

CHAPTER III

EXTRINSIC THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Attachment Styles Theory

Bowlby (1969) explains that, biologically speaking, attachment behavior is a safety-regulating mechanism to ensure the survival of young children and babies. By staying close to caregivers, exposure to threats that are faced by young children and infants, such as predation, is reduced. Therefore, attachment does not exist merely emotionally, but it is naturally ingrained as an adaptive mechanism in humans (p. 375).

The function of attachment behavior lies in the contribution it makes to survival. Adaptive reactions, including crying, clinging, or staying close, are designed to keep babies and young children safe by keeping them near their caregivers, who can offer them food and shelter. In addition to providing immediate defence against harm, attachment behaviour is essential for maintaining the infant's emotional stability and promoting healthy psychological growth. Through fostering intimacy, attachment creates a safe sanctuary that a kid may retreat to in times of danger and a stable basis which they can return to when they feel threatened (p. 223).

Bowlby also specifically stated that attachment does not mean dependency. “Dependency” suggests weakness or immaturity; it carries a negative or disparaging connotation, as though needing others is a flaw, while “attachment” frames the behavior as a natural and necessary system that contributes to survival and healthy

development because seeking closeness to others is a normal, adaptive, and valuable part of human development (p. 228).

Moreover, Ainsworth, et al. (2015) stated that attachment behavior and fear behavior are frequently triggered simultaneously. A young child would typically seek greater proximity to an attachment figure when they become alarmed. Should the attachment figure be inaccessible to him, either through absence or through an expectation of unresponsiveness built up through experience, he faces an especially frightening compound situation (p. 22) Since when faced with a potentially fear-arousing situation, it is crucial for young children to be with their trusted companion or caregivers because then, fear all of kinds of situation would diminish while if they are alone, fear would magnify (p. 20)

However, the absence of such figure is not a sufficient definition of "separation." The availability of the figure is what matters most. Separation distress arises when a person is seen to have become unresponsive and unreachable. Moreover, attachments imply strong affect—not only security, anxiety, fear, and anger, but also love, grief, jealousy and indeed the whole spectrum of emotions and feelings (pp. 20-21)

3.2 Types of Attachment Styles

3.2.1 The Strange Situation and Patterns of Attachment

According to *Patterns of Attachment* (2015), Mary Ainsworth created the Strange Situation Procedure (SSP) as a tool to gauge how well newborns and their carers were attached. During the process, the baby goes through a series of short episodes when they are separated from their mother, engage with a stranger, and then reunite with their carers. Researchers observe four key behaviors: exploration, separation distress, stranger anxiety, and reunion behavior.

Based on these observations, infants were then classified into three main attachment styles: Avoidant (Group A), who show little distress and avoid the carer upon return; ambivalent/resistant (Group C), who are extremely distressed yet exhibit a combination of clinging and resistant behaviour at reunion; and secure (Group B), who exhibit distress upon separation but are reassured upon reunion (pp. 55-63). Secure attachment is supported by maternal sensitivity, which is the ability to respond to an infant's needs in a timely, correct, and appropriate manner. On the other hand, ambivalent attachment was associated with irregular or intrusive responsiveness, whereas avoidant attachment was often linked to maternal rejection or withdrawal (pp. 259-260).

3.2.2 Attachment Styles in Romantic Relationships

Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991, as cited in Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016) introduced a four-category model of adult attachment that surpasses the conventional three classifications of secure, anxious, and avoidant. This paradigm highlights how individuals' perceptions of themselves and others influence their relational dynamics, resulting in four unique attachment styles: secure, anxious, avoidant, and fearful-avoidant.

3.2.2.1 Secure Attachment

Individuals possessing a secure attachment style exhibit ease with emotional intimacy and reliance. They easily place their faith in others, rely on them, and permit others to rely on them. They exhibit little apprehension towards solitude or rejection, resulting in relationships that are typically steady and fulfilling (p. 83)

3.2.2.2 Anxious Attachment

Anxious attachment individuals eagerly seek connection and closeness yet frequently perceive that others may not be as committed to the relationship as they are. They experience a dread of abandonment and often demand constant reassurance from their partner. (p. 83) Anxious-attachment individuals often employ hyperactivating strategies which include vigilance towards potential threats, exaggerated perceptions of threats (catastrophising), and rumination on past and hypothetical threatening experiences that stimulate proximity-seeking behaviours and reinforce the urgency of

obtaining a partner's attention, care, and support. This frequently leads attachment-anxious individuals to activate their attachment system even when no objective risks are present (p. 31)

3.2.2.3 Avoidant Attachment

Individuals exhibiting a dismissive or avoidant attachment style tend to prioritize autonomy and self-reliance over intimacy. They find it distressing to depend on others or permit others to depend on them. Consequently, they frequently minimize the significance of intimate connections and may reject emotional dependence (p. 83).

3.2.2.4 Fearful-avoidant/anxious-avoidant

Individuals with fearful-avoidant style seek intimate relationships while yet fearing emotional pain or rejection. This ambivalence complicates their ability to trust or rely on people completely. Consequently, they grapple with a push–pull dynamic: desiring intimacy while simultaneously retreating from it due to fear of emotional distress (p. 83)