

**ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE**

Vol. 1, Issue. 1 (2026), pp. 10–26

Received: 20-04-2026 | Accepted: 27-04-2026 | Published: 20-05-2026

Emotional Dysregulation and Relationship Satisfaction in Fearful-Avoidant Attachment: -A Gender-Based Study on Young Adults

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The current research focused on the emotional dysregulation and relationship satisfaction of young adults pertaining fearful avoidant attachment style and how their interaction was affected by gender differences and attachment dimensions. A sample of 280 university students, aged 18-25, was surveyed using ECR-RS, DERS-16, and CSI-16. The findings suggested higher emotional dysregulation, average relationship satisfaction, and no statistically significant gender differences in these variables. Nevertheless, males displayed greater attachment avoidance, which was also the strongest negative factor leading to lower relationship satisfaction, along with emotional dysregulation that was inversely related to satisfaction especially when factors of emotional clarity and acceptance were involved. This research shows the pivotal role of avoidance and emotional awareness in determining relationship satisfaction.

Keywords: *Attachment Style, Fearful Avoidant Attachment Style, Relationship Satisfaction, Emotional Dysregulation, Gender Difference*

1. INTRODUCTION

Humans are inherently social in nature, with strong desire for emotional connections where romantic relationships hold particular significant place, especially during young adulthood as it is key period for developing intimacy, identity and sense of belonging. Psychologists extensively sought to understand why some individuals experience satisfying relationships while others struggle, with attachment theory offering an explanation by emphasising the role of early interactions with caregivers shaping later relationships

John Bowlby (1969,1982) introduced attachment theory to explain how individual's earliest interactions with their primary caregivers become internalised, creating an internal working model which leads to emotional regulation and means by which one may relate to others throughout life. In 1978, Ainsworth designed the Strange Situation experiment building upon Bowlby's research, to explore attachment behaviors such as :- secure, anxious, and avoidant. Later, in 1986, Main & Solomon proposed fourth category, disorganized attachment, which is marked by child's unpredictable behavior. Thus, these early attachment patterns continue to persist throughout adulthood, shaping how couples display emotional sharing, trust, and dependence on each other (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Research suggests that secure attachment patterns are associated with lesser conflict and mistrust, while insecure attachment styles are associated with heightened vulnerability, distress, and lower relationship quality. (Kharkwal & Hasan, 2023 ; Sharma & Kaushik 2024; Ashaq & Singh, 2024) Among insecure style, Fearful avoidant attachment, also known as disorganised attachment is regarded as the most complex style due to its paradoxical need for connection and fear of rejection whilst holding negative perceptions of oneself and others (Simpson & Rholes, 2002). Such attachment style arises as a consequence of unresolved trauma, loss, or inconsistent caregiving that results in disoriented behaviors and disruptions in emotional and attentional regulation (Williams et al., 2020; Simeon & Knutelska 2022). Furthermore, various studies have shown that such individuals have tendency to experience high levels of emotional distress such as inconsistency in their emotions switching between hyper-activation and suppression of their feelings (Maalouf et al., 2022; Civilotti et al., 2021) causing low satisfaction, high conflict, and instability in their relationships "(Singh et al., 2022; Kacar et al., 2025). Additionally, research indicates that women display elevated levels of emotional involvement and attachment anxiety, while men tend to show avoidant behaviors and emotional suppression (Barry et al., 2015; McRae 2018; Weber et al., 2022). Hence, these differences not only affect how one manages their emotions but also the degree of satisfaction they receive from their relationships. Hence, these differences not only affect how one manages their emotions but also the degree of satisfaction they receive from their relationships.

In essence, multiple themes such as attachment theory, emotion regulation, gender differences and romantic relationship satisfaction have been explored, which presents evidence that insecure attachment results in emotional dysregulation and low satisfactory relationships. Nonetheless, it also reveals some of the conceptual and methodological limitations of the field, such as (a) the fearful avoidant attachment has been hardly studied as a separate pattern , (b) the aspect of emotional dysregulation has been barely associated with romantic relationship satisfaction, (c) and gender focused analyses of fearful avoidant attachment have been almost entirely disregarded, especially among young adults.

This paper is a step towards filling this void by concentrating on young adults experiencing fearful-avoidant attachment style and looking at how emotional dysregulation and gender differences affect their relationship satisfaction. By combining these factors in a single model, the research intends to help expand the body of work on attachment and relationships, as well as offering knowledge that could be used in psychological treatments and relationship therapy.

Although, there is an extensive body of work discussing notion of attachment and its impact on mature relationships, there still are a few significant gaps that need to be addressed. Most of the existing studies have focused on general attachment patterns and only partly explored fearful avoidant attachment, especially among adult non clinical samples. Even though, insecure attachment has been identified as the source of dissatisfaction among relationships, yet the role of emotional regulation in fearful avoidant individuals, have not been analysed properly. Moreover, gender variations in attachment and emotional

difficulties were mostly studied independently and very few researches have examined how gender together with fearful avoidant patterns influences relational outcomes. Pertaining India, although some researchers have recently focused on attachment, emotional regulation, and relationship satisfaction, these factors are usually studied separately. Thus, a more integrated and culturally rooted study is necessary, one that focuses on fearful avoidant attachment and its association with emotional regulation and relationship satisfaction, which is the aim of the present paper.

Young adulthood is pivotal period where individuals develop their first intimate romantic relationships. Thus, it can impact on one's emotional and relational well-being over time. Fearful, avoidant attachment style is linked to the experience of inner emotional conflicts, fear of intimacy, and fluctuating relationships. However, it has been scarcely studied compared to the other attachment styles. On the other hand, dysregulation of emotions also causes more problems in the relationships. Besides that, differences in gender might lead to the way these problems are experienced and differently expressed. This paper aims to explore these aspects in order to enrich the attachment theory, to be used in the field of relationship interventions as well as to serve as a source of cultural insight for young adults.

Objectives

1. To examine gender differences in romantic relationship satisfaction and emotional regulation in young adults with a fearful-avoidant attachment style.
2. To investigate the association between fearful-avoidant attachment and romantic relationship satisfaction among young adults.
3. To analyse the relationship between emotional regulation difficulties and romantic relationship satisfaction among young adults with a fearful-avoidant attachment style.

Hypotheses

1. H1: Gender differences would significantly influence romantic relationship satisfaction and emotional regulation in young adults with a fearful-avoidant attachment style.
2. H2:-Higher levels of attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance would be significantly negatively associated with romantic relationship satisfaction in individuals with a fearful-avoidant attachment style.
3. H3: Emotional regulation difficulties would be significantly negatively associated with romantic relationship satisfaction in young adults with a fearful-avoidant attachment style.

2. METHOD

Participants

The current study's sample consisted of 280 young adults drawn through purposive sampling from private universities in the Tri-City area (Chandigarh, Mohali, and Panchkula) via Google forms (online mode).

Inclusion criteria for the test included: (a) Participants with significant greater anxiety and avoidance scores on the (ECR-RS) questionnaire (i.e. classified as fearful-avoidant attachment). (b) Participants who are engaged in serious committed relationship with duration of 6 month /1 year –above. (c) Participants who fall into age group 18-25.

However, the **Exclusion criteria** were that (a) Individuals who are single, in dating phase or in situationships. (b) Individuals who fall into other attachment styles (secure, dismissing, or preoccupied). (c) Individuals diagnosed with any psychological and neurological disorder. (d) Individuals who are involved in same-sex relationships.

Instruments

1) Relationship Structures Questionnaire (ECR-RS): Fraley et al., (2011)

Fraley et al. (2011) constructed the ECR-RS, a validated self-report instrument for measuring adult attachment anxiety and avoidance across intimate relationships. The questionnaire assesses respondents' feelings of security and anxiety towards their mother, father, love partner, and best friend using Likert scales. The ECR-RS contains two subscale scores (attachment anxiety and avoidance) for each relationship situation. Psychometric evidence indicates that the ECR-RS has adequate reliability and construct validity. The anxiety and avoidance measures typically have higher internal consistency (Cronbach's α) scores.78.

2) Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS-16): Bjureberg et al., (2016)

Bjureberg et al. (2016) devised the (DERS-16), a well-validated self-report questionnaire that evaluates five domains: non-acceptance, goals, impulse, strategies, and clarity, and provides a total score (range 16-80), with higher scores indicating greater difficulty in managing emotional responses. The DERS-16 has strong internal consistency and test-retest reliability, and it has been validated in both clinical and community samples. The Psychometrics evidence demonstrates DERS-16 reported strong internal consistency ($\alpha \approx .92$) and good test-retest reliability (ICC $\approx .85$). It has excellent convergent and discriminant validity and performs comparable to the full DERS in clinical and community samples

3) Couples Satisfaction Index – 16 (CSI-16): Funk and Rogge (2007)

Funk and Rogge (2007) developed the CSI-16, a 16-item self-report scale assessing romantic relationship satisfaction. It gives a single total score (from 0 to 81), with higher numbers indicating greater satisfaction. The CSI-16 questionnaire provides a comprehensive evaluation of relationship quality that captures both global satisfaction and specific dimensions of relationship functioning

Procedure

This study employed a descriptive- correlational research design to examine the associations between emotional dysregulation, attachment styles and relationship satisfaction. All respondents gave informed consent, prior to participation as data was acquired through online survey sent out via Google Forms to eligible participants in the target age group, who then completed standardized questionnaires. Data collection was conducted over a period of time, during which responses were systematically recorded and later, analysed using appropriate statistical tools to determine the correlations between the study variables.

Data Analysis

Statistical analysis was conducted using (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were initially used to describe the data's basic characteristics, such as mean and standard deviation. Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was used to examine the correlations between variables and independent samples t-tests were employed to identify gender differences among variables. All statistical tests used a significance level of $\alpha = .05$.

3. RESULTS

The statistical results and their interpretation pertaining to the study titled *Emotional Dysregulation and Relationship Satisfaction in Fearful-Avoidant Attachment: A Gender-Based Study on Young Adults*. The study included 280 young adults (aged 18-25) who were classified as having a fearful-avoidant attachment style based on elevated scores on both the attachment anxiety and avoidance dimensions of the Experiences in Close Relationships—Relationship Structures questionnaire (ECR-RS; Fraley et al., 2011). The data was analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson product-moment correlations, and independent-sample t-tests. All analyses were performed at the .05 level of significance. The chapter is organised into the following sections: (a) sociodemographic profile of participants; (b) reliability of the instruments; (c) descriptive statistics of the study variables; (d) assessment of normality; and (e) hypothesis-wise testing and interpretation of results.

Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants

The sample gathered 280 young adults selected voluntarily from private universities in the Tri-City area (Chandigarh, Mohali, and Panchkula). Table 4.1 summarises the participant's sociodemographic characteristics.

Table 4.1
Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 280)

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	142	50.7
	Female	138	49.3
Age Group	18–25 years	280	100.0
Relationship Status	Serious committed relationship	162	57.9
	Dating/Situationship	118	42.1
Relationship Duration	6 months – 1 year	133	47.5
	More than 1 year	146	52.1
	Less than 1 year	1	0.4
Partner Gender	Male	138	49.3
	Female	142	50.7

As shown in Table 4.1, the sample was near-equally distributed across genders, with 142 males (50.7%) and 138 females (49.3%). All participants were in the 18–25 age range. A majority (57.9%) were in serious committed romantic relationships, while 42.1% described their status as dating or situationship. Regarding relationship duration, 52.1% had been in their relationships for more than one year, and 47.5% for six months to one year.

Table 4.2
Reliability Analysis of Study Instruments (Cronbach's Alpha)

Scale / Subscale	Items	α	Interpretation
ECR-RS – Attachment Anxiety	3	.961	Excellent
ECR-RS – Attachment Avoidance	6	.975	Excellent
DERS-16 (Total)	16	.990	Excellent
Clarity	2	.909	Excellent
Goals	2	.973	Excellent
Impulse	3	.913	Excellent
Non-Acceptance	4	.962	Excellent
Strategies	5	.967	Excellent
CSI-16 (Total)	16	.991	Excellent

Note. ECR-RS = Experiences in Close Relationships-Relationship Structures; DERS-16 = Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale16; CSI-16 = Couples Satisfaction Index-16.

All instruments exhibited strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from .909 to .991, substantially exceeding the standard threshold of .70 (Nunnally, 1978). The CSI-16 yielded the highest reliability ($\alpha = .991$), followed by the DERS-16 total ($\alpha = .990$) and the ECR-RS Avoidance subscale ($\alpha = .975$). These values confirm that the instruments were highly reliable for the present sample.

Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Table 4.3 summarizes the descriptive statistics for each study variables, including measures of central tendency, dispersion, and distributional shape.

Table 4.3
Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables (N = 280)

Variable	N	Min	Max	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Attachment Anxiety	280	5	19	13.59	5.59	-0.64	-1.47
Attachment Avoidance	280	14	39	28.26	9.28	-0.41	-1.41
Emotional Dysregulation	280	41	79	62.12	15.2	-0.44	-1.57
Clarity	280	5	10	7.25	1.89	0.04	-1.45
Goals	280	4	10	8.12	2.31	-0.77	-1.07
Impulse	280	8	15	11.9	2.93	-0.51	-1.59
Non-Acceptance	280	10	19	14.53	3.57	-0.25	-1.54
Strategies	280	14	25	20.31	4.75	-0.49	-1.60
Relationship Satisfaction	280	18	65	42.73	16.1	-0.13	-1.28

Note. "M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation". Emotional Dysregulation measured by DERS-16; Relationship Satisfaction measured by CSI-16.

The mean of attachment anxiety score was 13.59 ($SD = 5.59$) and the mean of attachment avoidance score was 28.26 ($SD = 9.28$), confirming that the sample, as intended, comprised individuals with elevated levels on both attachment dimensions characteristic of the fearful-avoidant style. The mean emotional dysregulation score was 62.12 ($SD = 15.20$) out of a possible maximum of 80, indicating that participants in this fearful-avoidant sample reported substantial difficulties in regulating emotions. The

Strategies subscale the highest mean ($M = 20.31$), followed by Non-Acceptance ($M = 14.53$), suggesting that limited access to regulation strategies and non-acceptance of emotional responses were the primary domains of difficulty.

Relationship satisfaction had a mean of 42.73 ($SD = 16.10$) out of a possible 65, reflecting a moderate level of satisfaction in romantic relationships. All variables have acceptable skewness and kurtosis values (± 2.0) (George & Mallery 2019), reflecting close to normal distributions for parametric analysis. The Shapiro-Wilk test indicated significant results ($p < .001$) for all variables, as expected in large samples ($N = 280$), where even minor deviations from perfect normality reach significance. Given a sufficient sample size, the Central Limit Theorem guarantees the resilience of parametric techniques (Field, 2018).

Distribution of Participants Across Levels of Study Variables

Table 4.4
Distribution of Participants Across Levels of Study Variables (N = 280)

Variable	Level	n	%
Attachment Anxiety	Low (≤ 12)	98	35.0
	High (> 12)	182	65.0
Attachment Avoidance	Low (≤ 24)	94	33.6
	High (> 24)	186	66.4
Emotional Dysregulation	Moderate (37–57)	98	35.0
	High (58–80)	182	65.0
Relationship Satisfaction	Low (0–27)	61	21.8
	Moderate (28–54)	125	44.6
	High (55–65)	94	33.6

Note. Attachment dimension cut-offs based on scale midpoints per the ECR-RS scoring guidelines.

Two thirds of the sample (65.0%) reported high anxiety attachment and 66.4% reported high avoidance attachment, consistent for the fearful-avoidant screening criteria. A majority (65.0%) scored in the high range on emotional dysregulation, indicating pervasive difficulties in managing emotional responses. Regarding relationship satisfaction, the largest proportion (44.6%) fell in the moderate range, while 21.8% reported low and 33.6% reported high satisfaction. This pattern suggests that while fearful-avoidant individuals maintain relationships, a substantial proportion experiences sub-optimal satisfaction.

Testing of Hypothesis 1

H1: *Gender differences would significantly influence romantic relationship satisfaction and emotional regulation in young adults with a fearful-avoidant attachment style.*

To test this hypothesis, independent-samples t-tests were employed to distinguish between male and female participants' relationship satisfaction (CSI-16) and emotional dysregulation (DERS-16). Furthermore, gender differences in attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance were studied as shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5
Independent Samples t-Test for Gender Differences in Study Variables

Variable	Gender	N	M	SD	t	do	p	d	Result
Relationship	Male	142	41.23	15.65					
Satisfaction	Female	138	44.26	16.46	-1.578	278	0.116	0.189	Not Sig.
Emotional	Male	142	61.23	15.81					
Dysregulation	Female	138	63.04	14.54	-1.002	277.2†	0.317	0.12	Not Sig.
Attachment	Male	142	13.05	5.76					
Anxiety	Female	138	14.14	5.37	-1.645	278	0.101	0.197	Not Sig.
Attachment	Male	142	29.43	8.91					
Avoidance	Female	138	27.07	9.53	2.145	278	0.033	0.256	Sig.*

Note. *d* = Cohen's *d* effect size. †Welch's adjusted *do* used due to unequal variances (Levene's $p < .05$). * $p < .05$.

4.5.1 Gender Differences in Relationship Satisfaction. The independent-samples t-test reported no statistically significant difference in relationship satisfaction between male ($M = 41.23$, $SD = 15.65$) and female ($M = 44.26$, $SD = 16.46$) participants, $t(278) = -1.578$, $p = .116$, Cohen's $d = 0.189$. The effect size ranged from minimal to small. Levene's test was non-significant ($F = 2.303$, $p = .130$), indicating equal variances.

4.5.2 Gender Differences in Emotional Dysregulation. There was no significant gender difference in attachment anxiety, $t(278) = -1.645$, $p = .101$. However, a prominent gender difference in attachment avoidance was observed, with males ($M = 29.43$, $SD = 8.91$) scoring substantially higher than females ($M = 27.07$, $SD = 9.53$), $t(278) = 2.145$, $p = .033$, $d = 0.256$.

4.5.3 Supplementary Analysis: Gender Differences in Attachment Dimensions. There was no significant gender difference under attachment anxiety, $t(278) = -1.645$, $p = .101$. However, a significant gender variation emerged for attachment avoidance, with males ($M = 29.43$, $SD = 8.91$) scoring comparatively higher than females ($M = 27.07$, $SD = 9.53$), $t(278) = 2.145$, $p = .033$, $d = 0.256$. This suggests that while both genders exhibited comparable attachment anxiety, males in the fearful-avoidant group displayed greater avoidance tendencies.

Decision: Hypothesis 1 is not supported for the primary variables. No significant gender differences were found in relationship satisfaction or emotional dysregulation among fearful-avoidant young adults. A supplementary finding revealed that males A supplementary finding revealed that males reported significantly greater attachment avoidance than females.

Testing of Hypothesis 2

H2: Higher levels of attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance would be significantly negatively associated with romantic relationship satisfaction in individuals with a fearful-avoidant attachment style.

Pearson's product-moment correlations were employed to analyse the connection between the two attachment variables (anxiety and avoidance) and romantic relationship satisfaction. Table 4.6 illustrates the intercorrelation structure for all study variables.

Table 4.6
Pearson Correlation Matrix Among Study Variables ($N = 280$)

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Attachment Anxiety	—	-.398**	.955**	.014
2. Attachment Avoidance	-.398**	—	-.166**	-.838**
3. Emotional Dysregulation	.955**	-.166**	—	-.196**
4. Relationship Satisfaction	.014	-.838**	-.196**	—

Note. ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

4.6.1 Attachment Avoidance and Relationship Satisfaction. A substantial negative association was identified between attachment avoidance and romantic relationship satisfaction ($r = -.838$, $p < .001$). This suggests that higher levels of attachment avoidance were associated with significantly lowered relationship satisfaction among fearful-avoidant young adults. Attachment avoidance explained nearly 70.3% of the variance in relationship satisfaction, corresponding to the coefficient of determination ($r^2 = .703$). This is a large impact size by any conventional standard (Cohen, 1988) and the single strongest predictor of relationship satisfaction in this study.

4.6.2 Attachment Anxiety and Relationship Satisfaction. The link between attachment anxiety and relationship satisfaction was nearly zero and non-significant ($r = .014$, $p = .816$), implying that attachment anxiety was not associated with relationship pleasure in this sample. This result is noteworthy, given that fearful-avoidant individuals exhibit heightened levels of both anxiety and avoidance; the outcome's revealed avoidance is the primary source of relationship dissatisfaction than anxiety.

Decision: Hypothesis 2 is somewhat supported. A strong, significant negative association was observed between attachment avoidance and relationship satisfaction, confirming the hypothesis. Contrary to assumptions, attachment anxiety was not found to be significantly linked with relationship satisfaction.

Testing of Hypothesis 3

H3: Emotional regulation difficulties would be significantly negatively associated with romantic relationship satisfaction in young adults with a fearful-avoidant attachment style.

Pearson's product-moment correlations were calculated between the DERS-16 total score (with its five subscales) and the CSI-16 total score. The findings are presented in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7
Correlations Between Emotional Dysregulation (DERS-16) and Relationship Satisfaction (CSI-16)

DERS Dimension	r	p	r ²	Interpretation
DERS-16 Total	-.196**	.001	.038	Weak negative
Clarity	-.393**	<.001	.154	Moderate negative
Goals	-.042	.486	.002	Not significant
Impulse	-.098	.101	.010	Not significant
Non-Acceptance	-.296**	<.001	.088	Weak-moderate negative
Strategies	-.166**	.005	.028	Weak negative

Note. ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed). r^2 = coefficient of determination.

4.7.1 DERS-16 Total and Relationship Satisfaction. There was a statistically significant, weak negative relationship between emotional dysregulation and romantic relationship satisfaction ($r = -.196$, $p < .001$), accounting for 3.8% of the shared variance. This confirms that fearful-avoidant young adults who have difficulty regulating their emotions have reduced relationship satisfaction, although the magnitude of the correlation is small.

4.7.2 DERS Subscales and Relationship Satisfaction. At the sub-scale level, three of the five DERS measures had significant negative relationships with relationship satisfaction. Emotional confusion ($r = -.393$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .154$) explained 15.4% of the variance in relationship satisfaction. The relationship between non-acceptance of emotional responses ($r = -.296$, $p < .001$) and limited access to emotional regulation strategies ($r = -.166$, $p = .005$) was shown to be modest but statistically significant. In contrast, difficulties with goal setting ($r = -.042$, $p = .486$) and impulse control ($r = -.098$, $p = .101$) were not significantly associated with relationship satisfaction.

These findings indicate that fearful-avoidant individuals adhere to cognitive-awareness dimensions of emotion regulation (clarity and acceptance) over behavioural dimensions (impulse control, goal-directed behavior) for determining romantic relationship satisfaction.

Decision: Hypothesis 3 is supported. A notable negative correlation was observed between emotional dysregulation and romantic relationship satisfaction. At the subscale level, Clarity, Non-Acceptance, and Strategies showed significant negative associations, while Goals and Impulse did not.

Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Table 4.8
Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

H	Hypothesis Statement	Key Statistic	Decision
H1	Significant gender difference in RS and ER among fearful-avoidant young adults	RS: $t(278) = -1.578, p = .116$; ER: $t(277.2) = -1.002, p = .317$	Not Supported
H2	Higher attachment avoidance and anxiety negatively associated with RS	Avoidance: $r = -.838^{**}$; Anxiety: $r = .014, ns$	Partially Supported
H3	Significant negative association between ER difficulties and RS	$r = -.196, p = .001$	Supported

Note. RS = Relationship Satisfaction; ER = Emotional Regulation/Dysregulation; $^{**}p < .01$; ns = not significant.

In summary, the findings demonstrate that among young adults pertaining fearful-avoidant attachment style: (a) no significant gender differences exist in relationship satisfaction or emotional dysregulation, although males report higher attachment avoidance; (b) attachment avoidance is a powerful negative predictor of relationship satisfaction ($r = -.838$), whereas attachment anxiety is unrelated to satisfaction; and (c) emotional dysregulation is significantly, albeit weakly, negatively associated with relationship satisfaction, with emotional clarity and non-acceptance of emotions emerging as the most consequential regulatory dimensions. These findings contribute to a subtle understanding of how attachment-related processes and emotion regulation jointly influence romantic functioning in fearful-avoidant individuals.

4. DISCUSSION

The current study aimed to investigate the association between emotional dysregulation and relationship satisfaction among young adults who exhibit a fearful avoidant attachment style particularly focusing on gender differences and attachment dimensions. The results obtained through statistical methods offer a detailed insight about how fearful avoidant attachment influences relational outcomes.

As per the first objective, which investigated gender differences “in relation to relationship satisfaction and emotional dysregulation, the results from (Table 4.5) demonstrated there were no significant statistical differences between the two gender groups concerning satisfaction within the relationship”, $t(278) = 1.578, p = .116$, or emotional dysregulation, $t(277.2) = 1.002, p = .317$. The mean figures

illustrated that males ($M = 41.23$, $SD = 15.65$) and females ($M = 44.26$, $SD = 16.46$) both indicated similar amounts of satisfaction within the relationship, and similarly high emotional dysregulation for males ($M = 61.23$, $SD = 15.81$) and females ($M = 63.04$, $SD = 14.54$) indicating that emotional difficulties and relationship experiences are largely similar across genders. This in lines with the previous findings, greater levels of attachment insecurity, particularly disorganised patterns, have a significant impact on one's emotional state (Lyons-Ruth & Jacobvitz, 2008 ; Gleeson & Fitzgerald, 2014; Yastibaş-Kaçar et al., 2025). On the other hand, a gender differences were identified in attachment avoidance, $t(278) = 2.145$, $p = .033$, where males ($M = 29.43$) were found to have “higher levels of avoidance than females” ($M = 27.07$) supporting prior evidence of men exhibiting avoidant behaviors and emotionally distant in romantic relationships (Del Giudice, 2011)

The second objective of the study was to evaluate how attachment styles relate to relationship satisfaction. Correlational analysis (Table 4.6), revealed the results were statistically significant, and negative a correlation between avoidance attachment and relationship satisfaction was found ($r = -.838$, $p < .001$) which represents approximately 70.3% of the variance ($r^2 = .703$) which indicates avoidance being as major determinant of dissatisfaction in romantic relationships among fearful avoidant individuals. It is consistent with the studies emphasising emotional suppression and intimacy avoidance among fearful avoidant individuals. (Kirkpatrick & Davis, 1994; Paetzold et al., 2015; Domic-Siede 2024) whereas, attachment anxiety had a very minimal and non-significant association with relationship satisfaction ($r = .014$, $p = .816$), implying avoidance playing a more dominant role despite the presence of anxiety.

The third objective was to investigate emotional dysregulation and its association with relationship satisfaction. Results from (Table 4.7) showed that “there was a statistically significant but weak negative correlation between overall emotional dysregulation and relationship satisfaction” ($r = .196$, $p = .001$), which explained 3.8% of the variance, a limited overall impact compared to attachment avoidance; however specific dimensions such as “lack of clarity ($r = .393$, $p < .001$), explaining 15.4% of the variance, non, acceptance ($r = .296$, $p < .001$), and limited access to strategies” ($r = .166$, $p = .005$) were also significantly negatively related to relationship satisfaction. While, impulse control ($r = .098$, $p = .101$) and goal, directed behavior ($r = .042$, $p = .486$) were non-significant highlighting that cognitive, emotional processes, like understanding and accepting emotions are more critical for relationship satisfaction than behavioural regulation.(Velotti et al., 2015; Chang et al., 2023)

This study bears limitations that should be considered when evaluating the results. First, the use of purposive sampling along with restricting the sample to young adults from private universities in the Tri-City region limits generalizability of the findings to a wider population. Moreover, having a narrow age range of 18-25 years only further limits applicability to age groups. Furthermore, using self, report measures like ECR-RS, DERS-16, and CSI-16 raises the possibility of biases such as social desirability and subjective errors. Cross-sectional designs make it difficult for determining cause-and-effect correlations between variables. Focusing only on fearful avoidant attachment type and excluding certain groups decreases the diversity and inclusiveness of the sample. Besides that, the study left out various other factors that can have significant influence such as personality characteristics, communication styles, and family environment. In terms of gender, the study considered only two categories, failing to encompass the entire range of gender identities. Finally, gathering data via the internet might have compromised the genuineness of responses and the degree of control over the research setting, impacting the findings overall.

5. CONCLUSION

The research uncovered young adults with fearful avoidant attachment presented high level of emotional dysregulation and moderate level of relationship satisfaction, which represents their internal paradox of wanting closeness whilst fearing intimacy. Though, the study did not discover any noteworthy gender differences in emotional dysregulation and relationship satisfaction; however, it did highlight how males exhibited a higher level of attachment avoidance. Moreover, it was revealed that attachment avoidance was the most prominent negative indicator of relationship satisfaction, whereas attachment anxiety did not

have any significant impact. Besides that, Emotional dysregulation, particularly low emotional clarity and non-acceptance, was reported to exert a negative correlation with relationship satisfaction. The research indicates that fearful avoidant individuals often experience relationship dissatisfaction due to avoidance behaviors and their lack of emotional awareness.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author(s) declare no conflict of interest.

FUNDING

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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