

The Effect of Attachment Styles on Emotional Regulation Impacting Relationship Satisfaction: An Exploratory Case Study Design

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Abstract

This study explores the impact of early attachment experiences, emotional regulation, and relationship dynamics among six participants through a qualitative case study approach. Using thematic and narrative analyses, the research identifies key patterns in emotional suppression, fear of abandonment, trust issues, and self-awareness. Participants' narratives reveal how childhood experiences with caregivers influenced their emotional regulation strategies and attachment styles in adulthood. Findings indicate that those with secure emotional upbringings exhibited healthier coping mechanisms, while those exposed to neglect, trauma, or inconsistent caregiving struggled with emotional dependency, avoidance, or toxic relationship patterns. Thematic analysis highlights core themes, including parental influence, emotional regulation, trust, relational conflicts, and self-awareness. Narrative analysis further examines individual emotional arcs, turning points, and the journey toward emotional growth. The findings highlight how important attachment theory is in determining adult relationships and emotional health. According to the study's findings, developing self-awareness and emotional control might enhance psychological well-being and relationship satisfaction. Additionally, the study highlights the value of supportive family contexts and early emotional education in the development of adaptive coping mechanisms. It also implies that emotional regulation training and attachment repair-focused therapy interventions can improve resilience, personal development, and relationship quality, with important ramifications for counselling psychology and interpersonal development initiatives. All things considered, the research advances our knowledge of attachment healing, emotional development, and the lasting psychological impacts of early relationship experiences.

Keywords: Attachment styles, relationship conflict, relationship satisfaction, emotional regulation, anxious attachment, emotional regulation, couple therapy

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INTRODUCTION

This research is centred on understanding the dynamics of romantic relationships. A study investigates the impact of narcissism on relationship satisfaction and intimacy in both romantic and platonic relationships [1]. For relationship satisfaction, it is very essential for one to consider the factor of emotional regulation which is the ability to control and react to emotional stimuli in a healthy, adaptable way. However, deeper, individual differences in attachment patterns may influence how emotional regulation impacts relationship pleasure.

Originally focusing on the interaction between babies and their caretakers, attachment theory has

subsequently been applied to adult relationships, implying that early attachment experiences have an impact on how people interact with others in close relationships. Examining how attachment styles impact the mediating function of emotional regulation in relationship happiness is the goal of this exploratory case study. It specifically looks into how people with secure, anxious, and avoidant attachment styles experience and control their emotions in romantic relationships and how this affects how happy they are in their relationships overall. A study focuses on how attachment security influences narcissistic vulnerability and relationship dynamics [2].

Even though attachment theory has been thoroughly examined, little is known about how emotional regulation functions as a mediator between attachment type and relationship pleasure, particularly in dyadic, real-world situations. Moradi Janati A et al. (2024) explores the mediating role of emotional regulation in the relationship between attachment styles and psychological well-being [3]. Similarly, this study intends to offer nuanced insights into the lived experiences of people navigating their romantic relationships by carrying out a qualitative examination through case studies. Examining how various attachment patterns influence emotional regulation techniques and how these techniques in turn affect relationship satisfaction is the aim.

Table 1. Theories and key concepts on attachment and emotion regulation.

Concept	Theory/model	Key points	References
Attachment Theory	Bowlby's Attachment Theory (1969)	- Early experiences with caregivers shape emotional bonds and regulation in adulthood.	Bowlby (1969); Ainsworth et al. (1978)
Attachment Styles	Secure, Anxious, Avoidant	- Secure attachment fosters adaptive emotional regulation.	
		- Insecure attachment (anxious/avoidant) is linked to maladaptive behaviors (e.g., emotional suppression, dependency, avoidance).	
Extension to Adult Relationships	Shaver & Fraley's extension of Attachment Theory	- Early attachment experiences influence intimacy, trust, and emotional regulation in adult romantic relationships.	Shaver & Fraley (2000)
Emotional Regulation	Gross & John's Emotional Regulation Model (2003)	- The ability to manage emotional responses in adaptive ways.	Gross & John (2003)
		- Secure attachment individuals use cognitive reappraisal and emotional expression.	Simpson et al. (1996)
		- Insecure attachments: anxious individuals exhibit emotional hyper-reactivity; avoidant individuals suppress emotions.	Mikulincer & Shaver (2007)
Mediating Role of Emotional Regulation	Gross's Emotional Regulation Model (1998)	- Emotional regulation strategies mediate the relationship between attachment styles and relationship satisfaction.	Gross (1998)
Relationship Satisfaction	Research by Kim et al. (2004)	- Secure attachment correlates with higher relationship satisfaction; insecure attachment (anxious/avoidant) is linked to lower satisfaction.	Kim et al. (2004)
	Brennan et al. (1998); Campbell et al. (2002)	- Insecure attachment may foster narcissistic traits, hindering emotional connection and partner satisfaction.	Brennan et al. (1998); Campbell et al. (2002)
Study Focus	Exploratory Case Study Design	- Examines real-world case studies to explore the interaction between attachment styles, emotional regulation, and relationship satisfaction.	This Study
Implications	Attachment-based therapeutic interventions	- Findings may inform attachment-based interventions to improve emotional regulation and relationship satisfaction.	

Paradigm

The conceptual framework integrates core attachment and emotion regulation models, summarised below in Table 1.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A study investigates the relationship between attachment security and emotion regulation in children and adolescents [4]. This study indicates that early attachment experiences play a foundational role in the development of emotional regulation abilities, influencing emotional responses throughout the lifespan.

Pincus et al. (2011) examine the dual pathways of narcissism: grandiose and vulnerable. The study emphasizes that the attachment system plays a pivotal role in shaping the expression of narcissistic traits [5].

Pirson et al (2018) discuss the role of attachment and emotional regulation in the therapeutic context. Their work suggests that attachment security influences not only personal emotional regulation but also the ability to engage in therapeutic processes for emotional growth [6].

Tucker et al. (1999) investigate how attachment styles affect relationship satisfaction in the context of both romantic and platonic relationships. This research suggests that attachment style influences not only romantic satisfaction but also the quality of broader interpersonal relationships [7].

Lamkin et al. (2015) further explore how attachment styles influence narcissistic traits and relationship satisfaction [8]. The research underscores that the emotional regulation capacity of individuals with insecure attachment styles contributes to these relationship difficulties, and thus, narcissistic traits play a mediating role in shaping relationship satisfaction.

Gewirtz and Finzi (2018) explore the role of narcissism in relationship satisfaction by examining how narcissistic behaviors influence emotional responsiveness and partner satisfaction [9]. The study emphasizes that narcissistic individuals' difficulty with emotional attunement and empathy may be a key factor in their lower levels of satisfaction in relationships.

Besser and Priel (2009) investigate how narcissism and attachment styles influence emotional responses in romantic relationships. Their study emphasizes that the attachment system is a key moderator in the expression of narcissistic traits within relationships [10].

A study focuses on how attachment security influences narcissistic vulnerability and relationship dynamics. Their research underscores the mediating role of emotional regulation in the expression of narcissism within intimate relationships [1].

A study investigates the impact of narcissism on relationship satisfaction and intimacy in both romantic and platonic relationships. Their research also highlights that narcissistic traits are negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction, particularly in relationships where emotional closeness is a priority [7].

Moradi Janati A et al. (2024) explores the mediating role of emotional regulation in the relationship between attachment styles and psychological well-being. Secure attachment promotes better emotional regulation, which in turn enhances psychological well-being [3].

METHODOLOGY

Aim of the Study

To study the effect of attachment styles on emotional regulation impacting relationship satisfaction.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How does attachment style affect emotional regulation?
- Is secure attachment positively associated with relationship satisfaction?
- Can emotional regulation help individuals with insecure attachment styles cope and positively influence their relationship satisfaction?

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employed a qualitative, exploratory case study design using narrative analysis to examine the interplay between attachment styles, emotional regulation, and relationship satisfaction.

DATA COLLECTION

Semi-structured interviews referred from provided tools were conducted to explore each participant's childhood experiences, emotional regulation strategies, relationship history, and perception of relationship satisfaction.

PARTICIPANTS OF THE STUDY

Six participants were selected for in-depth interviews based on their diverse attachment experiences. For confidentiality and ethical reasons, all participant names (Vishal, Shraddha, Ramsha, Gaurav, Aarohi) are hypothetical, and any identifying information has been altered to protect their privacy.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions were formulated systematically with accordance to the basis of the tools that are Adult Attachment Scale, Emotional Regulation Questionnaire, Relationship Assessment Scale.

DATA ANALYSIS

Thematic analysis and coding were applied to identify patterns across participants' narratives as shown in Table 2. Verbatim excerpts were coded to derive themes related to attachment styles, emotional regulation, and relationship experiences.

Case 1: VISHAL

The Storyline of Emotional Self-Sufficiency in Childhood

Vishal's narrative begins with a childhood marked by emotional independence, where he learned to compartmentalize his emotions early. His parents were present but had designated roles, which shaped how he expressed (or suppressed) emotions. The key codes and emergent themes from Vishal's narrative are outlined in Table 3.

Table 2. Summary of case studies overview.

Participant	Attachment style	Key emotional regulation strategy	Relationship satisfaction level
Vishal	Avoidant	Emotional suppression, self-reliance	Low (struggles with trust and fears abandonment)
Shraddha	Anxious	Emotional dependency, seeking validation	Low (tolerates toxic relationships)
Ramsha	Secure-Avoidant	Initial suppression, later self-awareness	Moderate (learning emotional regulation)
Kavish	Avoidant	Detachment, avoidance of deep emotional investment	Low (fear of commitment, struggles with trust)
Gaurav	Avoidant	Emotional suppression, withdrawal	Low (difficulty in emotional expression)
Aarohi	Anxious	External validation, tolerating control	Low (patterns of unhealthy relationships)

Table 3. Codes and themes table.

Theme	Key narrative codes	Turning point	Conclusion
The Silent Struggles of Emotional Regulation	“We knew from an early age that we had to share certain things with mom and others with dad.” “After 15-16, I began realizing that my problems were different from my parents’ problems, and I didn’t want to burden them.”	Vishal realized that emotional self-reliance was necessary and began dealing with emotions alone rather than seeking external support.	Emotional self-reliance became Vishal’s approach, but it limited his ability to express his emotional needs in relationships.
Emotional Suppression and Self-Reliance	“I don’t feel the need to go to others. I sit by myself, think about it, and deal with it on my own.” “I just pretend that everything’s fine. Even if something happened, it’s over now, and there’s nothing more to do.”	Vishal’s self-reliance helped build resilience but limited emotional expression and relationships.	This habit created internal struggles with emotional suppression and difficulty expressing needs.
The Fear of Abandonment in Relationships	“My biggest emotional pain comes when people leave me.” “No matter how much I try, no matter how many efforts I make, the relationship doesn’t last.” “I don’t trust the people around her.”	Vishal struggles to reconcile his emotional independence with his need for connection, fearing loss while avoiding help.	Vishal’s relationships reflect deep emotional investment but also a recurring fear of abandonment and trust issues.
Trust & The Defensive Mechanism of Control	“When outside opinions start influencing the relationship, things start to change.” “If you show your weakness to someone, he will use it 110% against you.”	Experiences with trust violations reinforce Vishal’s emotional defences, making him wary of vulnerability.	His protective instincts and fear of external influence create a push-pull dynamic in relationships, affecting trust and intimacy.
The Journey Toward Emotional Awareness	“I have started observing my patterns in relationships.” “I know that fear of abandonment is a problem, and I need to work on it.”	Vishal starts questioning his emotional patterns, marking a significant shift toward self-awareness.	Vishal begins to recognize his emotional patterns, aiming to balance independence with emotional connection.
Conclusion: The Emotional Arc	Before: Emotionally self-sufficient, avoids seeking help, suppresses feelings. Breaking Point: Struggles with abandonment fears, trust issues, and emotional suppression. Now: Recognizing patterns, attempting to balance independence with emotional connection.	A trajectory of growth: recognizing the need for emotional awareness and connection rather than just self-reliance.	Vishal’s emotional journey involves moving from emotional independence to understanding his relational needs and fears.

Executive Summary

- *Background:* Vishal had a close relationship with his mother, who mediated communication between him and his father. Emotional expression was limited in childhood.
- *Relevant facts:* He learned to handle problems independently and only sought help when situations became unmanageable. Emotional pain primarily stems from abandonment in friendships and romantic relationships. He struggles with emotional vulnerability and prefers demonstrating care through actions rather than verbal expressions.

Case Evaluation

- *Point of focus:* Relationship difficulties due to emotional regulation and attachment style.
- *Explanation of the situation:* Vishal suppresses emotions, relying on self-regulation rather than seeking support. He experiences distress when relationships end but does not actively process these emotions. Over time, he developed hyper-independence and struggles with trust in relationships, fearing abandonment.

Table 4. Codes and themes table.

Theme	Key narrative codes	Turning point	Conclusion
Emotional Neglect & Trust Issues	- “My parents have always had expectations, but emotionally, they were never much supportive.” - “I always had this fear of losing people because I never had real support growing up.” - “My parents separated for three years, and I saw other people being involved in their lives. That gave me trust issues and insecurities.”	Realizing that her parents were emotionally unavailable, which led her to seek validation externally.	Childhood emotional neglect led to insecurity and fear of abandonment, which shaped her attachment patterns and emotional needs in relationships.
Seeking Validation Through Relationships	- “I couldn’t differentiate between good and bad; I just wanted someone.” - “Most of my partners treated me badly, but I thought it was normal because my mother also tolerated it.” - “Even when I was cheated on repeatedly, I stayed because I believed he would change.”	After multiple failed relationships, Shraddha recognized her unhealthy patterns and attachment issues.	Her desperate need for love and fear of loneliness led her to accept unhealthy relationships, mirroring her childhood experiences.
Betrayal, Financial & Emotional Exploitation	- “I lost everything. I was calling him, calling his family—no one helped me.” - “For a month, I was just numb. I didn’t react. I felt cold inside.” - “I even got a tattoo of his name... biggest mistake of my life.”	The major betrayal (financial and emotional exploitation) led her to reassess how she trusted people and viewed love.	The betrayal forced her to confront her trust issues, realizing the need for emotional independence and reassessing her relationship patterns.
Self-Awareness & Emotional Growth	- “Now, I don’t run after love—I want it to come naturally.” - “I have put a stop to dating right now because I need to work on myself first.” - “Earlier, I had no boundaries—I would do 100% for someone if they did 1% for me. Now, I know my limits.”	Her journey shifted from seeking external validation to focusing on internal growth and emotional independence.	Her transformation reflects the power of self-awareness and boundaries in overcoming emotional dependence and fostering healthier relationships.
Transition from Dependency to Independence	Before: Seeking validation, falling for toxic partners, ignoring red flags. Breaking Point: Betrayal & financial loss. Now: Building self-worth, setting boundaries, and prioritizing emotional regulation.	The emotional shift from dependency to emotional independence.	Shraddha’s journey highlights the importance of self-awareness, emotional independence, and the ability to set boundaries in creating healthier relationships.

Case 2: SHRADDHA

The Storyline of Emotional Neglect & Early Life Experiences

Shraddha narrates her childhood through a lens of unmet emotional needs. Her relationship with her parents was marked by expectations, but not emotional support. Shraddha's major emotional themes and narrative codes are summarized in Table 4.

Table 5. Codes and themes table.

Theme	Key narrative codes	Turning point	Conclusion
The Shadow of Narcissistic Influence	"I got everything I wanted—big or small—just by saying the word."	She gradually noticed gender biases and felt unseen compared to her brother.	Ramsha's initial experience of being indulged in childhood gave way to realization about her brother's critical and dismissive behavior.
The Shadow of Narcissistic Influence (Continued)	"Even when I copied him to gain approval, I was told he did it better."	Constant comparison and criticism by her brother affected her self-worth and confidence.	Ramsha stopped seeking validation from her brother, cut him off, and found emotional relief, reclaiming her sense of self-worth.
The First Relationship: A Lesson in Betrayal	"I never thought someone could fake love because I had only experienced real love before."	Ramsha's first romantic relationship ended in betrayal, shattering her perception of love.	The betrayal caused emotional detachment and mistrust in future relationships, leaving her wary of others' intentions.
Breaking Point in Relationship	"I caught him with his girlfriend at my favorite place."	Discovering the betrayal in her first relationship was a turning point that ended her trust in others romantically.	The emotional shock of the betrayal led to self-isolation and emotional numbness.
Emotional Numbness & Self-Isolation	"I built a wall. I would sit in a restaurant while the other person talked, and I'd just say, 'Okay.'"	Ramsha's emotional withdrawal after her breakup signaled her desire to protect herself from further hurt.	She began emotionally distancing herself from others, prioritizing emotional safety over connection.
Turning Point: Therapy	Someone suggested therapy, helping her understand her emotional suppression and trust issues.	Therapy provided insight into her emotional suppression and the trust issues developed from past experiences.	Therapy played a key role in helping Ramsha acknowledge and confront her emotional struggles, promoting growth and emotional awareness.
Transformation & Emotional Independence	"Now, I don't need constant reassurance. If someone wants to stay, they will."	Ramsha gained emotional independence and no longer sought constant validation.	Through therapy and self-reflection, she became emotionally stronger, prioritizing compatibility and emotional stability.
Current Emotional Arc	Prefers arranged marriage for emotional stability. Prioritizes compatibility over emotional idealization.	The transformation from seeking idealized love to valuing emotional stability and compatibility.	Ramsha's narrative evolved from innocence and idealism to a balanced, self-aware, and emotionally grounded approach to relationships.
Final Reflection	Before: Innocence, validation-seeking, idealizing love. Breaking Point: Betrayal, emotional suppression, distrust. Now: Emotional growth, self-reliance, cautious optimism.	Ramsha's journey reflects emotional awakening and self-realization, moving from vulnerability to emotional resilience.	Ramsha now understands her emotional needs better, prioritizing emotional growth, self-reliance, and compatibility in her relationships.

Executive Summary

- *Background:* Shraddha had a distant emotional relationship with her parents. While her mother shared a friendship-like bond with her, her father was emotionally unavailable. Her primary emotional support came from her grandmother, who passed away.
- *Relevant facts:* She grew up in a household with strict boundaries and limited emotional validation. Witnessing her parents' unstable marriage and infidelity led to trust issues, insecurities, and a fear of abandonment. She also experienced sexual abuse in childhood, which significantly impacted her perception of relationships and physical intimacy.

Case Evaluation

- *Point of focus:* Impact of childhood trauma and parental relationships on attachment style and emotional regulation in adult relationships.
- *Explanation of the situation:* Shraddha developed an insecure attachment style due to parental neglect and emotional unavailability. She engaged in multiple relationships in search of validation and security but often found herself in toxic dynamics. She internalized patterns from her parents' dysfunctional marriage, leading to difficulty in differentiating between healthy and unhealthy relationships.

Case 3: RAMSHA

The Fairytale Childhood & Its Blind Spots

Ramsha's story begins with an idealized childhood where she received unconditional love from her parents and grandmother. An overview of the recurring codes and transformative themes from Ramsha's narrative is presented in Table 5.

Executive Summary

- *Background:* Ramsha grew up in a privileged yet emotionally complex household. She received "princess treatment" from her parents but faced constant comparison with her narcissistic older brother. This led to self-doubt and a need for external validation.
- *Relevant facts:* While her parents were loving, they reinforced patriarchal values, often seeking her brother's approval over hers. This contributed to feelings of inadequacy. Despite her strong support system, the impact of her brother's behavior and family dynamics shaped her emotional processing.

Case Evaluation

- *Point of focus:* Impact of childhood comparison and emotional invalidation on self-worth and emotional regulation.
- *Explanation of the situation:* Growing up with a brother diagnosed with narcissistic personality disorder, Ramsha struggled with self-doubt and an identity crisis. She initially sought validation from him but later distanced herself to establish independence. This dynamic influenced her emotional regulation, leading to an ongoing struggle with self-worth and trust in relationships.

Case 4: KAVISH

The Privileged Yet Complicated Childhood

Kavish's coded themes and emotional patterns are illustrated in Table 6. Kavish's childhood appears secure, with supportive parents and financial stability, yet witnessing family conflicts left a lasting impression.

Executive Summary

- *Background:* Kavish grew up in a financially stable, business-oriented family. His parents were supportive and granted him freedom in his decisions, ensuring a positive and encouraging home environment.

- *Relevant facts:* Despite a strong family foundation, Kavish was exposed to conflicts among extended family members. He witnessed violent disputes among his uncles and cousins, which shaped his perception of relationships and trust. His relationship history includes multiple short-term relationships, where emotional attachment was difficult to sustain.

Case Evaluation

- *Point of focus:* Impact of exposure to familial conflict on emotional attachment and relationship stability.
- *Explanation of the situation:* Kavish's early exposure to family disputes may have contributed to his avoidance of deep emotional involvement in relationships. While he seeks commitment, he often engages in casual relationships, struggling with long-term emotional investment. He also expresses hesitancy in forming deep attachments, possibly as a protective mechanism.

Table 6. Codes and themes table.

Theme	Key narrative codes	Turning point	Conclusion
Early Life: Family Dynamics	"I was raised in a business family where my parents never said no to me."	Seeing his uncles fight over family issues planted a fear of future conflicts and distanced him from extended family.	Kavish's early life was shaped by indulgence and family conflict, leading to a fear of confrontation and a sense of isolation from extended family.
The Disillusionment of Early Relationships	"My first breakup wasn't even my choice—my brother ended it for me." "In school, I was cheated on twice."	Betrayals and lack of control in his first relationships led Kavish to become cautious and emotionally detached.	Early relationship betrayals created emotional detachment, making Kavish wary of trusting and investing emotionally in future relationships.
The Emotional High & The Fear of Losing Control	"I realized I was attached to her, but we were both insecure about long distance."	The fear of commitment and long-distance relationships reinforced his avoidant tendencies, making it harder for him to move on.	Kavish allowed himself to emotionally invest, but his fear of losing control prevented deeper emotional engagement, highlighting his insecurities.
The Struggle Between Independence & Emotional Need	"I cried like a madman in front of my brother and closest friends."	Despite his avoidance, Kavish had moments of vulnerability, acknowledging his emotional needs but struggling with how much to express them.	Kavish faced a tug-of-war between emotional independence and the desire for emotional connection, struggling with how much to let others in.
The Journey Towards Emotional Maturity	"I've realized that overthinking conflicts only creates more problems." "I now focus on the present rather than dwelling on the past."	Kavish began realizing the importance of emotional regulation in healthy relationships and started focusing on the present.	Kavish moved toward emotional maturity by learning to manage his emotions and attachment tendencies, aiming for healthier connections.
Final Arc: The Emotional Transformation	Early Life: Secure but witnessed family conflict → Fear of confrontation. Adolescence: Betrayals in relationships → Emotional detachment. Young Adulthood: Fear of commitment, avoidant tendencies → Struggles with trust.	Kavish now recognizes the importance of emotional regulation and aims to balance his attachment styles.	Kavish's journey shows emotional growth, where he's learning to manage his attachment patterns and aiming for emotional security and healthier relationships.

Case 5: GAURAV**The Emotionally Detached Upbringing**

Gaurav's thematic codes and key emotional patterns are detailed in Table 7. Gaurav's childhood was secure but lacked deep emotional connection.

Executive Summary

- *Background:* Gaurav grew up in a household where emotional expression was not a focal point. His father was highly focused on his career and academic performance, while his mother provided emotional support but lacked an understanding of emotional depth.
- *Relevant facts:* Gaurav experienced loneliness in childhood due to a lack of deep emotional connection with his caregivers. He was often misunderstood by his peers, which led to difficulty in forming early relationships. As an adult, he exhibits hyper-independence and hesitancy in relying on others for emotional support.

Table 7. Codes and themes table.

Theme	Key narrative codes	Turning point	Conclusion
The Emotionally Detached Upbringing	"Meri maa mujhe pyaar karti thi, par samajh nahi thi ki bacchon se kaise baat ki jati hai."	Gaurav realized early on those emotions had to be self-managed, leading him to suppress his feelings.	Gaurav's childhood, although secure, lacked emotional connection, and this led to emotional suppression as a coping mechanism.
The First Experiences of Betrayal & Emotional Numbness	"Mujhe dhokha mila par mujhe koi dukh nahi hua."	Gaurav was betrayed in his early relationships, but he conditioned himself to suppress emotional pain instead of confronting it.	His inability to feel or express emotional pain during betrayals marked the beginning of emotional numbness and detachment.
The Struggle Between Avoidance & Control in Relationships	"Mujhe laga ki agar main baat karna bandh kar doon, toh sab theek ho jayega."	Gaurav withdrew in relationships, believing that emotional distance would resolve conflict, but he began to notice these patterns.	Gaurav faced manipulative partners and chose avoidance over confrontation, leading to emotional exhaustion and unresolved issues.
The Realization & Path Towards Self-Awareness	"Mujhe ab samajh aaya ki main relationships mein kya galti kar raha tha."	Gaurav recently began to recognize his avoidant tendencies and their negative impact on relationships.	Gaurav is now focused on becoming more self-aware and intends to adopt a more balanced, open approach to relationships.
Current Emotional Arc	He wants to take a more practical, self-aware approach to relationships.	Gaurav is beginning to understand the importance of emotional openness and self-awareness in improving his relationships.	Gaurav's emotional journey is about transforming from emotional suppression to gaining insight into his emotional needs and patterns.
Final Reflection: The Emotional Transformation	Early Life: Emotionally independent upbringing → Avoidant attachment style. Adolescence: Betrayal, emotional suppression → Relationships lacked depth. Young Adulthood: Avoidance in conflicts, manipulative partners → Emotional exhaustion.	Gaurav's emotional arc has shifted towards self-awareness, as he realizes the impact of his past behavior on relationships.	Gaurav's transformation is characterized by a shift from avoidance to emotional openness, working towards healthier and more self-aware relationships.

Table 8. Codes and themes table.

Theme	Key narrative codes	Turning point	Conclusion
The Impact of Parental Emotional Unavailability	“My dad made fun of me in front of others, and I felt worthless ever since childhood.” “I could never tell them what was going on in my life, so I landed up with people who invalidated my feelings.” “I have the saviour complex; I feel responsible for others’ emotions, just like I had to care for my mother.”	Aaroahi realized that her parents’ emotional unavailability made her seek emotional security and validation from external sources, especially partners.	Growing up with emotionally unavailable parents shaped Aaroahi’s need to seek external validation, setting a pattern for her future relationships.
The Search for Love & Emotional Security in Relationships	“I have only dated men who made me feel worthless.” “I thought it was normal for a man to control me because my dad did that to my mother.” “I always ended up in long-distance relationships, just like the emotional distance I had with my parents.”	Aaroahi realized that her romantic relationships were mirrors of her childhood dynamics, reinforcing feelings of worthlessness and emotional instability.	Aaroahi’s relationships were driven by a desperate need for emotional security, leading her to tolerate toxic behavior and stay in unhealthy relationships due to fear of being alone.
The Betrayal & Breaking Point	“My ex-husband’s family tried to drug me and put me in a mental hospital.” “I was manipulated and gaslighted into thinking I was the problem.” “Men leave me after using me, and every breakup feels like I am losing a part of myself.”	Aaroahi’s deep emotional suffering from betrayal, abuse, and manipulation prompted her to reassess her approach to love and attachment.	The trauma of emotional and physical abuse, along with repeated betrayals, led Aaroahi to recognize her vulnerability in relationships and prompted her to reconsider her patterns.
The Realization & Transformation	“I am trying to learn how to be single and not rely on external validation.” “I need to work on myself before seeking another relationship.” “I always sought a man to save me, but now I want to save myself.”	Aaroahi’s realization shifted from seeking external validation to focusing on self-growth and emotional independence.	Aaroahi’s transformation reflects a move towards emotional independence, self-awareness, and a commitment to personal healing and growth before entering another relationship.
Final Emotional Arc	Before: Seeking validation, tolerating toxic partners, ignoring red flags. Breaking Point: Betrayal, abuse, and emotional breakdowns. Now: Learning self-worth, breaking toxic patterns, and focusing on self-regulation.	Aaroahi’s emotional journey has evolved from dependency on relationships to self-awareness and emotional regulation, focusing on personal growth and healing.	Aaroahi’s narrative arc shows significant growth from emotional neglect and unhealthy attachment patterns to self-regulation, self-worth, and independence.

Table 9. Thematic coding and analysis

Theme	Participant	Quote
Parental Influence on Emotional Regulation	Vishal	"I never realized the emotional implications of this until much later in life."
	Shraddha	"My parents were never introspective inside me; they just expected good grades, a good job, and marriage."
	Ramsha	"My father preferred me over my brother, but I was always compared to him, making me question my worth."
	Kavish	"My parents gave me everything I wanted, but I never learned to process my emotions properly."
	Aarohi	"My father made fun of me in front of others, and I felt worthless ever since childhood."
	Gaurav	"I was emotionally neglected as a child, which made it difficult for me to trust others."
Fear of Abandonment and Trust Issues	Vishal	"My biggest emotional pain comes when people leave me."
	Shraddha	"I have major trust issues because I saw my parents' toxic relationship."
	Ramsha	"I always needed validation from others because I was constantly put down at home."
	Kavish	"I lost touch with my cousins due to family fights, but I don't think it ruined my relationships."
	Aarohi	"I tend to attract men who devalue me, just like my father did."
	Gaurav	"My relationships are short-lived because I struggle with emotional intimacy."
Emotional Regulation Strategies	Vishal	"I lock myself in a room and listen to devotional songs when I'm sad."
	Shraddha	"I don't regulate my emotions well; I suppress them."
	Ramsha	"I argue when I feel invalidated, but I'm learning to set boundaries."
	Kavish	"I used to cry until my parents gave me what I wanted."
	Aarohi	"My nervous system is always in panic mode because of past relationships."
	Gaurav	"I isolate myself when I feel emotionally overwhelmed."
Relationship Patterns and Satisfaction	Vishal	"I believe my actions should show that I care, but my relationships always fall apart."
	Shraddha	"I have always jumped from one relationship to another due to fear of being alone."
	Ramsha	"I seek emotional maturity and space in a partner but struggle to find it."
	Kavish	"I had more casual relationships than serious ones and struggle with commitment."
	Aarohi	"I keep ending up in long-distance relationships with controlling men."
	Gaurav	"My relationships end quickly because I can't communicate my emotions well."

Case Evaluation

- *Point of focus:* The role of emotional neglect in childhood and its impact on adult relationships and emotional regulation.
- *Explanation of the situation:* Gaurav learned to self-regulate from an early age, avoiding emotional dependence on others. This has resulted in emotional suppression and difficulty in forming secure attachments. He finds it challenging to express emotions openly and tends to avoid vulnerability in relationships.

Case 6: AAROHI

The Storyline of Emotional Neglect & Early Life Experiences

Aarohi's core emotional and attachment-based codes are organized in Table 8. Aarohi's story is shaped by a childhood marked by neglect and emotional invalidation. She describes her father as absent, both physically and emotionally, while her mother was controlling and obsessed with her academic success rather than her emotional needs. Her sense of worthlessness began in early childhood, reinforced by experiences of bullying and mistreatment.

Executive Summary

- *Background:* Aarohi grew up in a household where emotional neglect and control were present. Her father was emotionally unavailable and exerted dominance, while her mother focused primarily on her academic achievements rather than emotional support.
- *Relevant facts:* She has a history of attracting emotionally unavailable or controlling partners, mirroring the dynamics she witnessed in her family. Aarohi struggles with self-worth, has a deep need for validation in relationships, and experiences persistent anxiety about finding a suitable partner.

Case Evaluation

- *Point of focus:* The impact of childhood emotional neglect and controlling relationships on self-worth and emotional regulation.
- *Explanation of the situation:* Aarohi's childhood experiences shaped her attachment style, leading to difficulties in maintaining healthy boundaries and emotional stability in relationships. She tends to overcompensate in relationships, often prioritizing her partner's emotions over her own, which leaves her feeling hollow and emotionally drained.

Table 9. consolidates the major cross-case themes and participant narratives identified during the thematic analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings highlight significant connections between attachment styles, emotional regulation, and relationship satisfaction. Key results include:

Parental Influence on Emotional Regulation

Participants with secure childhood attachments (Ramsha) displayed better emotional resilience, while those with emotionally unavailable or controlling caregivers (Aarohi, Shraddha) struggled with validation-seeking behaviors in adulthood. This is consistent with findings that emphasize early attachment experiences significantly influence emotional regulation abilities, shaping emotional responses throughout life. Emotional neglect in childhood (Gaurav, Vishal) led to difficulties in expressing emotions and reliance on suppression as a coping mechanism, which aligns with, who suggest that insecure attachment may foster maladaptive coping mechanisms.

Fear of Abandonment and Trust Issues

Anxiously attached participants (Shraddha, Aarohi) exhibited heightened sensitivity to perceived rejection and dependency on partners for emotional security. This reflects the findings of who

highlighted that individuals with insecure attachment styles, particularly anxious attachment, struggle with emotional regulation, which contributes to relationship difficulties and dissatisfaction. Avoidantly attached participants (Kavish, Vishal, Gaurav) avoided deep emotional bonds due to past experiences of emotional neglect, reinforcing their fear of vulnerability. This is consistent with who argue that attachment style influences relationship satisfaction by affecting emotional attunement and vulnerability in relationships.

Emotional Regulation Strategies

Avoidantly attached participants preferred emotional suppression (Vishal, Gaurav, Kavish), leading to relational dissatisfaction and difficulties in conflict resolution. Anxiously attached participants exhibited hyper-reactivity and external validation-seeking behaviors (Shraddha, Aarohi), often resulting in unstable relationships. These patterns are supported by the work who found that emotional regulation capacities, influenced by attachment security, determine how individuals manage emotional responses, which directly affects relationship satisfaction. Participants with a balance of avoidance and security (Ramsha) demonstrated increased emotional self-awareness, indicating the potential for improved regulation through therapeutic interventions.

Gender-Based Emotional Coping Differences

- *Male participants (Vishal, Kavish, Gaurav)*: Emotional suppression was common (e.g., Vishal's devotional songs, Gaurav's isolation, Kavish's avoidance of emotional depth). Commitment issues and reluctance to emotionally invest in long-term relationships were noted. These behaviors align with findings from Vater et al. (2013), who found that individuals exhibiting narcissistic traits, often linked to avoidant attachment, face challenges with emotional attunement and empathy, resulting in lower relationship satisfaction.
- *Female participants (Shraddha, Ramsha, Aarohi)*: Expressed heightened emotional reactivity and greater need for external validation. Fear of abandonment played a significant role in their relationship patterns. This finding resonates with Reich et al. (2020), who argue that emotional regulation plays a mediating role in the expression of attachment-related vulnerabilities, such as narcissistic vulnerability, which can impact relationship dynamics.

Cultural & Societal Influences

The study also notes the significant impact of cultural and societal norms on emotional expression and attachment behaviors. Future research should further explore how external factors, such as societal expectations, influence emotional regulation and attachment behaviors, as these norms may also contribute to individual differences in emotional coping and relationship satisfaction.

Limitations

- *Research design*: The use of a mixed-method approach may limit the ability to generalize findings due to the complexity of integrating qualitative and quantitative data
- *Social desirability bias*: Some participants may have idealized or downplayed aspects of their emotional regulation and relationship experiences.
- *Self-report data*: The reliance on self-reported experiences limits objectivity, and future research could integrate observational or longitudinal studies for more accurate findings.
- *Cultural factors*: The study did not explicitly explore cultural influences on attachment and emotional regulation, which could impact relational expectations and behaviors.

CONCLUSION

This study underscores the profound impact of attachment styles on emotional regulation and relationship satisfaction. Participants' narratives illustrate how childhood emotional neglect, parental expectations, and relational trauma contribute to maladaptive relationship behaviors. The findings suggest that:

- Early emotional experiences shape relationship expectations and emotional coping strategies.
- Individuals with anxious attachment tend to seek validation excessively, leading to unstable relationships.

- Avoidant attachment manifests in emotional distancing and difficulty forming deep connections.
- Men exhibit higher emotional suppression, while women show higher emotional reactivity and dependence.
- Therapeutic interventions focusing on emotional regulation skills and secure attachment formation may improve relationship satisfaction.

Future research could explore therapeutic techniques tailored to different attachment styles to enhance emotional resilience and relationship quality. The insights from this study provide a foundation for developing attachment-based interventions in couple therapy.

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APPENDIX

Interview Questions

Introduction (5-10 minutes)

- *Purpose of interview:* "Can you briefly describe your current relationship situation and your thoughts on emotional regulation in relationships?"
- *Consent:* "Is it okay if we record this interview? The data will be used for research purposes only."

Background Information (10-15 Minutes)

1. Childhood and Parental Relationships (10-15 minutes):
 - "Can you tell me about your relationship with your primary caregivers (mother, father, or other key figures) growing up? How did they typically respond to your emotional needs?"

- Do you recall any specific experiences from your childhood that might have shaped the way you feel about relationships now, especially in terms of emotional security and trust?
 - "Did you experience any difficult or traumatic events in childhood, and how do you think these experiences might have influenced your attachment style and emotional regulation in your adult relationships?"
2. Personal and Relationship History:
- "Tell me a bit about your family background. How were emotions handled in your family growing up?"
 - "How would you describe your relationship history? Can you highlight any significant patterns in past relationships?"
 - "Have you been in long-term relationships before? How do you typically navigate conflicts in these relationships?"

Attachment Style Assessment (20-30 minutes)

Using the adult attachment scale (AAS)

Attachment patterns:

- "How would you describe your emotional connection with close family members growing up?"
- "Do you tend to rely on others in times of need, or do you prefer to handle emotions on your own?"
- "When you think of your partner or loved ones, do you generally feel secure or anxious about your emotional connection?"

Follow-up based on Attachment Style:

- *Secure*: "How do you feel when your partner needs emotional support?"
- *Anxious*: "Do you ever feel your partner might not emotionally support you as much as you'd like?"
- *Avoidant*: "How comfortable are you with being emotionally dependent on others, including your partner?"

Emotional Regulation (30-40 minutes)

Using the emotional regulation questionnaire (ERQ)

Emotional regulation in daily life:

- "How do you typically manage difficult emotions like anger, sadness, or frustration?"
- "Can you recall a situation in your current (or past) relationship where you had difficulty regulating your emotions?"
- "What are some coping strategies you find helpful when dealing with emotional distress?"

In Relationship Conflicts

- "How do you typically respond to emotional stress within your relationship?"
- "Can you describe a time when your partner's emotional expression or reaction affected your emotional state?"
- "Do you use strategies like suppression or reappraisal during conflicts with your partner? Could you describe when and why?"

Emotional Regulation & Attachment Style Link (30-40 minutes)

Linking attachment style and emotional regulation

- "How do you think your attachment style influences your way of regulating emotions in relationships?"
- "Have you noticed any patterns where your attachment style either helps or hinders your emotional regulation?"
- "When conflicts arise, do you find that your emotional regulation strategies are linked to how you feel about your partner's emotional availability?"

Relationship Satisfaction (30-40 minutes)

Using the relationship assessment scale (RAS) [SEP], 6. overall relationship satisfaction:

- "How satisfied are you with the emotional support you receive from your partner?"
- "Do you feel that emotional regulation plays a key role in the level of satisfaction you experience in your relationship?"
- "How do you think your attachment style impacts your overall satisfaction in relationships?"

Impact of Emotional Regulation on Relationship Dynamics

- "When you feel emotionally overwhelmed, how does it affect your relationship dynamic? Can you give an example?"
- "Do you think your ability to regulate emotions in stressful moments contributes to or hinders relationship satisfaction?"
- "Have you ever noticed how your partner's emotional regulation influences your relationship satisfaction?"

Case Exploration (60-90 minutes)

For the case study section, explore detailed personal experiences:

1. Exploring a Specific Case:
 - "Can you tell me about a challenging period in your relationship where attachment and emotional regulation were particularly tested?"
 - "How did you manage emotions during that time? What strategies did you use?"
 - "Looking back, how did your attachment style influence how you reacted emotionally, and how did it impact the relationship at that time?"
 - "What would you change if you were to approach that situation with the knowledge of your attachment style and emotional regulation techniques?"
2. Analyzing Relationship Dynamics in Detail:
 - "What patterns do you notice about how you and your partner emotionally interact in both stressful and calm moments?"
 - "How do you feel your relationship might improve if both you and your partner better understood each other's attachment styles and emotional regulation needs?"
 - "In your experience, has the way you regulate emotions helped resolve conflict or created further tension? Can you provide an example?"

Closing Questions (10-15 minutes)

- "Reflecting on your relationship satisfaction, how much do you think emotional regulation and attachment style play a role?"
- "What advice would you give someone who might be struggling with emotional regulation in their relationship?"
- "Is there anything else you think is important to share about your relationship and emotional experience that we haven't covered yet?"

Wrap-Up (5 minutes)

- "Thank you so much for sharing. I really appreciate your time and openness. Do you have any questions for me about the study or next steps?"