generations more effectively and educate them about healthy relationship practices that may shift their attitudes toward marriage. The study highlights the advantages of secure attachment styles in relationships. Programs supporting secure attachments within family units and early childhood interventions may be associated with positive outcomes in adult romantic partnerships over the long term.

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