Preliminary Research on Attachment Styles and Flight Training Outcomes: A Qualitative Study

EMBRY-RIDDLE Aeronautical University.
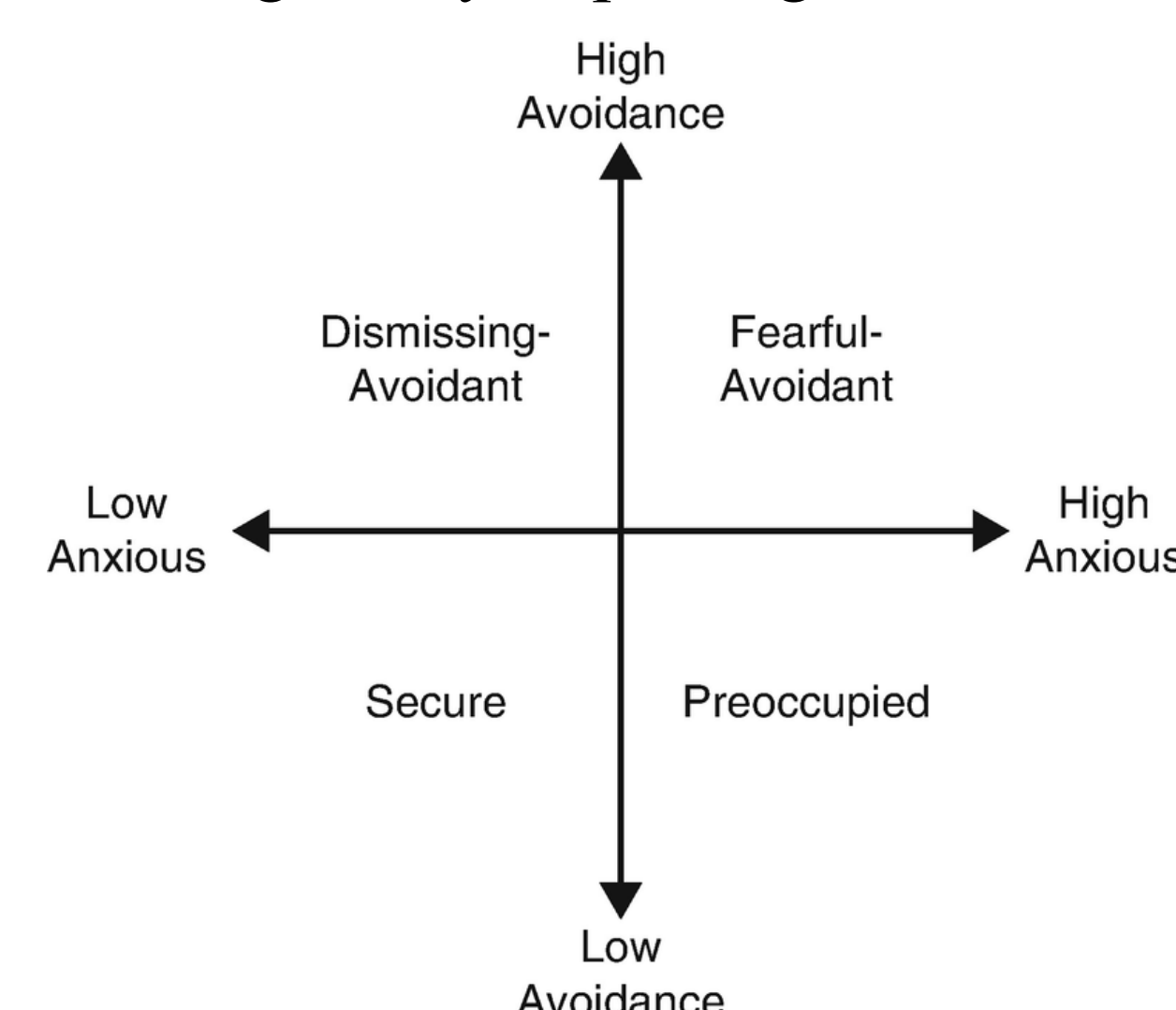
Dongguang Yu

INTRODUCTION

The attachment style theory was introduced by Bowlby (1988), which revealed the relationship between a child with their parents in the infantry age. Bowlby also discovered that an adult shares a relative same attachment style as their chairhood. There are four types of attachment styles, secure, preoccupied, dismissive, and fearful. The types other than the secure could also be grouped as the insecure. An adult individual could be identified into one of these four types by a valid questionnaire. Previously, the attachment style theory was utilized to research romantic relationships and family problems. Recent researches revealed that the attachment styles could also be a factor in an adult's personality, which affects one's self-esteem, and learning process (Doinita, 2015; Fleming, 2008; Mikulincer, 1997; Sagone et al., 2023).

This qualitative research investigated the relationship between attachment styles, as measured by the Attachment Style QuestionnaireShort Form and interviewed flight training outcomes among flight students. By using a mixed-method approach, we conducted surveys to assess attachment styles and interviewed flight students to explore their feelings and interactions with their instructors. This research would assess the impact and influence of each attachment style on their flight training outcome. This research aims to underscore the potential for attachment-informed strategies in future flight training programs to enhance student success and personal development.

LITERATURES REVIEW

- Thematic analysis identifies four attachment styles: secure, preoccupied, dismissive, and fearful.
- Young adults can be classified into these styles based on their positive or negative perceptions of themselves and others.
  - *Secure* adults have positive models of self and others, allowing them to feel comfortable in relationships.
  - *Dismissive* individuals have a positive self-model but a negative other model, leading to discomfort with closeness.
  - *Preoccupied* individuals have a negative self-model but a positive other model, expressing a need for intimacy while fearing rejection.
  - *Fearful* individuals have negative models for both themselves and others, leading to a fear of rejection and closeness.
- Attachment theory and research provide insights into adult learning and teaching, particularly in relation to transformative learning (Sagone et al., 2023).
- Attachment theory has primarily been used to study intimacy or family relationships.
- Research suggests that individuals with insecure attachment styles experience reduced safety and hindered learning (Fleming, 2008; Mikulincer, 1997) .
- Adults with insecure attachment styles may experience long-lasting emotional effects, negatively impacting their self-esteem (Doinita, 2015).

- To assist students with insecure attachment styles, a Learner-Instructor Alliance can be established
- The Learner-Instructor Alliance involves establishing a solid relationship, agreeing on goals and tasks, and fostering emotional connections.
- The concept of the learner-instructor alliance can also be applied to flight training.
- However, research on the effectiveness of attachment styles in flight training is needed.

METHODOLOGY

- This qualitative research involved conducting individual interviews and measuring attachment styles.
- To measure attachment styles, the Attachment Styles Questionnaire-Short Form (ASQ-SF) was used.
- The ASQ-SF is a five-point Likert scale questionnaire that condensed the original 40 questions of the Attachment Styles Questionnaire (ASQ) into 20 questions.
- Each style was represented by 2 to 3 questions reflecting an adult's attachment style (Feeney, 1994; Gillath et al., 2016).
- We modified the questionnaire by adding several questions related to flight training scenarios.
- During the interview portion, participants were asked about their flight training experiences, including their relationship with instructors, descriptions of trustworthy and supportive instructors, feelings during training with attractive instructors, personal life experiences, parent-child relationships, and family life.

RESULTS & CONCLUSION

- Attachment styles impact flight training outcomes over time.
- Individual flight students' self-image, self-esteem, and trajectory goals are influenced by attachment styles.
- Secure attachment boosts students' self-image, increasing confidence when facing failure or learning plateaus.
- Insecure attachment styles, like avoidant and fearful, lead to a negative outlook on flight training during plateaus.
- Attachment styles affect students' intimacy, including the ability to show and receive love. Insecure attachment styles result in nervousness or a lack of openness in intimacy with partners.
- More research is needed to explore attachment styles' impact on flight training outcomes, with a larger sample size.
- This study did not consider the instructor's attachment style, which may also affect flight training outcomes.
- Future research could investigate attachment styles in student-instructor pairs.

REFERENCES

Bowlby, J. (1988). *A secure base: Parent–child attachments and healthy human development*. New York: Basic Books.

Doinita, N. E. (2015). Adult attachment, self-esteem and emotional intelligence. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 187*, 570–574. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.03.106

Feeney, J. A., Noller, P., & Hanrahan, M. U. (1994). Assessing adult attachment. Attachment in Adult. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1994-98431-004

Fleming, T. (2008). A secure base for Adult learning: attachment theory and Adult Education. Adult Learner: The Irish Journal of Adult and Community Education. http://eprints.maynoothuniversity.ie/1072/2/TedFleming2008.pdf

Gillath, O., Karantzas, G. C., & Fraley, R. C. (2016). How are individual differences in attachment measured? In Elsevier eBooks. https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-0-12-420020-3.00005-0

Mikulincer, M. (1997). Adult attachment style and information processing: Individual differences in curiosity and cognitive closure. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 72*(5), 1217–1230. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.72.5.1217

Reio, T. G., Marcus, R. F., & Sanders-Reio, J. (2009). Contribution of student and instructor relationships and attachment style to school completion. *Journal of Genetic Psychology, 170*(1), 53–72. https://doi.org/10.3200/gntp.170.1.53-72

Sagone, E., Commodari, E., Indiana, M. L., & La Rosa, V. L. (2023). Exploring the Association between Attachment Style, Psychological Well-Being, and Relationship Status in Young Adults and Adults—A Cross-Sectional Study. *European Journal of Investigation in Health, Psychology and Education, 13*(3), 525–539. https://doi.org/10.3390/ejihpe13030040

Summerville, M. W. (2000). Attachment style in adult learning: Implications for the person-environment interaction. *University of Connecticut ProQuest Dissertations Publishing*. http://digitalcommons.uconn.edu/dissertations/AAI9964793

APPENDIX

The Attachment Style Questionnaire — Short Form Modified
A five-point Likert scale. Sum up the Likert score of each section to test the favorable attachment style.

Secure
- I trust other people and I like it when other people can rely on me.
- I feel at ease in intimate relationships
- I think it is important that people can rely on each other.
- I am satisfied with the overall progress of my flight training.
- The relationship between me and my instructor(s) was enjoyable, grateful, and satisfying.

Fearful-avoidant
- I would like to be open to others, but I feel I can't trust other people.
- I would like to have close relationships with other people, but I find it difficult to fully trust them.
- I'm afraid that my hopes will be deceived when I get too closely related to others.
- I am wary of getting engaged in close relationships because I'm afraid to get hurt.
- I feel uncomfortable when relationships with other people become close.

Preoccupied
- I often wonder whether people like me.
- I am often afraid that other people don't like me.
- I don't worry whether people like me or not.
- I often worry about my flight training progress.
- The relationship between me and my instructor often becomes nervous, stressful, or less trustworthy.

Dismissing
- It is important to me to be independent.
- I prefer that others are independent of me, and that I am independent of others.
- I like to be self-sufficient.
- I don't worry about being alone: I don't need other people that strongly.
- I would not love to study with others.