



Examining the effect of Attachment styles on relationship satisfaction
amongst heterosexual and non-heterosexual couples.

2203596

Dissertation in psychology

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Declaration

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degrees and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degrees.

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This dissertation is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of The BSc Psychology

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STATEMENT 2:

This dissertation is the result of my own independent work/investigation, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by giving explicit references. A reference list is appended.

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to explore the links between attachment styles and relationship satisfaction amongst heterosexual and homosexual couples. There were two questionnaires used, the Attachment Style Questionnaire (Chui & Leung, 2016) and the Relationship Assessment Scale (Vaughn & Malyaslic, 1999). The study consisted of 64 participants (12 Males, 52 Females). A Between subject's design was used which meant all participants took part in all the questionnaires. The Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to assess relationship satisfaction between participants from straight and same-sex couples. Additionally, a Pearson's product-moment correlation was conducted to examine the relationships between the different attachment styles (secure, fearful avoidant, preoccupied, and disorganised) and relationship satisfaction. The results partially supports the study's hypothesis, therefore future research should be done to examine this phenomenon further.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

According to Levy et al. (2011) attachment styles are sets of behaviours and responses that individuals have in relationships with attachment figures such as parents and romantic partners. There are different types of attachments such as secure and insecure, insecure attachments tend to be divided into subgroups such as anxious and avoidant attachment styles. Attachment styles is a phenomenon that has been studied for many years. A lot of the original research on the importance of attachment styles on later development came from Bowlby's and Ainsworth's research on attachment. Research by Waters et al. (2002) discusses Bowlby's attachment theory, emphasising how adult-adult relationships are significantly influenced by the early relationship between an infant and their caregiver. Additionally, Waters et al. (2002) also discusses how Bowlby argued that humans develop mental models based on early experiences, which in turn shape behaviours such as communication and proximity-seeking. This highlights the importance of a secure attachment between children and caregivers, as these early experiences are believed to influence an individual's cognitive development in the long term. This working model has been supported by Fraley and Shaver (1998) who studied couples separating from each other in an airport, it was discovered women who had anxious working models were more likely to experience distress before the separation. Thus, this theory emphasises how early experiences, such as the attachment formed in childhood, significantly influence an individual's behaviour and emotions in adult relationships.

Moreover, a range of empirical literature suggests that attachment can have a long-lasting effect on an individual, which can influence how individuals feel in their relationships. For example, a study by Dwiwardani et al. (2014) using 245 participants, discovered that attachment is a strong predictor for forgiveness, gratitude and humility in relationships. Additionally, research by Feeney and Fitzgerald (2019) has shown that conflict behaviours resulting from insecure attachments tend to negatively affect quality in a relationship. These findings emphasise further the significant role attachment styles play in shaping an individual's behaviour in adult relationships. This supports Bowlby's theory of mental models, as early attachment experiences between a child and their caregiver have been shown to influence behaviours such as forgiveness and gratitude in adult relationships. Furthermore, it has been supported since the 1990s that attachment styles influence romantic relationships. A study created by Simpson (1990) found that in relationships where partners had secure attachments there were greater levels of trust and commitment in comparison to a relationship that consisted of partners with anxious attachment styles. Therefore, this suggests that individuals with secure attachment styles are likely to feel more satisfied in relationships compared to those with insecure attachment styles, due to increased trust and commitment. Furthermore, this study emphasises the belief that attachment styles

have a significant relationship with the feelings of satisfaction in a relationship. Furthermore, it has been discovered that in heterosexual couples those who possess an avoidant attachment style have more negative relationship satisfaction (González-Ortega et al., 2021). In addition to this, Vollmann et al. (2019) also discovered individuals with insecure attachment styles have a relationship that involves lower levels of gratitude towards romantic partners, therefore resulting in poorer relationship satisfaction. Candel and Turliuc (2019) have also identified that insecure attachments such as anxious and avoidant have a negative relationship with satisfaction in relationships. As a result, these studies support that attachment styles do affect an individual's satisfaction in their relationships. The literature has suggested the more insecure an individual is in their attachment the more unsatisfied they are in their relationships. In addition, the findings on how attachment styles impact relationship satisfaction is further supported by a study examining just women and their relationships. It has been found by Towler and Stuhlmacher (2013) that women with avoidant attachment styles are less satisfied, having a lower level of cohesion in their relationships, this sample consisted of 92% being heterosexual couples. Therefore, this study focused on women only and still highlighted that when individuals have insecure attachments it could result in negative adult relationships. Thus, this further supports the literature and suggests that there may not be any/ or a large gender difference across findings.

Furthermore, according to Gilbert and Blakey (2021) individuals who have insecure attachments including disorganised attachment styles have increased use of controlling and compulsive behaviours in a relationship. Thus, these negative behaviours can impact a relationship resulting in poorer satisfaction potentially even relationship breakdowns. As a result, these findings continue to reinforce the overall understanding that attachment styles have a crucial role in determining relationship satisfaction. Additionally, a meta-analysis on attachment working models found that individuals with a preoccupied attachment style showed stronger emotional reactions and tended to interpret events more negatively (Collins, 1996). This helps explain why individuals with insecure attachments often experience lower relationship satisfaction, as their more negative thoughts and behaviours can impact the quality of their relationships.

Furthermore, it has been highlighted that Individuals with a more anxious attachment style have increased phone use whilst in the company of their romantic partners, this has indirectly negatively impacted their relationship satisfaction (Roberts & David, 2016). Thus, this implies that an individual's attachment style can significantly influence the behaviour partners display within their relationship. Individuals may feel dissociated from their partner due to higher phone usage as there will be less attention on them, which, in turn, can explain why increased phone use may affect the satisfaction felt in partners. Being able to understand this interaction can help establish and understand how early emotional connections and experiences shape later behaviours and romantic relationships. Furthermore, it has

been discovered that individuals with higher levels of avoidant attachment, who also had higher Cumulative childhood trauma (CCT) have poorer relationship satisfaction (Baumann et al., 2024). CCT is referred to when individuals experience a mixture of different trauma during their childhood that goes on to impact their adulthood (Bigras et al., 2016). Therefore, this highlights the impact experiences during childhood have on the overall quality and satisfaction of romantic relationships. Thus, providing further support that insecure attachment styles can have a negative impact on relationships. However, this makes it unclear whether trauma, attachment styles or a combination of both affect relationship satisfaction. Thus, it suggests that other factors also play a significant role in an individual's relationship.

It has also been discovered there are higher chances of difficulties in emotional regulations and being emotionally dependent on a partner if individuals have developed a dismissing attachment (Momeñe et al., 2024). Therefore, this indicates that insecure attachments like dismissing can significantly impact an individual's emotional development. This may impact how individuals manage conflict and their own emotions. In addition, this may result in unrealistic and/or wrong interpretations of emotional situations, which, in turn, could impact both the overall satisfaction and maintenance of the relationship. Furthermore, if an individual with insecure attachment cannot regulate their emotions as much as an individual with secure attachment like the findings suggest, it could raise disagreement and issues during a relationship. This explains why individuals who possess insecure attachment behaviours have reduced positive emotions and lower relationship quality (Meyer et al., 2015). There has been further support from a meta-analysis of 72 studies, it has been found that anxious and avoidant attachment styles negatively affect the emotional, behavioural and cognitive areas of relationship quality, anxious attachment had a larger effect on the overall's satisfaction felt in relationships (Li & Chan, 2012). Li and Chan (2012) also discovered that there was not a significant gender difference in their findings. Therefore, this implies that insecure attachments do have a negative influence on many aspects of the quality of relationships which can potentially affect how satisfied and happy an individual feels in their relationship. Furthermore, the findings also imply that attachment styles effects both males and females in similar ways, emphasising the importance of good early relationships to prevent negative behaviours during adulthood. Fitzpatrick and LaFontaine (2017) have also identified that individuals who have an avoidant attachment style have less trust within their relationship which then negatively impacts a relationship. Trust is important for both the formation and maintenance of a relationship including a romantic one, without a sense of trust partners may feel wary of each other which may increase conflict or feelings of tension, this may impact the overall satisfaction felt. Additionally, individuals with avoidant attachment styles may be less satisfied due to their tendency to withdraw from their relationships. For example, Bretaña et al. (2022) found that individuals with avoidant attachment styles expressed more withdrawal behaviours, which led to lower relationship satisfaction. Research has also suggested that attachment styles have a moderation role in the effect narcissism has in a relationship, and narcissism influences partners views on

infidelity which affects satisfaction (Altinok et al., 2020). Therefore, these findings highlight the influence attachment styles have within a relationship. For example, the findings imply that attributes a partner has impacts a relationship. Furthermore, it implies how many challenges can arise such as, narcissistic behaviours because of one's attachment style.

In addition, there is support from studies examining non-western cultures, replicating the findings from western cultures that attachment style like insecure ones have negative influences on relationship satisfaction (Siling et al., 2024). For example, Sharma and Kaushik (2024) studied individuals from countries such as Delhi and Noida and found individuals who have a secure attachment have higher chances of being satisfied in their relationships in comparison to individuals with an insecure attachment. In addition, a study looking at Indian couples revealed that insecure attachments impacted fear of intimacy which then goes on to negatively affect the satisfaction felt in couples (Mohan & Mathew, 2024). As a result, support from non-Western countries increases the generalisability of the finding that attachment styles are significantly related to satisfaction felt in a relationship. Furthermore, according to Domyancich-Lee (2022) adoptees from Korea tended to think negatively about themselves and their relationships often indicating fear in their romantic relationships. Thus, this provides further support as an attachment style an adoptee develops may be different from a non-adoptee due to their potential turbulent upbringing and disruptive developmental period. This, therefore, can explain why they may fear romantic relationships as the most important early relationship (parent-child) was disrupted and turbulent. In addition, a study looking at Turkish culture has also identified that avoidance attachment has an impact on marital satisfaction, whilst attachment anxiety is related to the increase in conflict (Harma & Sümer, 2016). Therefore, insecure attachments have an impact on romantic relationships whether that be conflict which in turn can result in poorer satisfaction or directly linked to satisfaction. Ho et al. (2012) researched how attachment styles effect relationships in individuals from Hong Kong and the United States they found attachment avoidance and anxiety negatively impact relationship satisfaction. Overall, these findings are not just applicable to western cultures, as many studies examining non-western cultures have reinforced the crucial role that early attachment development has not only an impact on the formation of romantic relationships but also the continuous satisfaction and fulfilment experienced by partners. This cross-cultural support has highlighted how universal the attachment theory can be in explaining and understanding the impact attachment style towards a caregiver in early childhood has on later human relationships. Thus, this highlights the universality of Bowlby's mental model in explaining how individual's early experiences with their caregiver's shape how they communicate and seek proximity.

However, despite this providing support that early attachment styles can also impact an individual's romantic relationships from a non-western culture, all the above samples consisted of mainly heterosexual couples. Therefore, due to a limited

amount of research on homosexual relationships, findings cannot and should not attempt to be generalised to non-heterosexual individuals. This raises questions about any potential differences between heterosexual and non-heterosexual experiences with romantic relationships, and what they may be.

There has also been evidence that insecure attachment styles can be directly related to abuse suffered in romantic relationships. A study examining participants from a heterosexual romantic relationship discovered that insecure attachment styles were directly related to sexual and psychological abuse in their relationships (Bonache et al., 2019). Thus, this may suggest that individuals with insecure attachment styles may be at greater risk of being in an abusive relationship. In addition, there is further evidence that insecure attachments like anxious attachments have a negative influence on abuse in a relationship. For example, according to Fournier, and Shaver (2011) Insecure attachment in men is associated with physical and psychological abuse in romantic relationships. Furthermore, this has been supported in studies looking at women and abusive relationship. For example, Bélanger et al. (2015) discovered that women who have an anxious attachment style are more likely to be physically abusive in a romantic relationship. As a result, these findings provide further support that attachment styles influence satisfaction in a relationship, suggesting partners will have more negative experiences due to the increased risk of abuse, which ultimately would reduce partners satisfaction during their relationship. However, once again these studies only focus on heterosexual relationships, and by only focusing on one type of relationship it provides a limited understanding of the impact attachment style has on all types of romantic relationships. However, there has been a study assessing same sex relationships and the findings suggest that individuals who have an insecure attachment, have higher chances of both giving and receiving same sex intimate partner violence (Gabbay & Lafontaine, 2017). Therefore, despite the limited literature on same-sex relationships, the existing studies support the broader belief that attachment styles influence abuse.

Moreover, existing literature surrounding this topic does not consider how homosexual individuals may have different experiences throughout their life when exploring and creating romantic relationships. For example, according to Otis et al., (2006) partners from same sex couples who have experienced higher levels of discrimination and internalised homophobia had more negative views towards the quality of their relationship. Therefore, this indicates personal experiences, such as discrimination can impact satisfaction and attitudes towards romantic relationships. Therefore, this emphasises how personal experiences and societal factors impact relationship dynamics, which should therefore be taken into account. Fuller and Rutter (2017) found that individuals from an LGBTQ+ identity who had acceptance from parents, had more satisfied and securely attached adult relationship. These findings highlight external factors such as, discrimination from family and friends can negatively impact an individual's attachment styles. This expresses the importance of

studying the personal experiences of same sex couples, as these external societal factors can impact attachment styles, which, in turn can influence romantic relationships.

Additionally, these findings have been replicated in a study exploring gay men and the impact of their attachment styles. For example, Trachtenberg-Ray and Modesto (2023) discovered attachment styles affects relationship satisfaction in gay men, men who had an avoidant attachment style showed lower levels of relationship satisfaction in comparison to those with a secure attachment. In addition, a study by Sommantico and De Rosa (2020) with a sample of lesbian and gay men couples found that attachment styles are a factor that influences satisfaction felt in the relationships. This may explain why same sex couples who have insecure attachments, have poorer trust, increase problems and lower satisfaction (Mohr and Fassinger, 2013). As a result, despite the lack of evidence and literature surrounding homosexual relationships, the literature that there is has continued to support the belief that insecure attachment styles negatively affect an individual's relationship satisfaction. Furthermore, the belief that secure attachment is the most beneficial attachment style remains true for same-sex relationships, as research continues to show that secure attachments are associated with higher relationship satisfaction.

Furthermore, it has been suggested that attachment styles not only have a major impact on relationship satisfaction in general but also predicts sexual satisfaction (Mark et al., 2018). Therefore, this study suggests attachment styles influence various aspects of satisfaction in romantic relationships, including sexual satisfaction, not just emotional connection. Therefore, this highlights that attachment styles have an important role in shaping both emotional and sexual dynamics within romantic relationships. In addition, findings from a study assessing couples in therapy have found anxious and avoidant attachment also predict sexual dissatisfaction in relationships (Brassard et al., 2012). Thus, this suggests that having an insecure attachment style is negatively associated with sexual satisfaction; the more insecure a person is, the more likely they are to experience sexual dissatisfaction in a relationship. As a result, this provides further support that attachment styles individuals have, have a significant influence on how dissatisfied/satisfied a partner is in their relationship. Furthermore, the higher the level of avoidance attachment in a woman, the lower her partners intimacy motivation, which results in lower sexual satisfaction felt (Gewirtz-Meydan and Finzi-Dottan 2018). This suggests that attachment styles can have a significant impact on the motivation an individual feels in a relationship, which, in turn can influence satisfaction felt. This supports the belief that attachment styles formed during childhood have an influence on romantic relationships.

In summary, this literature implies that attachment style significantly impacts relationship satisfaction, with insecure attachment having a negative impact on

satisfaction and secure attachment having a positive impact on romantic relationship satisfaction. Research also emphasises that attachment style not only influences the emotional aspects of a relationship but also other areas, such as sexual satisfaction. However, there is not a huge amount of existing literature examining this phenomenon on homosexual couples. Therefore, this creates a gap in the literature that raises questions about potential differences between heterosexual and homosexual romantic relationships. Based on these findings, the study hypothesises that participants with higher levels of insecure attachment style will experience poorer relationship satisfaction in their couples. Furthermore, there may be a difference in what type of attachment style a heterosexual and non- heterosexual couple experiences, which may impact the satisfaction felt in the relationship.

Chapter 2 – Methods

2.1 Participants:

There were 64 participants (12 Males, 52 Females) and (58 Straight, 6 Same Sex). However, the aim was for there to be 40 straight and 40 same sex relationships so a total of 80 participants. However, when doing the Mann-Whitney U test on SPSS one straight participant was removed from the results due to not completing a relationship satisfaction question so only 63 participants were used for that analysis. Participants were over the age of 18 the age range for participants was 18-57 years ($M = 29.8$, $SD = 10.36$). Participants were voluntarily recruited via a link provided on the Psychology and Counselling Facebook page for those outside the university and outside the Psychology and Counselling student cohort. There was also an option for individuals within the Psychology and Counselling cohort to participate via the EMS system, they were provided credits for participation. There were specific criteria that needed to be met for participation. For example, either in a heterosexual (straight) or homosexual (gay) relationship of at least six months to allow the honeymoon phase to pass, whilst not restricting the number of participants recruited. Although there are several gender identifications, the study focused on these two groups as an initial investigation and aimed to assess and compare how attachment style affects relationship satisfaction in these couples. Ethical approval for this study was granted by the UWTSD ethics panel.

2.2 Design:

A correlational design was used in this study to examine the relationships between three variables: relationship type, attachment styles, and relationship satisfaction. The first variable, relationship type, was categorised into heterosexual (straight) or same-sex relationships. The second variable, attachment styles, included four categories: secure, fearful avoidant, preoccupied, and disorganised. The third variable, relationship satisfaction, was what was being measured so the dependent variable (DV).

Furthermore, A Pearson's product-moment correlation was conducted to examine the relationships between the different attachment styles (secure, fearful avoidant, preoccupied, and disorganised) and relationship satisfaction. This analysis was performed to explore the individual relationships between each attachment style and relationship satisfaction, as the originally planned two-way between-subjects ANOVA could not be performed.

The Mann-Whitney U test was used to assess whether there was a significant difference in relationship satisfaction between participants from different relationship types. In this analysis, the grouping variable was relationship type (straight and same-sex), and the dependent variable (DV) was relationship satisfaction.

In addition, for the attachment styles, a questionnaire was used to measure the four attachment styles mentioned above. Initially, the plan was to group all insecure attachment styles (fearful avoidant, preoccupied, and disorganised) into one category of insecure attachment. However, to explore the individual relationships between each attachment style and relationship satisfaction, participants were categorized according to their specific attachment style: secure, fearful avoidant, preoccupied, and disorganised.

2.3 Materials:

This study used two questionnaires. The Attachment Style Questionnaire (Chui and Leung, 2016) is a 15-item questionnaire, where questions were divided into secure, fearful avoidant, preoccupied and disorganised attachments. The Relationship Assessment Scale (Vaughn and Matyastik, 1999) is a seven-item questionnaire that measures relationship satisfaction. It uses a 5-point Likert scale, with items 4 and 7 being reverse scored. The data from both the questionnaires were collected via Qualtrics.

For participants to be aware of what the study entails before taking part they were provided with an online information sheet which briefly outlines what the study is about and what they will have to do during participation. After this, participants were given an online consent form which outlined their rights as a participant and who to contact should they have questions. Finally, a debrief form at the end of the study was also provided to participants online and outlined the true aims of the study, whilst also highlighting key rights participants had at this time of the study. All these materials can be found in the appendices.

2.4 Procedure:

Participants were required to complete this study online on Qualtrics through a link provided on a Facebook advert for those outside the university or the Psychology and Counselling cohort. There was an option for UWTSD students to participate and gain credits via the EMS system. Participants were provided a brief

description on either EMS or Facebook about what the study entails and requirements to participate. Then, a slide with the information sheet was provided. Following this, participants were given the consent form online prior to starting the study that they had to read carefully. Participants were required to tick all relevant consent boxes to take part in the study. There were instructions created on Qualtrics which only allowed participants to continue to the next steps of the study if full consent was provided. Participants were then asked to complete the demographic questions: Age, gender, Relationship type (same sex or straight relationship) and length of current relationship. When participants proceed to the next steps the screen on Qualtrics will display the relationship satisfaction scale, then the attachment style questionnaire. The questionnaires were provided in this order, to prevent participants understanding/ finding out the true aims of the study. Once participants have completed the questionnaires, they were provided an online debrief form which participants had an option to download. Participants then were required to press submit if they wanted their answers used as data for the study. If participants wanted to withdraw their data, they were provided this option in the debrief form which advised them not to submit their answers.

2.5 Ethics:

The study received ethical approval from the university's ethics panel, and several ethical considerations were addressed throughout the research process. One potential issue was that, as an online study, participants were unable to ask questions directly to a researcher. However, this concern was acknowledged, and participants were provided with a debrief form that included the contact details of the supervisors and researchers for any follow-up questions or concerns.

To ensure informed consent, participants were required to confirm they agree to all the consent questions before proceeding with the study on Qualtrics. It was coded into Qualtrics where participants could only proceed if all consent boxes were ticked. Some minor ethical concerns were raised, such as data storage procedures. To mitigate this, measures were put in place to protect participant's information. For example, all data was stored securely on OneDrive, with no physical copies printed. Participants were also provided anonymous codes or numbers within Qualtrics, ensuring their identities remained confidential. Further details regarding the study's ethical considerations can be found on the ethics form.

Chapter 3 - Results

Before any of the required analysis were conducted, the data was taken from Qualtrics and was screened and cleaned. Participants who did not provide consent or complete at least some questions from all questionnaires were deleted from the data set. The data was then prepared for analysis where total scores and means for each variable were calculated and on the relationship questionnaire it was ensured that items 4 and 7 were reversed scored. On the demographics, straight and same sex participants were provided values to distinguish the two groups. Straight being 1 and same sex being 2.

To conduct the Mann-Whitney U test, the analysis was conducted on SPSS. First, the analyse option was clicked, followed by selecting Nonparametric test and the independent sample. Next, in the pop-up box, the dependent variable (relationship satisfaction) was placed into the Test Variable list box, and the grouping variable (relationship type) was moved into the grouping variable box. Next, the Define groups was clicked, and the original values used to distinguish between straight and same sex individuals was used: for group 1, the number 1 was added to represent the straight group, and for group 2, the number 2 was inputted to represent the same-sex group. Next, the continue button was clicked. It was ensured the Mann-Whitney u test was selected and the default setting were left as it is. Finally, the Ok button was clicked to run the analysis.

To conduct the Pearson's product-moment correlation, the analysis was also performed using SPSS. First, the Analyse tab was selected, followed by the Correlate option. From the available options, Bivariate was chosen, as the analysis involved two variables (attachment style and relationship satisfaction). Next, the attachment style and relationship satisfaction variables were placed into the box. It was ensured that the Pearson's correlation coefficient option was selected. In the Options tab, the options for means, standard deviation, and Exclude cases pairwise were ticked. Finally, the Continue button was clicked, followed by the OK button to run the analysis.

3.1 Table 1

Descriptive statistics for variables included in the study

Relationship satisfaction

	<i>Md</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>
Straight relationship	21.00	2.16	21.49
Same sex relationship	22.50	2.07	22.33

A Mann-Whitney U test was conducted as opposed to an independent samples T test to compare relationship satisfaction in straight and same sex couples due to the sample size of same sex couples being relatively small. Therefore, the Mann-Whitney U test was used to determine if there was a significant difference in relationship satisfaction between these two relationship groups. However, the results indicated no significant difference in relationship satisfaction between straight ($Md = 21.0$, $N = 57$) and same sex ($Md = 22.5$, $N = 6$), $U = 135.00$, $Z = .85$, $p = 0.39$, $r = -0.11$. Therefore, this suggests that relationship satisfaction does not significantly differ between straight and same-sex couples.

A Pearsons product moment correlation analysis was conducted to explore the relationship between secure attachment and relationship satisfaction, fearful avoidant attachment and relationship satisfaction, preoccupied attachment and relationship satisfaction, and disorganised attachment and relationship satisfaction. The findings for each variable are individually described below:

3.2 Tabel 2

Descriptive statistics for variables included in the study

Attachment styles	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Secure	12.06	2.05
Fearful avoidant	16.92	4.60
Preoccupied	10.20	1.62
Disorganised	15.31	2.47

Secure attachment and relationship satisfaction

A Pearsons correlation was used to conduct an analysis on secure attachment and relationship satisfaction. The results indicated there was also no significant correlation between secure attachment and relationship satisfaction, $r = -.17$, $N = 63$, $p > .05$. This suggests the relationship between these two variables is not statistically significant.

Fearful avoidant attachment and relationship satisfaction

Another Pearson's correlation was conducted and indicated a strong, negative relationship between fearful avoidant attachment and relationship satisfaction, $r = -.77$, $N = 63$, $p < .05$. Therefore, this suggests that the higher levels of fearful avoidant attachment, the lower levels of relationship satisfaction were reported.

Preoccupied attachment and relationship satisfaction

A Pearson's correlation was also used to conduct an analysis on preoccupied attachment and relationship satisfaction. The results suggested there was also no significant correlation between preoccupied attachment and relationship satisfaction, $r = -.15$, $N = 63$, $p > .05$. This suggests there is not a statistically significant relationship between these variables.

Disorganised attachment and relationship satisfaction

Finally, A Pearson's correlation was conducted to test the relationship between disorganised attachment and relationship satisfaction. The results suggested a weak negative correlation between disorganised attachment and relationship satisfaction, $r = -.26$, $N = 63$, $p < .05$. This indicates that higher levels of disorganised attachment are associated with lower levels of relationship satisfaction. However, the relationship is weak, suggesting that disorganised attachment only weakly influences relationship satisfaction.

To summarise, the study hypothesised that individuals with more insecure attachment styles would experience lower levels of relationship satisfaction. Based on the findings, this hypothesis can be partially accepted, as fearful avoidant and disorganised attachment styles were associated with lower levels of relationship satisfaction. Therefore, individuals with these insecure attachment styles may experience lower levels of relationship satisfaction. However, the study also discovered that secure and preoccupied attachment styles had no significant relationship with relationship satisfaction, thus the hypothesis for these attachment styles was not supported.

In addition, it was also hypothesised that there may be a difference in relationship satisfaction between heterosexual and non-heterosexual couples based on attachment styles. However, this hypothesis was not supported, as there was no significant difference in relationship satisfaction between straight and same sex couples. Therefore, the findings suggest that relationship type does not impact relationship satisfaction. Additionally, due to the small sample size of same sex couples, an analysis could not be conducted to test whether attachment styles influenced relationship satisfaction within these groups.

Chapter 4 - Discussion

The aim of this study was to explore the relationships between attachment styles and relationship satisfaction in both heterosexual and same-sex relationships. However, due to the small sample size in the same-sex group, a two-way between-subjects ANOVA could not be conducted to examine the interaction effect between relationship type (heterosexual vs. same-sex) and attachment styles. As a result, this study focused solely on the relationships between each of the four attachment styles (secure, fearful avoidant, preoccupied, and disorganized) and relationship satisfaction, while also examining the link between relationship type (straight and same sex) and relationship satisfaction.

Additionally, while the initial plan was to categorise attachment styles into secure and insecure types, it was recognised that this approach might not be the most suitable for this study. To maximise the use of the study's data and obtain more meaningful results, the decision was made to examine each of the four attachment styles independently and explore their individual effects on relationship satisfaction.

Furthermore, to examine relationship types (Straight and same sex) and their potential differences in relationship satisfaction, a Mann-Whitney U test was conducted. Initially, this study aimed to explore the main effect of relationship types on attachment styles and the interaction between the two on relationship satisfaction. However, due to the small sample size of same sex couples ($N = 6$), the Mann-Whitney U test was deemed the best suited statistical test for this study. Therefore, this interaction effect between attachment styles and relationship types on relationship satisfaction could not be examined. As a result, given the small sample size future research could consider reaching out to LGBTQ+ organisations or communities to gather a larger sample of same-sex couples.

In addition, the results from the Mann-Whitney U test indicated no significant difference in relationship satisfaction between straight and same sex couples, ($U = 135.00$, $Z = .85$, $p = 0.39$, $r = -0.11$). These findings, therefore, suggest relationship satisfaction is not significantly influenced by relationship type. However, the effect size ($r = -0.11$) suggests a very weak negative correlation between straight and same sex couples and their relationship satisfaction. However, due to the very weak correlation and no statistical significance, there is not enough evidence to claim that relationship satisfaction differs between straight and same sex groups. However, this weak negative correlation could also be due to the sample size. As a result, it is important to acknowledge this. Therefore, future studies with larger more diverse samples may be beneficial to discover any potential differences or similarities between straight and same sex couples regarding their relationship satisfaction.

Moreover, due to a lack of participants from the same-sex group, this study was unable to examine one of its key hypotheses: the interaction between attachment style and relationship type (heterosexual vs. same sex) on relationship satisfaction. This study's small sample size prevented the analysis of the findings by Sommantico and De Rosa (2020), who identified attachment styles as a significant factor influencing relationship satisfaction in gay and lesbian couples. Therefore, future research should include a range of relationship types in attempt to be more inclusive and better investigate this relationship.

Furthermore, despite significant correlations being expected based on prior empirical literature regarding this phenomenon, the results from the correlations statistical test revealed a mixture of levels of significance towards the relationship between attachment styles and relationship satisfaction.

The Pearson's correlation conducted to analyse the relationship between secure attachment and relationship satisfaction highlighted there was no significant relationship ($r = .17$, $p > 0.05$). This was unexpected, based on the substantial evidence supporting a positive relationship between secure attachment and relationship satisfaction. For example, like previously mentioned Sharma and Kaushik (2024) found having a secure attachment made it more likely to have higher relationship satisfaction in comparison to insecure attachments. Therefore, the non-significant correlation between secure attachment and relationship satisfaction suggests that having a secure attachment does not necessarily predict higher relationship satisfaction. This may suggest that the impact of secure attachment on relationship satisfaction may be influenced by other factors like having high self-confidence regarding problem solving skills (Eğeci & Gençöz, 2006). As a result, it is important for future studies to consider individual differences and influences like personality.

Additionally, the findings of this study may differ from those in previous literature due to its methodological limitations. For instance, secure attachment was assessed using only three questions, which may not provide a thorough measure of an individual's attachment styles. Therefore, future research examining this phenomenon should consider using a more detailed questionnaire to ensure participants are not categorised into distinct groups based on a limited set of questions.

However, a strong negative correlation was established between fearful avoidant attachment and relationship satisfaction ($r = -.77$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, this indicates having higher levels of fearful avoidant attachment tends to result in lower relationship satisfaction. This could be due to the fact that individuals with avoidant

attachment styles tend to exhibit withdrawal behaviours, which can lead to lower satisfaction in romantic relationships (Bretaña et al., 2022). Furthermore, this statistically significant relationship between avoidant attachment and relationship satisfaction is strongly supported by existing literature such as, Li and Chan (2012) who uncovered in a meta-analysis that anxious attachments have a larger negative effect on relationship satisfaction. As a result, this supports the existing literature's expectation that insecure attachments lead to lower relationship satisfaction.

Similarly to secure attachment, preoccupied attachment styles have shown no significant correlation with relationship satisfaction ($r = -.15$, $p > 0.05$). This indicates that preoccupied attachment levels do not influence relationship satisfaction. Therefore, this does not support the literature suggesting that insecure attachments negatively affect relationship satisfaction. However, it may be beneficial to assess preoccupied attachment independently and examine its effect on relationship satisfaction, as only five questions assessed preoccupied attachment styles, which may not provide enough data to gain a clear and robust understanding of the impact of this attachment style on relationship satisfaction.

However, in line with previous literature, there was a correlation between disorganised attachment and relationship satisfaction ($r = -.26$, $p < 0.05$), however, this was a weak significant correlation which suggests although there is a slight tendency for higher levels of disorganised attachment styles to be associated with lower levels of relationship satisfaction, this was a weak correlation therefore it may be important to interpret these findings lightly and do more robust research regarding disorganised attachment.

Moreover, the findings provide a more valuable understanding into how attachment styles are associated in different ways to relationship satisfaction. Specifically, as it was found fearful avoidant attachment had a strong negative correlation regarding relationship satisfaction, however, secure and preoccupied attachment styles did not show the same level of significance. Therefore, these results indicate that attachment styles may just be one of the factors influencing relationship satisfaction. This supports existing literature, but also implies that other factors, such as the expression of anger and communication styles, may also play a major role in how satisfied an individual feels in a relationship (Guerrero et al., 2009).

Furthermore, there are more limitations to this study. For example, the sample size, mainly consisted of straight relationships, which may limit the generalisability of this study's findings. Additionally, having a small same sex sample made it impossible to conduct statistical tests like the ANOVA, which would have provided more valuable insight into the interactional effects between all independent variables

(IVs) and the dependent variables (DV). Therefore, to allow for more robust statistical analyses, such as an ANOVA, it may be beneficial to take the study further and recruit more participants, particularly same sex couples. This would help obtain more diverse findings, making the results more generalisable and provide greater representation for different groups of individuals.

Another limitation of the study is its reliance on self-reported measures of attachment styles and relationship satisfaction. For example, the participants answers may have been influenced by social desirability bias, where participants may have responded in ways they felt were expected or socially acceptable. This can impact the accuracy of the results, as participants might overreport or underreport aspects of their relationships and attachment behaviour's. Furthermore, self-report measures, such as the questionnaires used in this study, depend on the participant's ability to accurately reflect on their own emotions and behaviours, which may not be possible for all individuals. As a result, the findings may not truly represent participant's actual feelings and behaviours but instead reflect what they believe is socially desirable or acceptable. It may be beneficial for future research to incorporate more qualitative methods, such as interviews, to gain deeper insights into participant's thoughts and behaviours and reduce the potential bias in self-report methods.

In addition, due to the constraints of this being an undergraduate study, several limitations impacted the design and methodology. A mixed-methods approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data, may have been more effective in providing a deeper understanding of the research topics. For instance, conducting interviews could have allowed for more in-depth insights into the potential differences such as parental attitudes toward homosexuality, and how these attitudes might influence individual's future relationships. Research by Fuller and Rutter (2017) suggests that parental acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals plays a significant role in the quality of their relationships and the sense of security they feel in them. Therefore, this highlights how personal experiences may impact an individual's future relationships, highlighting the importance of deeply understanding the factors that influence attachment style and relationship satisfaction. By identifying these factors, it may be possible to mitigate insecure attachment styles, which, in turn, enhances relationship satisfaction. Thus, using qualitative methods, such as interviews, could also provide a deeper understanding of why attachment styles affect areas like trust (Mohr & Fassinger, 2013) and how these factors influence relationships.

Furthermore, another limitation of the study is the use of an online format, which can reduce levels of control during data collection. As participants are not being directly monitored, this makes the data more vulnerable to external influences. For example, participants could be more easily distracted, resulting in potentially more rushed answers. Furthermore, due to no researcher being present, it is harder

to know if participants have encountered difficulties completing the study. As a result, data being collected may not reflect a participant's true behaviours or feelings.

Additionally, there are further limitations with the study being on the Experimental management system (EMS) for students to obtain credits. For example, as psychology students could easily access the study to gain credits, there is possibility participants were motivated by the credits rather than a genuine interest in the study. Therefore, this could result in carelessness when answering questions, with some random responses. Furthermore, there was also no way to verify whether participants were in a relationship of at least 6 months, which is a requirement for the study. As a result, it is impossible to be certain that the relationship satisfaction data accurately reflects the experiences of individuals in a relationship of at least six months.

Furthermore, due to the restrictions of being an undergraduate study, this study relied heavily on quantitative methods. Whilst this method is great for identifying statistical relationships, it has its limitations, as it cannot provide insight into what areas of the relationship are contributing to poorer satisfaction. For example, despite the findings supporting the original hypothesis that insecure attachment correlates with lower relationship satisfaction, the results on their own do not uncover why insecure attachment styles, such as fearful avoidant and disorganised, result in lower satisfaction. In addition, due to the nature of the study it fails to explain the underlining factors, such as the ones discovered by Gabbay and Lafontaine (2017), who highlighted that insecure attachment could lead to increased partner violence, which, in turn, lowers relationship satisfaction. Thus, although the quantitative method provides valuable insight into the statistical relationship between the two variables, it did not offer the in depth understanding of personal experiences that qualitative methods could provide.

Another potential limitation of this study is it did not consist of a pilot phase. The study did not consist of a pilot study due to the time frame and it was not deemed necessary. However, without piloting the study, it is difficult to understand directly from participants whether any modifications were needed, such as changes to the questions wording or response options. Therefore, it remains unclear whether aspects of the study, such as the phrasing of questions, influenced the responses and whether these areas should have been revised to improve the study's effectiveness.

Furthermore, the study focused only on two types of relationships, specifically straight and gay relationships. As a result, it did not consider other relationship types, such as open or polygamous relationships. Consequently, the findings are limited to same-sex or heterosexual relationships and cannot be generalised to other relationship dynamics. To address this limitation, a more robust study could be conducted that includes a broader range of relationship types and gender identifications. This would allow for the identification of both differences and similarities across a range of different relationship structures.

This study has important real-world implications, particularly within the fields of social and developmental psychology. It enhances our understanding of how early childhood relationships, such as attachment styles, can influence later romantic experiences. In addition, the study goes further by examining various types of relationships and finding no significant difference in relationship satisfaction between heterosexual and same-sex couples. This adds valuable insights to the psychological literature on the similarities and differences between heterosexual and homosexual individuals. Additionally, by assessing each attachment style individually, the study provides a deeper understanding of how different attachment styles independently impact romantic relationships, contributing further to attachment theory literature.

Additionally, the study's sample included only 12 males, with the majority being female (52 participants). Given the small number of male participants, the findings cannot be truly representative of the male population. This limitation reduces the generalisability of the results to the broader population. Therefore, this emphasises the need for future research that includes a more diverse sample, which allows for the identification of potential individual differences. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that this study was conducted at the undergraduate level, which meant it was constrained by a limited timeframe. This limitation may have contributed to the underrepresentation of male participants and could be a factor to consider when interpreting the results.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the existing literature by exploring the relationship between different attachment styles and relationship satisfaction. The findings suggest that certain types of attachment styles for example, fearful avoidant and disorganised are associated with lower levels of relationship satisfaction, with fearful avoidant attachment showing a stronger statistical association. However, secure and preoccupied attachment styles showed no significant relationship with relationship satisfaction. Moreover, the studies findings demonstrated no significant difference in relationship satisfaction between straight and same sex couples. However, there was a small sample size for same-sex couples therefore, the findings should be taken lightly as they may not accurately represent the experiences of same-sex couples. These findings highlight the complexity of phenomena like

attachment styles and relationship satisfaction, emphasising the importance of acknowledging and considering many factors, including attachment styles, when understanding satisfaction in relationships. As a result, these findings suggest future research should be conducted with larger and more diverse samples, whilst considering other potential factors that may impact the level of satisfaction felt in relationships.

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Appendices

Appendices A - Relationship assessment scale:

How well does your partner meet your needs?

In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?

How good is your relationship compared to most?

How often do you wish you hadn't gotten into this relationship?

To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?

How much do you love your partner?

How many problems are there in your relationship?

Items are scored on a 5-point Likert scale. Items 4 and 7 are reverse-scored permission.

Appendices B – Attachment style questionnaires

Secure

- 8.

I trust other people and I like it when other people can rely on me.

- 9.

I feel at ease in intimate relationships

- 10.

I think it is important that people can rely on each other.

Fearful-avoidant

- 6.

I would like to be open to others, but I feel I can't trust other people.

- 7.

I would like to have close relationships with other people, but I find it difficult to fully trust them.

- 8.

I'm afraid that my hopes will be deceived when I get too closely related to others.

- 9.

I am wary to get engaged in close relationships because I'm afraid to get hurt.

- 10.

I feel uncomfortable when relationships with other people become close.

Preoccupied

- 8.

I often wonder whether people like me.

- 9.

I am often afraid that other people don't like me.

- 10.

I don't worry whether people like me or not.

Dismissing

- 6.

It is important to me to be independent.

- 7.

I prefer that others are independent of me, and that I am independent of others.

- 8.

I like to be self-sufficient.

- 9.

I don't worry about being alone: I don't need other people that strongly.

Appendices C – Consent Form

Centre for Psychology and Counselling

BSc Applied Psychology

BSc Psychology

BSc Psychology and Counselling



Prifysgol Cymru

Y Brindod Dewi Sant

University of Wales

Trinity Saint David

Study Consent Form

I understand that this research study is being carried out by a 3rd year Psychology Student for their dissertation, and that this study will involve completing two questionnaires.

This study will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

I understand that participation in this study is voluntary, and I am free to withdraw participation during or at the end of the study without giving a reason. I understand that once I leave the study, I will not be able to withdraw my data, as it will be anonymised. I am aware that if I have concerns about the study, I can contact the researcher via email about these concerns at any time during or after the study. I understand that I will be provided with the contact details of the research supervisor at the end of the study, should I have any concerns.

I understand that the information provided by me will be held confidentially, with a code assigned in place of my name. This data will be stored indefinitely in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

I also understand that at the end of the study I will be provided with a debrief form that will have the contact details of the researcher to discuss any issues.

If you have any queries or wish to contact the researchers or research supervisor, see the contact details below:

Marisa Pinto (2203596@uwtsd.ac.uk)

Dr Judith Marshall: (judith.marshall@uwtsd.ac.uk)

Appendices D – Debrief Form

Centre for Psychology and Counselling

BSc Applied Psychology

BSc Psychology

BSc Psychology and Counselling



Prifysgol Cymru

Y Drindod Dawl Sant

University of Wales

Trinity Saint David

Study Debrief Sheet

Does attachment effect levels of romantic relationship satisfaction amongst those in same-sex and heterosexual relationships.

Thank you for taking part in the study.

The aim of this study was to explore the effect attachment styles have on relationship satisfaction in heterosexual and non-heterosexual couples. I specifically wanted to find out whether individuals with insecure attachment styles will have poorer relationship satisfactions in romantic relationships. Previous literature regarding this phenomenon has suggested that individuals with more insecure attachment style will have poorer relationship satisfaction in comparison to those with secure attachments. However, there was a gap in the literature when it came to exploring non-heterosexual couples. Thus, this study was an explorative study to include non-heterosexual relationships in this study.

All data has been anonymised by the Qualtrics system and only used for the purpose of this research. One you press submit all data will be anonymised and cannot be traced back to you.

If you wish to withdraw your data from the study, you must exit this page without pressing submit.

If taking part in this study has raised any questions, please contact the researcher: Marisa Pinto 2203596@uwtsd.ac.uk or contact the academic supervisor Dr Judith Marshall: judith.marshall@uwtsd.ac.uk

Thank you once again for taking time to participate in this study.

Marisa Pinto

Appendices E – Proposal form



UNIVERSITY OF WALES
Trinity Saint David
—UNIVERSITY OF WALES—
TRINITY SAINT DAVID

ECP\$6001: Psychology Empirical Project Research Proposal

Assessment Component 1: Research proposal (1,000 words) worth 10% of the overall module mark for the Psychology Empirical Project. The proposal form will be marked in line with the Level Six Grading Rubric. The boxes below will expand as you type.

Student Name and University ID number:	Marisa Pinto (2203596)
Proposed Supervisor's name:	Dr Judith Marshall

Psychology Research Area (tick all that apply)

Social Psychology ✓	Developmental Psychology ✓	Biological Psychology	Forensic Psychology
Health Psychology	Individual Differences	Educational Psychology	Political Psychology
Cognitive Psychology	Clinical Psychology	Counselling Psychology	Occupational Psychology
Other: indicate briefly (not included in word count)			

Proposed Study Design (tick all that apply)

Quantitative ✓	Experimental	Applied (with UWTSB students)	Online Questionnaire Survey
Qualitative	Quasi Experimental	Focus Groups	Online ✓
Mixed Methods	Applied (with external organisation)	Interviews	Lab-based study
If Applied, and involving an external organisation, please indicate your plans for gaining appropriate approvals from the organisation: (not included in the word count)		Other study design: indicate briefly (not included in word count)	

Suggested Research Title/Area: (between 10-15 words and must reflect the essence of your proposed research question, study design and study population and should be more specific than a broad topic area).

Does attachment style effect levels of romantic relationship satisfaction in heterosexual (Straight) and non-heterosexual (Gay) couples?

Background: 260 words

Why is your study important? What theory and empirical research evidence supports your research question? (Please provide a rationale for your study including a brief review of relevant psychological literature and theory and a minimum of five references).

It has been argued that the attachment style developed as a child influences adult romantic relationships. This is supported by, González-Ortega et al. (2021) who found individuals with an avoidant attachment style in heterosexual couples tends to have negative quality relationships, and the higher this attachment style is the more withdrawn a person gets in a relationship. This could potentially have long term effects for individuals as relationships are vital in helping individuals belong and grow. Therefore, when individuals become withdrawn from a romantic relationship it may impact future relationships, and the development of an individual's social identity as a sense of belongingness is necessary for the formation of social identities (Bemstien et al., 2010). Candel and Turfuc (2019) discovered higher levels of insecure attachment, such as insecure and avoidant results in lower levels of relationship satisfaction. Furthermore, this evidence has been replicated where women with avoidant attachment are less satisfied and have lower levels of cohesion in a romantic relationship (Towler & Stuhlmacher, 2013). Additionally, this is also supported in a study looking at gay relationships by Trachtenberg-Ray and Modesto (2023) who also found gay men with an avoidant attachment style have lower levels of romantic relationship satisfaction but when they have a secure attachment there was higher levels of satisfaction. In addition to an avoidant attachment style, individuals with insecure attachment styles have been found to have a more negative relationship such as lower levels of gratitude towards their partner leading to lower satisfaction (Vollmann et al., 2019). As a result, this can suggest the attachment you form in your early development will affect your adult relationships.

Through the examination of many studies and recent literature surrounding this topic. Studies like Trachtenberg-Ray and Modesto (2023) on gay men, despite supporting this overall belief found on heterosexual couples that insecure attachment negatively effects romantic relationship satisfaction this study is still limited by only focusing on gay men. Therefore, it still raises doubts and provides unanswered questions as to whether gay women would have the same findings.

Overall, the majority of research looks at heterosexual couples, which does not consider how homosexual couples might go through different journeys and experiences when developing a romantic relationship such as discrimination, that may influence an individual's upbringing and mental health, which may cause different effects on the attachment style of homosexual individuals compared to heterosexual individuals. According to Otis et al., (2008) same sex couples who experience more discrimination and internalised homophobia had more negative views on relationship quality. Thus, these different experiences may affect their romantic relationship satisfaction and attachment styles. Furthermore, there is a relative lack of data exploring how attachment styles correlate with relationship experience of non-heterosexual couples. Thus, this study aims to explore similarities and differences between attachment styles and levels of satisfaction in both non-heterosexual and heterosexual relationships.

As appropriate restrictions apply to an undergraduate study, this study is intended as an initial exploratory research with the intention of underpinning this topic at a higher level of study, with further ethical approval.

Bernstein, M. J., Sacco, D. F., Young, S. G., Hugenberg, K., & Cook, E. (2010). Being "In" With the In-Crowd: The Effects of Social Exclusion and Inclusion Are Enhanced by the Perceived Essentialism of Ingroups and Outgroups. *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin*, 36(8), 999–1009. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167210376059>

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Please state the main research question(s) or hypotheses(s): (100 words max)

- Does insecure attachment result in poorer romantic relationship satisfaction?
- Does attachment style affect relationship satisfaction the same way for heterosexual (Straight) and homosexual (Gay) couples?
- If not, what is this difference?

It is hypothesised that participants who have a more insecure attachment style will display poorer relationship satisfaction in their couples.

It is hypothesised that there will be a difference in types of attachment styles in heterosexual and non-heterosexual couples that will impact relationship satisfaction in couples.

Methodological Details (600 words)

Please summarise the key methodological approach: (you can include copies of proposed study materials as appendices if you wish). You must include details of the following:

- *Participants: Who will your participants be, how will you access and recruit them, and how many are needed?*
- *Design: Using appropriate terminology clearly define key elements of your design (IVs, DVs, Quasi approach, expt. manipulations etc). How do you plan to analyse your main data?*
- *Materials: What are the main measures, scales, experimental tools or other materials required for your study?*
- *Procedure: How will you carry out the study – define briefly what will happen to a participant in your study from the point of consent to the study debrief.*

Participants:

Participants will need to be over the age of 18 and sign up via a link provided on media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. There are specific criteria needed to be met to participate in the study such as being in a heterosexual (Straight) or homosexual (Gay) relationship. The study will focus on these two groups (Straight and Gay couples) and will assess and compare how attachment style affects their relationship satisfaction. This study will require 100 participants.

Design:

A 2x2 quantitative mixed experimental design will be used. This study will consist of two independent variables, the first IV is sexual orientation: Straight/Gay and the second IV is attachment styles: Insecure/secure. The dependent variable will relationship satisfaction.

A mixed Anova will be used to analyse the research question of whether attachment styles effect Relationship satisfaction, which will be assessed using a 5-point Likert scale so the higher an individual scores the more satisfied they are in their heterosexual or homosexual romantic relationship. This will be conducted to see the main effect of the different attachment styles on heterosexual and homosexual relationship satisfaction.

Materials:

The Attachment Style Questionnaire (Chui and Leung, 2016): consists of a 15-item questionnaire where questions will be divided into secure and insecure attachment. The relationship assessment scale (Vaughn and Matyasik, 1999): consists of a seven-item questionnaire that measure relationship satisfaction using a 5-point likert scale. This will be organised on Qualtrics, with an information sheet, a consent form, the questionnaires and then a debrief form that can then be downloaded.

Procedure:

Participants will be required to complete this study online on Qualtrics. A link would be provided for them to press and complete the study. Firstly, an information sheet outlining what the study entails will be provided following on from this there will be a slide presented which provides the consent form. This will have options where the participant will have to tick to complete, instructions will be created on Qualtrics which only allows the participants to proceed to the next steps of the study if full consent is provided. They will then be asked to complete demographic questions such as age, gender and sexual preference. Participants would have had to know their partner and be in a romantic relationship with them for a minimum of six months. The screen will then display the attachment questionnaire and the Likert scale for each question. Once participants have completed this questionnaire there will then be provided with the relationship satisfaction scale, which will also include a Likert scale for each question. Participants will be doing the questionnaires in this order as the research question is to see how attachment styles affect relationship satisfaction in romantic relationships. Once both questionnaires have been completed the screen will present a online debrief form which participants can download.

Chui, W. Y., & Leung, M.-T. (2016). Adult attachment internal working model of self and other in Chinese culture: Measured by the Attachment Style Questionnaire — Short Form (ASQ-SF) by confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and item response theory (IRT). *Personality and Individual Differences*, 96, 55–64.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2016.02.068>

Vaughn, M. J., & Matyasik Baier, M. E. (1999). Reliability and validity of the relationship assessment scale. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 27(2), 137–147.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/019261899262023>

Key Ethical considerations (150 words)

In this section you are required to briefly outline any specific ethical considerations for your project. All projects will be expected to adhere to the BPS code of human research ethics, and you will need to submit a full ethics form which will document your specific processes for informed consent, debriefing, and data protection. Here you need to briefly note additional or specific key ethical considerations for your particular project e.g. potential for distress or discomfort, any deception, research with vulnerable

populations or sensitive topic areas, and briefly outline how you expect to manage these risks within your project.

The questionnaire will require participants to answer personal questions regarding their attachment style and relationship satisfaction. However, participants will be informed of this prior to commencing the study and if they do not want to participate in the study after being made aware of what's required they can withdrawal at any time and also do not need to take part in the study at all if they feel what's being asked of them will cause distress. They will be made aware that their data will be anonymised so it cannot be traced back to them and all their information will be confidential. All participant data will be discarded once analysed. They will be made aware they can withdraw at any time on the consent form. They will also be made aware if they do not want their data used in the study, they will have to exit the page without submitting their answers. Participants will also be debriefed at the end of the study so if they are not happy for their data to be used in analysis it can be discarded, they will just need to exit without pressing submit.

Appendices F –Ethics Form



UNIVERSITY OF WEXFORD
Wexford, Ireland
www.uwexford.ie
info@uwexford.ie

ECP56001: Psychology Empirical Project Research Proposal

Assessment Component 1: Research proposal (1,000 words) worth 10% of the overall module mark for the Psychology Empirical Project. The proposal form will be marked in line with the Level Six Grading Rubric. The boxes below will expand as you type.

Student Name and University ID number:	Marisa Pinto (2203596)
Proposed Supervisor's name:	Dr Judith Marshall

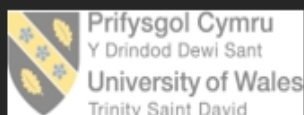
Psychology Research Area (tick all that apply)

Social Psychology ✓	Developmental Psychology ✓	Biological Psychology	Forensic Psychology
Health Psychology	Individual Differences	Educational Psychology	Political Psychology
Cognitive Psychology	Clinical Psychology	Counselling Psychology	Occupational Psychology
Other: indicate briefly (not included in word count)			

Proposed Study Design (tick all that apply)

Quantitative ✓	Experimental	Applied (with UWTSD students)	Online Questionnaire Survey
Qualitative	Quasi Experimental	Focus Groups	Online ✓
Mixed Methods	Applied (with external organisation)	Interviews	Lab-based study
If Applied, and involving an external organisation, please indicate your plans for gaining appropriate approvals from the organisation: (not included in the word count)		Other study design: indicate briefly (not included in word count)	

Suggested Research Title/Area: (between 10-15 words and must reflect the essence of your proposed research question, study design and study population and should be more specific than a broad topic area).



PG2 / E1 FORM

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

In order for research to result in benefit and minimise risk of harm, it must be conducted ethically. A researcher may not be covered by the University's insurance if ethical approval has not been obtained prior to commencement.

The University follows the OECD Frascati manual definition of research activity: "creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications". As such this covers activities undertaken by members of staff, postgraduate research students, and both taught postgraduate and undergraduate students working on dissertations/projects.

The individual undertaking the research activity is known as the "principal researcher".

Ethical approval is not required for routine audits, performance reviews, quality assurance studies, testing within normal educational requirements, and literary or artistic criticism.

Please read the notes for guidance before completing ALL sections of the form.

This form must be completed and approved prior to undertaking any research activity. Please see Checklist for details of process for different categories of application.

SECTION A: About You (Principal Researcher)

1	Full Name:	Marisa Pinto			
2	Tick all boxes that apply:	Member of staff:	☐	Honorary research fellow:	☐
	Undergraduate Student	☒	Taught Postgraduate Student	☐	Postgraduate Research Student
3	Institute/Academic Discipline/Centre:	Institute of Education and Humanities/Psychology and Counselling			
4	Campus:	University of Wales Trinity Saint David SA1 Campus			
5	E-mail address:	2203596@student.uwtsd.ac.uk			
6	Contact Telephone Number:	N/A			
For students:					
7	Student Number:	Marisa Pinto (2203596)			
8	Programme of Study:	BSc Psychology			
9	Director of Studies/Supervisor:	Dr Judith Marshall			

Does attachment style effect levels of romantic relationship satisfaction in heterosexual (Straight) and non-heterosexual (Gay) couples?

Background: 250 words

Why is your study important? What theory and empirical research evidence supports your research question? (Please provide a rationale for your study including a brief review of relevant psychological literature and theory and a minimum of five references).

It has been argued that the attachment style developed as a child influences adult romantic relationships. This is supported by González-Ortega et al. (2021) who found individuals with an avoidant attachment style in heterosexual couples tends to have negative quality relationships, and the higher this attachment style is the more withdrawn a person gets in a relationship. This could potentially have long term effects for individuals as relationships are vital in helping individuals belong and grow. Therefore, when individuals become withdrawn from a romantic relationship it may impact future relationships, and the development of an individual's social identity as a sense of belongingness is necessary for the formation of social identities (Bernstien et al., 2010). Candel and Turtiuc (2019) discovered higher levels of insecure attachment, such as insecure and avoidant results in lower levels of relationship satisfaction. Furthermore, this evidence has been replicated where women with avoidant attachment are less satisfied and have lower levels of cohesion in a romantic relationship (Towler & Stuhlmacher, 2013). Additionally, this is also supported in a study looking at gay relationships by Trachtenberg-Ray and Modesto (2023) who also found gay men with an avoidant attachment style have lower levels of romantic relationship satisfaction but when they have a secure attachment there was higher levels of satisfaction. In addition to an avoidant attachment style, individuals with insecure attachment styles have been found to have a more negative relationship such as lower levels of gratitude towards their partner leading to lower satisfaction (Vollmann et al., 2019). As a result, this can suggest the attachment you form in your early development will affect your adult relationships.

Through the examination of many studies and recent literature surrounding this topic. Studies like Trachtenberg-Ray and Modesto (2023) on gay men, despite supporting this overall belief found on heterosexual couples that insecure attachment negatively effects romantic relationship satisfaction this study is still limited by only focusing on gay men. Therefore, it still raises doubts and provides unanswered questions as to whether gay women would have the same findings.

Overall, the majority of research looks at heterosexual couples, which does not consider how homosexual couples might go through different journeys and experiences when developing a romantic relationship such as discrimination, that may influence an individual's upbringing and mental health, which may cause different effects on the attachment style of homosexual individuals compared to heterosexual individuals. According to Otis et al., (2006) same sex couples who experience more discrimination and internalised homophobia had more negative views on relationship quality. Thus, these different experiences may affect their romantic relationship satisfaction and attachment styles. Furthermore, there is a relative lack of data exploring how attachment styles correlate with relationship experience of non-heterosexual couples. Thus, this study aims to explore similarities and differences between attachment styles and levels of satisfaction in both non-heterosexual and heterosexual relationships.

As appropriate restrictions apply to an undergraduate study, this study is intended as an initial exploratory research with the intention of underpinning this topic at a higher level of study, with further ethical approval.

Bernstein, M. J., Sacco, D. F., Young, S. G., Hugenberg, K., & Cook, E. (2010). Being "In" With the In-Crowd: The Effects of Social Exclusion and Inclusion Are Enhanced by the Perceived Essentialism of Ingroups and Outgroups. *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin*, 36(8), 999–1009. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167210376059>

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Please state the main research question(s) or hypotheses(s): (100 words max)

- Does insecure attachment result in poorer romantic relationship satisfaction?
- Does attachment style affect relationship satisfaction the same way for heterosexual (Straight) and homosexual (Gay) couples?
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It is hypothesised that there will be a difference in types of attachment styles in heterosexual and non-heterosexual couples that will impact relationship satisfaction in couples.

Methodological Details (500 words).

Please summarise the key methodological approach: (you can include copies of proposed study materials as appendices if you wish). You must include details of the following:

- *Participants: Who will your participants be, how will you access and recruit them, and how many are needed?*
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- *Materials: What are the main measures, scales, experimental tools or other materials required for your study?*
- *Procedure: How will you carry out the study – define briefly what will happen to a participant in your study from the point of consent to the study debrief.*

Participants:

Participants will need to be over the age of 18 and sign up via a link provided on media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. There are specific criteria needed to be met to participate in the study such as being in a heterosexual (Straight) or homosexual (Gay) relationship. The study will focus on these two groups (Straight and Gay couples) and will assess and compare how attachment style affects their relationship satisfaction. This study will require 100 participants.

Design:

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Likert scale for each question. Once participants have completed this questionnaire there will then be provided with the relationship satisfaction scale, which will also include a Likert scale for each question. Participants will be doing the questionnaires in this order as the research question is to see how attachment styles affect relationship satisfaction in romantic relationships. Once both questionnaires have been completed the screen will present a online debrief form which participants can download.

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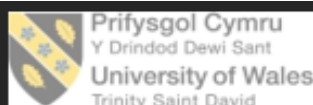
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Key Ethical considerations (150 words)

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The questionnaire will require participants to answer personal questions regarding their attachment style and relationship satisfaction. However, participants will be informed of this prior to commencing the study and if they do not want to participate in the study after being made aware of what's required they can withdrawal at any time and also do not need to take part in the study at all if they feel what's being asked of them will cause distress. They will be

made aware that their data will be anonymised so it cannot be traced back to them and all their information will be confidential. All participant data will be discarded once analysed. They will be made aware they can withdraw at any time on the consent form. They will also be made aware if they do not want their data used in the study, they will have to exit the page without submitting their answers. Participants will also be debriefed at the end of the study so if they are not happy for their data to be used in analysis it can be discarded, they will just need to exit without pressing submit.



PG2 / E1 FORM

SECTION B: Approval for Research Activity

1	Has the research activity received approval in principle? (please check the Guidance Notes as to the appropriate approval process for different levels of research by different categories of individual)	YES	☐	NO	☒
		Date			
2	If Yes, please indicate source of approval (and date where known): <i>Approval in principle must be obtained from the relevant source prior to seeking ethical approval</i>	Research Degrees Committee	☐		
Institute Research Committee		☐			
Other (write in)		☐			

SECTION C: Internal and External Ethical Guidance Materials

Please list the core ethical guidance documents that have been referred to during the completion of this form (including any discipline-specific codes of research ethics, location-specific codes of research ethics, and also any specific ethical guidance relating to the proposed methodology). Please tick to confirm that your research proposal adheres to these codes and guidelines. You may add rows to this table if needed.	
1	UWTSD Research Ethics & Integrity Code of Practice ☒
2	UWTSD Research Data Management Policy ☒
3	UWTSD Student Code of Conduct ☒
4	UWTSD Data Protection and Storage Protocol ☒
5	BPS Code of Human Research Ethics (April 2021) ☒
6	BPS code of Ethics and Conduct (Dec 2021) ☒
7	BPS Data Protection Regulation - Guidance for researchers (2018) ☒

SECTION D: External Collaborative Research Activity

If there are external collaborators then you should gain consent from the contact persons to share their personal data with the university. If there are no external collaborators then leave this section blank and continue to section E.

1	Institution					
2	Contact person name					
3	Contact person e-mail address					
4	Is your research externally funded?	YES	☐	NO	☐	
5	Are you in receipt of a KESS scholarship?	YES	☐	NO	☐	
6	Are you specifically employed to undertake this research in either a paid or voluntary capacity?	Voluntary	YES	☐	NO	☐
7		Employed	YES	☐	NO	☐
8	Is the research being undertaken within an existing UWTSD Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership (APLP)?	If YES then the permission question below does not need to be answered.	YES	☐	NO	☐
9	Has permission to undertake the research has been provided by the partner organisation?	(If YES attach copy) If NO the application cannot continue	YES	☐	NO	☐

Where research activity is carried out in collaboration with an external organisation

10	Does this organisation have its own ethics approval system?	YES	☐	NO	☐
If Yes, please attach a copy of any final approval (or interim approval) from the organisation (this may be a copy of an email if appropriate).					

SECTION E: Details of Research Activity

1	Indicative title:	Examining the effect of Attachment styles on relationship satisfaction amongst heterosexual and non-heterosexual couples.			
2	Proposed start date:		Proposed end date:	May 2025	
	Introduction to the Research (maximum 300 words per section) Ensure that you write for a <u>Non-Specialist Audience</u> when outlining your response to the points below: <i>Purpose of Research Activity</i> <i>Proposed Research Question</i> <i>Aims of Research Activity</i> <i>Objectives of Research Activity</i> Demonstrate, briefly, how <u>Existing Research</u> has informed the proposed activity and explain <i>What the research activity will add to the body of knowledge</i> <i>How it addresses an area of importance.</i>				
3	Purpose of Research Activity It has been argued that the attachment style developed as a child influences adult romantic relationships. This is supported by, González-Ortega et al. (2021) who found individuals with an avoidant attachment style in heterosexual couples tend to have negative quality relationships, and the higher this attachment style is, the more withdrawn a person gets in a relationship. This could have long term effects for individuals as relationships are vital in helping individuals belong and grow. Therefore, This can explain why Candel and Turluc (2019) discovered higher levels of insecure attachment (insecure and avoidant), results in lower levels of relationship satisfaction. This has been replicated where women with avoidant attachment are less satisfied and have lower levels of cohesion in a romantic relationship (Towler & Stuhlmacher, 2013). Additionally, this is also supported in a study looking at gay relationships by Trachtenberg-Ray and Modesto (2023) who found gay men with an avoidant attachment style have lower levels of romantic relationship satisfaction but the opposite findings for secure attachment. In addition, individuals with insecure attachment styles have been found to have lower levels of gratitude towards their partner leading to lower satisfaction (Vollmann et al., 2019). As a result, this can suggest the attachment you form in your early development will affect your adult relationships. However, although studies like Trachtenberg-Ray and Modesto (2023) support the overall belief that attachment styles effect relationship satisfaction, it just focuses on gay men without the consideration of gay women. Therefore, it still creates unanswered questions as to whether gay women would have the same findings. Thus, this study aims to explore similarities and differences between attachment styles and levels of satisfaction in both non-heterosexual and heterosexual relationships.				

The study hypothesises participants who have a more insecure attachment style will display poorer relationship satisfaction in their couples. Furthermore, there may be a difference in types of attachment styles in heterosexual and non-heterosexual couples that will impact relationship satisfaction in couples.

As appropriate restrictions apply to an undergraduate study, this study is intended as initial exploratory research with the intention of underpinning this topic at a higher level of study.

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Towler, A. J., & Stuhlmacher, A. F. (2013). Attachment styles, relationship satisfaction, and well-being in working women. *The Journal of social psychology*, 153(3), 279–298. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.2012.735282>

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(this box should expand as you type)

4	Research Question Does attachment style effect levels of romantic relationship satisfaction in heterosexual (Straight) and non-heterosexual (Gay) couples currently in romantic relationships? (this box should expand as you type)
5	Aims of Research Activity This study proposes to explore the links between attachment styles and relationship satisfaction in heterosexual and homosexual couples. (this box should expand as you type)
6	Objectives of Research Activity To contribute to the literature that explores effects of early attachment bonds on the formation of adult intimate relationships (this box should expand as you type)
	Proposed methods (maximum 600 words) Provide a brief summary of all the methods that may be used in the research activity, making it clear what specific techniques may be used. If methods other than those listed in this section are deemed appropriate later, additional ethical approval for those methods will be needed. You do not need to justify the methods here but should instead describe how you intend to collect the data necessary for you to complete your project.

7	Participants: Participants will be over the age of 18 and will sign up via a link on the university Facebook (Facebook advertisement provided at the end of the form) which will be overlooked by the university. There may be some 'unserious' responses due to it being primarily online and on Facebook which would be a weakness to this study. However, if this was to be taken further into a post graduate study then there can be more robust recruitments by potentially recruiting from LGBT societies. Participants will need to be in a heterosexual (Straight) or homosexual (Gay) relationship of at least six months. Although there are several gender identifications, The study will focus on these two groups as an initial investigation and will assess and compare how attachment style affects their relationship satisfaction. It aims to have 80 participants as the aim is for there to be 40 gay and 40 straight participants. Design: A 2x2 quantitative mixed experimental design will be used. This study will consist of two independent variables, the first is sexual orientation: Straight/Gay and the second is attachment styles: Insecure/secure. The dependent variable will be relationship satisfaction. There may be different insecure attachment styles. However, they will all be grouped into insecure attachment. A mixed Anova will be used to analyse whether attachment styles effect Relationship satisfaction. This will be conducted to see the main effect of the different attachment styles on heterosexual and homosexual relationship satisfaction. Materials: The Attachment Style Questionnaire (Chui and Leung, 2016): a 15-item questionnaire where questions will be divided into secure and insecure attachment. The Relationship Assessment Scale (Vaughn and Matyastik, 1999): a seven-item questionnaire that measure relationship satisfaction using a 5-point likert scale. These questionnaires will be collecting data via Qualtrics. Procedure: Participants will be required to complete this study online on Qualtrics through a link provided on a Facebook advert (with the approval of the ethics committee). There will be the option for UWTSD student to participate and gain credits via the EMS system. Participants will be provided a brief description on either EMS or Facebook about what the study entails, A slide with the consent form will be provided online prior to participants starting the study, they would have to tick all the required boxes on the consent form to take part in the study. There will be instructions on Qualtrics which only allows the participants to proceed to the next steps if full consent is provided. They will then be asked to complete demographic questions such as age, gender and sexual orientation. The screen will then display the attachment questionnaire, then the relationship satisfaction scale. Once both questionnaires have been completed the screen will present a online debrief form which participants can download. (this box should expand as you type)
	Location of research activity Identify all locations where research activity will take place.

8	The research will take place online using Qualtrics where participant are required to complete an online study answering questions. This will be shared to the public via Facebook through use of an recruitment advertisement that has been approved by the ethics panel. (this box should expand as you type)
	Research activity outside of the UK If research activity will take place overseas, you are responsible for ensuring that local ethical considerations are complied with and that the relevant permissions are sought. Specify any local guidelines (e.g. from local professional associations/learned societies/universities) that exist and whether these involve any ethical stipulations beyond those usual in the UK (provide details of any licenses or permissions required). Also specify whether there are any specific ethical issues raised by the local context in which the research activity is taking place, for example, particular cultural and/or legal sensitivities or vulnerabilities of participants. If you live in the country where you will do the research then please state this.
9	N/A (this box should expand as you type)

10	Use of documentation not in the public domain: Are any documents NOT publicly available?	NO	☒
		YES	☐
11	If Yes, please provide details here of how you will gain access to specific documentation that is not in the public domain and that this is in accordance with the current data protection law of the country in question and that of England and Wales. (this box should expand as you type)		

	Does your research relate to one or more of the seven aims of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015?	YES	NO
12	A prosperous Wales	☐	☒
13	A resilient Wales	☐	☒
14	A healthier Wales	☒	☐
15	A more equal Wales	☒	☐
16	A Wales of cohesive communities	☐	☒
17	A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language	☐	☒
18	A globally responsible Wales	☐	☐
19	If YES to any of the above, please give details:		
	By assessing how attachment styles effect relationship satisfaction in both heterosexual and non-heterosexual couples there may be differences or similarities that arise from this study that should be used understand both relationships rather than just heterosexual. As this study will assess attachment styles and their effect on relationship satisfaction, findings may uncover how certain attachment styles lead to unhealthy relationships or less satisfied relationships. Therefore, the aim is to contribute to the body of literature that assesses the importance of secure and healthy attachments to later life relationships.		

(this box should expand as you type)

SECTION F: Scope of Research Activity

	Will the research activity include:	YES	NO
1	Use of a questionnaire or similar research instrument?	☒	☐
2	Use of interviews?	☐	☒
3	Use of focus groups?	☐	☒
4	Use of participant diaries?	☐	☒
5	Use of video or audio recording?	☐	☒
6	Use of computer-generated log files?	☐	☒
7	Participant observation with their knowledge?	☐	☒
8	Participant observation without their knowledge?	☐	☒
9	Access to personal or confidential information without the participants' specific consent?	☐	☒
10	Administration of any questions, test stimuli, presentation that may be experienced as physically, mentally or emotionally harmful / offensive?	☐	☒
11	Performance of any acts which may cause embarrassment or affect self-esteem?	☐	☒
12	Investigation of participants involved in illegal activities?	☐	☒
13	Use of procedures that involve deception?	☐	☒
14	Administration of any substance, agent or placebo?	☐	☒
15	Working with live vertebrate animals?	☐	☒
16	Procedures that may have a negative impact on the environment?	☐	☒
17	Other primary data collection methods. Please indicate the type of data collection method(s) below.	☐	☒
	Details of any other primary data collection method: (this box should expand as you type)		

If NO to every question, then the research activity is (ethically) low risk and may be exempt from some of the following sections (please refer to Guidance Notes).

If YES to any question, then no research activity should be undertaken until full ethical approval has been obtained.

SECTION G: Intended Participants

If there are no participants then do not complete this section, but go directly to section H.

	Who are the intended participants:	YES	NO
1	Students or staff at the University?	☒	☐
2	Adults (over the age of 18 and competent to give consent)?	☒	☐

3	Vulnerable adults?	☐	☒
4	Children and Young People under the age of 18? (Consent from Parent, Carer or Guardian will be required)	☐	☒
5	Prisoners?	☐	☒
6	Young offenders?	☐	☒
7	Those who could be considered to have a particularly dependent relationship with the investigator or a gatekeeper?	☐	☒
8	People engaged in illegal activities?	☐	☒
9	Others. Please indicate the participants below, and specifically any group who may be unable to give consent.		
	Details of any other participant groups: I will also be collecting participants from outside the university via social media. (this box should expand as you type)	☒	☐

	Participant numbers and source Provide an estimate of the expected number of participants. How will you identify participants and how will they be recruited?	
10	How many participants are expected?	80 (this box should expand as you type)
11	Who will the participants be?	Individuals from inside the university will be recruited via EMS and individuals from outside will be recruited from Facebook. All participants must be 18 or over and be in a romantic relationship. (this box should expand as you type)
12	How will you identify the participants?	It will be a volunteer sample where Psychology and counselling students will be take part through EMS and identified by their EMS ID. Participants from outside the university or the psychology and counselling course will volunteer to take part in the study from and advert via the universities Facebook. This advert will have a link to the online study so participants can complete. (this box should expand as you type)

	Information for participants:	YES	NO	N/A
13	Will you describe the main research procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	☒	☐	☐
14	Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	☒	☐	☐
15	Will you obtain written consent for participation?	☐	☒	☐

16	Will you explain to participants that refusal to participate in the research will not affect their treatment or education (if relevant)?	☒	☐	☐
17	If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed?	☐	☐	☒
18	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	☒	☐	☐
19	With questionnaires, will you give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer?	☒	☐	☐
20	Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?	☒	☐	☐
21	Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation, in a way appropriate to the type of research undertaken?	☒	☐	☐
22	If NO to any of above questions, please give an explanation			
This will be a Online study therefore, consent will be provided digitally online and indicating consent is the only way participants can take part in the study. Participants would have to tick yes to all the consent questions on the consent form to participate, there will be instructions on Qualtrics that only allow participants to proceed with the study if informed consent is fully provided. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>				

Information for participants:		YES	NO	N/A
24	Will participants be paid?	☐	☒	☐
25	Is specialist electrical or other equipment to be used with participants?	☐	☒	☐
26	Are there any financial or other interests to the investigator or University arising from this study?	☐	☒	☐
27	Will the research activity involve deliberately misleading participants in any way, or the partial or full concealment of the specific study aims?	☐	☒	☐
28	If YES to any question, please provide full details			
<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>				

SECTION H: Anticipated Risks

Outline any anticipated risks that may adversely affect any of the participants, the researchers and/or the University, and the steps that will be taken to address them. If you have completed a full risk assessment (for example as required by a laboratory, or external research collaborator) you may append that to this form.						
1	Full risk assessment completed and appended?	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Yes</td> <td>☐</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No</td> <td>☒</td> </tr> </table>	Yes	☐	No	☒
Yes	☐					
No	☒					
2	Risks to participants For example: sector-specific health & safety, emotional distress, financial disclosure, physical harm, transfer of personal data, sensitive organisational information					
	Risk to participants: 1. The topic area discussed such as relationship satisfaction and attachment style may be personal to some participants, therefore this may be uncomfortable for some participant to answer.	How you will mitigate the risk to participants: 1. Adhering to the UWTSD and BPS research guidelines, participants will be informed of the nature of the study prior to taking part. Therefore, any participant who is not happy to take part and answer questions about their relationship satisfaction or attachment style would have the option to not proceed/ take part.				

	2. Participants would be asked about their attachment style and relationship satisfaction; therefore, participants may be concerned about how data can be traced back to them and/or the potentiality of data being leaked. 3. Participants will complete the study via Qualtrics online. So, a potential risk is that a researcher will not be present during their participation so any concerns/ issues with the study cannot be answered then and there. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	Participants will also be informed prior to the start of the study that if they do not wish to proceed at any stage of the study then they have a right to withdraw without any penalty this will also be outlined on the debrief form at the end of the study. 2. All data will be saved with a unique code, where the participants names will not be used but instead numbers that cannot be traced back to the participants. Once the study is completed participants will be given an online debrief form that outlines how all data will remain anonymous and will only be used for this research. They will also be given the researchers and supervisor email, so if they have any questions regarding their data, they can email the emails provided. 3. A full debrief will be provided once the study has been completed which will outline the true aims and purpose of the study. They will also be given contact details of the researcher (student email) and academic supervisors if they would like to discuss any issues or questions. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
3	If research activity may include sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use) or issues likely to disclose information requiring further action (e.g. criminal activity), give details of the procedures to deal with these issues, including any support/advice (e.g. helpline numbers) to be offered to participants. Note that where applicable, consent procedures should make it clear that if something potentially or actually illegal is discovered in the course of a project, it may need to be disclosed to the proper authorities	
	Participants will be advised that this study looks at topics such as attachment styles and relationship satisfaction, so before participants can participate in the study, they need to provide consent. They will also be informed that if anytime during the study they no longer want to proceed with the study they can withdraw at any time without a penalty. At the end of the study participants will be debriefed and the true aims of the study will be outlined and if they would like to withdraw, they can and their data will not be collected. They will be instructed to exit the study without submitting their responses. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	
4	Risks to the investigator For example: personal health & safety, physical harm, emotional distress, risk of accusation of harm/impropriety, conflict of interest	
	Risk to the investigator: 1. Participants will have access to the researchers email due to the debrief. Therefore, there is a potential risk that the researcher will receive hateful and negative emails from a participant.	<i>How you will mitigate the risk to the investigator:</i> 1. Participants will only have access/ receive the university student email address not personal ones. Therefore, If the researcher does receive any unwelcomed emails from a participant, this will be reported to the research supervisor immediately.

	2. Participants may ask the student researcher questions that are out of their scope of knowledge as an undergraduate student. 3. There is also a potential for the student researcher to be accused of harm/impropriety if the participant feels they are not happy about something that has been asked during the research. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	2. Queries that the student cannot answer/ are out of their scope of knowledge will be passed on to the research supervisor. 3. It will be ensured that the student researcher follows all UWTSD and BPS researcher codes of conduct and research guidelines, and the study will not take place until all elements have been approved by the ethics panel and the supervisor. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
5	University/institutional risks For example: adverse publicity, financial loss, data protection	
	Risk to the University: 1. If the codes of ethics and research protocols are broken and not adhered to then the reputation of UWTSD and the discipline of Psychology could be damaged causing a complaint of impropriety against the researcher. 2. In the event of data leakage <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to the University: 1. To reduce any potential dangers to the institution, the university's ethics and integrity code of practise, as well as the BPS rules of ethics and conduct will be followed all throughout the proposed study. 2. The data obtained will be maintained in accordance with UWTSD Research Data Management (RDM) rules and only used for the purpose of the study, in accordance with the UWTSD Research Ethics & integrity code of practice policy and the British Psychological Society (BPS) code of ethics. Once all the data has been collected and analysed it will be locked into a encrypted, password created one drive. Any data that may be identifiable will be destroyed. This is to ensure that all risks are minimised to UWTSD and the psychology department <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
6	Environmental risks For example: accidental spillage of pollutants, damage to local ecosystems	
	Risk to the environment: N/A: No risks <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to environment: N/A: No risks <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>

	Disclosure and Barring Service			
	If the research activity involves children or vulnerable adults, a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate must be obtained before any contact with such participants.	YES	NO	N/A
7	Does your research require you to hold a current DBS Certificate?	☐	☒	☐
8	If YES, please give the certificate number. If the certificate number is not available please write "Pending"; in this case any ethical approval will be subject to providing the appropriate certificate number.			

SECTION I: Feedback, Consent and Confidentiality

1	Feedback What de-briefing and feedback will be provided to participants, how will this be done and when?
	Participants will be provided a debrief after they have finished the study. The debrief form will be provided online and with the option to download, it will explain the aims of the study in more detail and address any misconceptions. It will also include the researcher's and supervisor's email address to contact if any support is needed. Participants will be told one more time they can withdraw without penalty before submission of their questions. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
2	Informed consent Describe the arrangements to inform potential participants, before providing consent, of what is involved in participating. Describe the arrangements for participants to provide full consent before data collection begins. If gaining consent in this way is inappropriate, explain how consent will be obtained and recorded in accordance with prevailing data protection legislation.
	Participants will be provided a brief description of what the study entails on EMS and Facebook. This allows participants to have an understanding what they will be expected to do to participate so they can make an informed decision if this study is for them. In the consent form participants will be advised that their data remains confidential, and they will be provided a unique code so they cannot be identified. It will also be made clear that participants can withdraw at any time before their data are submitted. Participants will need to tick all boxes in the consent form to be able to progress with the study. Quartics will be provided instructions where participants can only proceed and commence the study once full consent is provided. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
3	Confidentiality / Anonymity Set out how anonymity of participants and confidentiality will be ensured in any outputs. If anonymity is not being offered, explain why this is the case.
	All participants will remain anonymous through the duration and after the study. They will be provided unique numbers linked to their EMS account (if they are the students in UWTSD). Once the participants complete the study, they will remain anonymous with only the details put on the consent form kept. For those who access the study through the Facebook advert, there will be no record of who has, and no identifiable data will be collected. Age, gender and sexual orientation will be kept for descriptive statistics. Participants responses will remain confidential which suggest that their information and identity will be kept private from unauthorised access and kept in line with the safeguarding rules. This will mean that they cannot be identified through their data. Any names provided on the online consent form will be stored in a locked file with no public access, protected with a password and encrypted. This will only provide access to those authorised such as the supervisor and myself. All participants will remain anonymous through the duration and after the study. They will be provided unique numbers linked to their EMS account (if they are the students in UWTSD). Once the participants complete the study, they will remain anonymous with these unique codes that means participants cannot be traced back. For those who access the study through the Facebook advert, there will be no record of who has, and no identifiable data will be collected. Age, gender and sexual orientation provided by participants will be kept for descriptive statistics. Participants would not need to be providing their names as this study is solely online thus, nothing will be traced back to participants. Participants responses will remain confidential which suggest that their information and identity will be kept private from unauthorised access and kept in line with the safeguarding rules. All data collected from the study will be stored as a copy on OneDrive with a password. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>

SECTION J: Data Protection and Storage

	Does the research activity involve personal data (as defined by the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 "GDPR" and the Data Protection Act 2018 "DPA")?	YES	NO
1	"Personal data" means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person ("data subject"). An identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person. Any video or audio recordings of participants is considered to be personal data.	☒	☐
	If YES, provide a description of the data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
2	- age, - gender (potential differences between those identifying as male or female) and - sexual orientation or the descriptive statistics of the study. Some students will be from UWTSD therefore, they will use their Experimental Management System (EMS) numbers to sign up for the study, so they can be identified during the study. However, this number will not be used in any data of the study. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
	Does it involve special category data (as defined by the GDPR)?	YES	NO
3	"Special category data" means sensitive personal data consisting of information as to the data subjects' – (a) racial or ethnic origin, (b) political opinions, (c) religious beliefs or other beliefs of a similar nature, (d) membership of a trade union (within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992), (e) physical or mental health or condition, (f) sexual life, (g) genetics, (h) biometric data (as used for ID purposes),	☒	☐
	If YES, provide a description of the special category data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
4	This study will ask participants about their sexual orientation and romantic relationship. It will also have some links to childhood due to asking participants about their attachment style. These are all important data to collect from the participant to complete the study. As, the study will explore the effect attachment styles have on intimate relationships. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
	Will data from the research activity (collected data, drafts of the thesis, or materials for publication) be stored in any of the following ways?	YES	NO
5	Manual files (i.e. in paper form)?	☐	☒
6	University computers?	☒	☐
7	Private company computers?	☐	☒
8	Home or other personal computers?	☐	☒
9	Laptop computers/ CDs/ Portable disk-drives/ memory sticks?	☒	☐
10	"Cloud" storage or websites?	☒	☐
11	Other – specify:	☐	☒

12	For all stored data, explain the measures in place to ensure the security of the data collected, data confidentiality, including details of backup procedures, password protection, encryption, anonymisation and pseudonymisation:
	Data will be collected using the university programme: Qualtrics data and put into university computers. The data will then be stored into cloud storages on the universities OneDrive with a password protected system. Only I (the researcher) and the supervisor for this study: Dr Judith Marshall will have access through this password protected OneDrive holding all the data. To ensure no data gets lost it will also be stored as a copy on a password protected OneDrive that only the supervisor and I will have access to. Any participants personal information such as, age, gender and sexual orientation will also be kept in a locked cabinet on a password protected OneDrive <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>

Data Protection			
	Will the research activity involve any of the following activities:	YES	NO
13	Electronic transfer of data in any form?	☒	☐
14	Sharing of data with others at the University outside of the immediate research team?	☐	☒
15	Sharing of data with other organisations?	☐	☒
16	Export of data outside the UK or importing of data from outside the UK?	☐	☒
17	Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, emails or telephone numbers?	☐	☒
18	Publication of data that might allow identification of individuals?	☐	☒
19	Use of data management system?	☐	☒
20	Data archiving?	☐	☒
21	If YES to any question, please provide full details, explaining how this will be conducted in accordance with the GDPR and Data Protection Act (2018) (and any international equivalents, where appropriate):		
	Data will be collected using the university programme: Qualtrics. The data will be stored on OneDrive with a password protected system. Only I (the researcher) and the supervisor for this study: Dr Judith Marshall will have access through this password protected OneDrive holding all the data in accordance with the principles of the GDBR. To ensure no data gets lost it will also be stored as a copy on a password protected OneDrive. The data will only be used for the purpose of this study such as sexual orientation, attachment styles and relationship satisfaction in accordance with the GDPR. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
22	List all who will have access to the data generated by the research activity:		
	Marisa Pinto Judith Marshall <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
23	List who will have control of, and act as custodian(s) for, data generated by the research activity:		
	Marisa Pinto & Judith Marshall <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

24	Give details of data storage arrangements, including security measures in place to protect the data, where data will be stored, how long for, and in what form. Will data be archived – if so how and if not why not.		
	Data will be collected using the university programme: Qualtrics data. The data will then be stored on OneDrive with a password protected system. Only I (the researcher) and the supervisor for this study: Dr Judith Marshall will have access through this password protected OneDrive holding all the data. To ensure no data gets lost it will also be stored as a copy on a password protected OneDrive All data will be used and stored in accordance with the UWTSD Research Data Management Policy. Anonymous data will be stored securely in a password protected one drive and then deleted once the thesis assessment grade has been agreed at the examinations board. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
25	Please indicate if your data will be stored in the UWTSD Research Data Repository (see https://researchdata.uwtsd.ac.uk/). If so please explain. <i>(Most relevant to academic staff)</i>		
	N/A this will not be used. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
26	Confirm that you have read the UWTSD guidance on data management (see https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/library/research-data-management/)	YES	☒
27	Confirm that you are aware that you need to keep all data until after your research has completed or the end of your funding	YES	☒



PG2 / E1 FORM

SECTION K: Declaration

	The information which I have provided is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I have attempted to identify any risks and issues related to the research activity and acknowledge my obligations and the rights of the participants. In submitting this application I hereby confirm that I undertake to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice which is published on the website: https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/research/research-ethics/	
1	Signature of applicant:	Marisa.p Date: 31.10.2024

For STUDENT Submissions:

2	Director of Studies/Supervisor:		Date: 31.10.2024
3	Signature:		

For STAFF Submissions:

4	Academic Director/ Assistant Dean:		Date:
5	Signature:		

Checklist: Please complete the checklist below to ensure that you have completed the form according to the guidelines and attached any required documentation:

☒	I have read the guidance notes supplied before completing the form.
☒	I have completed ALL RELEVANT sections of the form in full.
☒	I confirm that the research activity has received approval in principle
☐	I have attached a copy of final/interim approval from external organisation (where appropriate)
☐	I have attached a full risk assessment (where appropriate) ONLY TICK IF YOU HAVE ATTACHED A FULL RISK ASSESSMENT
☒	I understand that it is my responsibility to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice.
☒	I understand that before commencing data collection all documents aimed at respondents (including information sheets, consent forms, questionnaires, interview schedules etc.) must be confirmed by the DoS/Supervisor, module tutor or Academic Director.

RESEARCH STUDENTS AND STAFF ONLY

All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk, with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name. You will be informed of the outcome of your claim by email; therefore it is important that you check your University and personal email accounts regularly.

STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.



PG2 / E1 FORM

This form is available electronically from the Academic Office web pages:
<https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/academic-office/appendices-and-forms/>

Advert for Facebook:

This online study exploring attachment and relationship satisfaction is seeking individuals who are currently in heterosexual or same-sex romantic relationships. If you are over 18 and have been in a romantic relationship for at least 6 months, please consider taking part.

Appendices C – SPSS output

Please provide your Relationship status

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Straight relationship	58	90.6	90.6	90.6
	Same-sex relationship	6	9.4	9.4	100.0
	Total	64	100.0	100.0	

Statistics

		Please provide your Relationship status	Please provide your age below
N	Valid	64	63
	Missing	0	1
Mean		1.09	29.78
Std. Deviation		.294	10.359
Variance		.086	107.305
Minimum		1	18
Maximum		2	57

Report

Median

Please provide your Relationship status	Total_RSS
Straight relationship	21.0000
Same-sex relationship	22.5000
Total	21.0000

Ranks

	Please provide your Relationship status	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Total_RSS	Straight relationship	57	31.37	1788.00
	Same-sex relationship	6	38.00	228.00
	Total	63		

Test Statistics^a

	Total_RSS
Mann-Whitney U	135.000
Wilcoxon W	1788.000
Z	-.853
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.394
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.415 ^b

a. Grouping Variable: Please
provide your Relationship status

b. Not corrected for ties.

Correlations

		Total_RSS	MEAN_Secure
Total_RSS	Pearson Correlation	1	.174
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.172
	N	63	63
MEAN_Secure	Pearson Correlation	.174	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.172	
	N	63	64

Correlations**Correlations**

		Total_RSS	MEAN_FA
Total_RSS	Pearson Correlation	1	-.773**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	63	63
MEAN_FA	Pearson Correlation	-.773**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	63	64

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Correlations**Correlations**

		Total_RSS	MEAN_PRE
Total_RSS	Pearson Correlation	1	-.154
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.229
	N	63	63
MEAN_PRE	Pearson Correlation	-.154	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.229	
	N	63	64

Correlations**Correlations**

		Total_RSS	MEAN_DIS
Total_RSS	Pearson Correlation	1	-.261*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.039
	N	63	63
MEAN_DIS	Pearson Correlation	-.261*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.039	
	N	63	64

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).