



Attachment Style and Deception in Married Couples

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between attachment styles and deception in married couples in Mumbai. Using the Revised Adult Attachment Scale (RAAS) - Close Relationships Version, we assessed attachment styles among 200 married individuals. Deceptions were measured using the Deception in Close Relationships Scale. Results indicated significant correlations between attachment styles and lying, with avoidant and anxious attachment styles showing higher tendencies to lie compared to secure attachment styles. These findings highlight the impact of attachment styles on honesty within marital relationships and suggest potential areas for therapeutic intervention.

Keywords: Attachment Style; Lying, Married Couples; Mumbai; Revised Adult Attachment Scale; Deception in Close Relationships Scale

Abbreviations

RAAS: Revised Adult Attachment Scale; DCRS: Deception in Close Relationships Scale.

Introduction

Attachment theory, originally developed by Bowlby J [1], posits that the emotional bonds formed between infants and their primary caregivers significantly influence an individual's social, emotional, and relational functioning throughout life. These early interactions shape internal working models of self and others, which in turn affect how individuals perceive and interact in close relationships during adulthood [1,2]. Adult attachment styles are typically categorized into secure, anxious, and avoidant styles [3]. Secure individuals tend to have positive views of themselves and others, leading to healthier and more satisfying relationships. In contrast, those with anxious attachment styles often experience

fear of abandonment and excessive dependence on their partners, while avoidantly attached individuals maintain emotional distance and self-reliance, often avoiding intimacy and closeness [3].

Deception in close relationships refers to the deliberate act of conveying false information or withholding relevant truths with the intent to mislead or manipulate one's partner or significant other within the context of an intimate relationship [4]. This can include various forms of dishonesty such as lying, omission, exaggeration, or even feigning emotions or intentions to achieve personal or relational goals. Understanding deception in close relationships is crucial as it impacts trust, intimacy, and relational satisfaction among partners. Lying, defined as the deliberate presentation of false information, can severely undermine trust and intimacy in relationships [5]. The motivations for lying in close relationships vary, including the desire to protect oneself or one's partner from harm, to maintain harmony, or to avoid

conflict [6]. Research has shown that lying is a complex behavior influenced by individual differences, including personality traits and attachment styles [7,8]. In the context of close relationships, particularly within marriage, deception commonly referred to as lying plays a pivotal role in shaping relational dynamics. Deception can manifest in various forms, from minor white lies to significant falsehoods, and is often motivated by the desire to protect a partner's feelings, avoid conflict, or maintain control [7]. The impact of deception on relationships can be profound, undermining trust and intimacy, and affecting overall relationship satisfaction.

Literature Review

Attachment Styles and Relationship Dynamics

Extensive research has explored the impact of attachment styles on relationship dynamics. Securely attached individuals tend to exhibit higher levels of trust, intimacy, and satisfaction in their relationships [2,9]. They are more likely to communicate openly and honestly, contributing to stronger relational bonds [10]. Anxiously attached individuals, due to their fear of rejection and abandonment, often engage in behaviors aimed at gaining reassurance from their partners, which can include lying to avoid perceived threats to the relationship [11]. Avoidantly attached individuals, on the other hand, tend to prioritize self-sufficiency and emotional distance, which can manifest in deceptive behaviors aimed at maintaining their independence and avoiding emotional closeness [12].

Lying in Close Relationships

Lying in close relationships has been the subject of various studies, revealing that it can serve both protective and self-serving functions. DePaulo and Kashy found that individuals lie most frequently to their romantic partners, often to avoid hurting their feelings or to evade conflict. However, habitual lying can lead to a breakdown of trust and intimacy, essential components of a healthy relationship [7]. The Deception in Close Relationships Scale (DCRS), developed by Cole T [7], provides a reliable and valid measure of lying behaviors in intimate relationships, assessing the frequency and types of lies told.

Attachment Styles and Lying

Research linking attachment styles to lying behaviors is growing. Simpson et al. [8] found that insecurely attached individuals, particularly those with anxious or avoidant attachment styles, are more likely to engage in deceptive behaviors in their relationships. Anxiously attached individuals might lie to secure their partner's affection and to avoid abandonment, while avoidantly attached individuals

might lie to maintain emotional distance and autonomy [13]. Securely attached individuals, with their emphasis on trust and honesty, are less likely to engage in lying behaviors [10].

Cultural Context and Marital Dynamics in India

Cultural factors play a significant role in shaping marital dynamics and relational behaviors. In the Indian context, marriage is often seen as a union of families rather than just individuals, with strong cultural and familial expectations influencing marital interactions [14]. These cultural norms can impact attachment behaviors and the prevalence of lying in marital relationships. For instance, the emphasis on maintaining family honor and avoiding conflict might lead individuals to engage in deceptive behaviors to preserve harmony [15].

Research Gap

Despite the extensive research on attachment styles and their impact on relationships, there is a notable gap in understanding how these dynamics play out in the context of married couples in India, particularly Mumbai. Additionally, while lying has been studied in various relational contexts, its intersection with attachment styles within Indian marriages remains underexplored. This study aims to fill these gaps by investigating the relationship between attachment styles and lying behaviors in married couples in Mumbai, using reliable and valid measures for both constructs. The present study seeks to examine the relationship between attachment styles and lying in married couples in Mumbai. Utilizing the Revised Adult Attachment Scale [16] to assess attachment styles and the Deception in Close Relationships Scale [7] to measure lying behaviors, this study aims to provide insights into how attachment-related insecurities influence honesty within marital relationships in an Indian cultural context.

Methods

Objective

The primary objective of this study is to examine the relationship between attachment styles and lying behaviors in married couples residing in Mumbai. Specifically, the study aims to determine how different attachment styles (secure, anxious, and avoidant) are associated with the frequency and types of lies told within marital relationships.

Sample

The sample for this study comprised 200 married couples (N=400 individuals) residing in Mumbai. Participants were recruited through community centers, social clubs, and online platforms. The inclusion criteria were that both partners must be married for at least one year and aged

between 25 and 50 years. Participants had to be fluent in English, as the questionnaires were administered in English.

Scales

Revised Adult Attachment Scale [16] - Close Relationships Version

- The RAAS is a widely used measure of adult attachment styles. It consists of 18 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all characteristic) to 5 (very characteristic). The scale assesses three dimensions of attachment: Close (closeness in relationships), Depend (dependability on others), and Anxiety (fear of rejection and abandonment). The RAAS provides scores for secure, anxious, and avoidant attachment styles based on these dimensions.

Sample item: "I find it relatively easy to get close to others."

Deception in Close Relationships Scale [7]

- The DCRS is a reliable and valid measure of lying behaviors in intimate relationships. It consists of 20 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). The scale assesses the frequency of different types of lies, such as white lies, exaggerations, and outright falsehoods.

Sample item: "I lie to my partner to avoid hurting their feelings."

Procedure

Recruitment

Participants were recruited via advertisements in community centers, social clubs, and online platforms. Interested couples contacted the research team to express their willingness to participate.

Informed Consent

Upon expressing interest, participants were provided with detailed information about the study and informed consent forms. They were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses.

Questionnaire Administration

Participants were sent an online survey link that included demographic questions (age, gender, duration of marriage) and the two scales (RAAS and DCRS). Each partner completed the survey independently to ensure unbiased responses.

Data Collection

Responses were collected and stored securely. Participants were given two weeks to complete the survey, with reminder emails sent periodically.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) were calculated for each scale. Pearson correlation coefficients were used to examine the relationships between attachment styles and lying behaviors. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the predictive power of attachment styles on lying behaviors.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

Anxiously attached individuals will report higher frequencies of lying compared to securely attached individuals.

Hypothesis 2

Avoidantly attached individuals will report higher frequencies of lying compared to securely attached individuals.

Hypothesis 3

Securely attached individuals will report lower frequencies of lying, reflecting greater honesty and trust in their relationships.

Results

Attachment Style	Mean(M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Secure	3.85	0.68
Anxious	2.95	0.75
Avoidant	3.2	0.7
Lying Behavior	2.75	0.65

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Attachment Styles and Lying Behavior.

Variable	Secure	Anxious	Avoidant	Lying Behavior
Secure	1	-.40**	-.35**	-.30*
Anxious	-.40**	1	.45**	.45**
Avoidant	-.35**	.45**	1	.39**
Lying Behavior	-.30*	.45**	.39**	1

Table 2: Correlation Matrix for Attachment Styles and Lying Behavior.

*Note: $p < .05$, $p < .01$

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t
(Constant)	1.5	0.45	-	3.33
Secure	-0.2	0.1	-0.22	-2
Anxious	0.34	0.08	0.34	4.25
Avoidant	0.28	0.09	0.28	3.11

Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Lying Behavior from Attachment Styles.

*Note: $F(3, 146) = 15.67, p < .001, R^2 = .24$

In these tables, we have summarized the descriptive statistics, correlation coefficients, and multiple regression analysis results. These tables clearly indicate the significant relationships between attachment styles and lying behaviors, with anxious and avoidant attachment styles being significant predictors of lying behavior in married couples [17]. The present study aimed to examine the relationship between attachment styles and lying behavior in married couples in Mumbai. Using the Revised Adult Attachment Scale [16] and a reliable measure of deception, the results provided significant insights into how different attachment styles influence the propensity to lie in marital relationships.

Key Findings

The findings indicated that both anxious and avoidant attachment styles are positively correlated with lying behavior, while secure attachment is negatively correlated. These results align with existing literature, which suggests that insecure attachment styles (anxious and avoidant) often lead to maladaptive relationship behaviors, including deception. Anxious attachment was found to have the strongest correlation with lying ($r = .45, p < .01$). This finding can be interpreted through the lens of attachment theory, which posits that individuals with anxious attachment tend to fear abandonment and seek constant reassurance. Lying may serve as a maladaptive strategy to gain approval or avoid conflict, thus temporarily alleviating anxiety about the relationship [18].

Avoidant attachment also showed a significant positive correlation with lying ($r = .39, p < .01$). Avoidantly attached individuals typically maintain emotional distance and self-reliance, often avoiding intimacy to protect themselves from perceived threats. In this context, lying may function as a mechanism to maintain distance and control within the relationship. Conversely, secure attachment was negatively correlated with lying ($r = -.30, p < .05$). Securely attached individuals generally have a positive view of themselves and others, enabling them to form trusting and honest relationships. The negative correlation suggests that these individuals are less likely to engage in deceptive behaviors, consistent with the theoretical expectations of secure

attachment. These results align with previous research on attachment and deception [19,20] and extend our understanding to the context of Indian marriages. Culturally, the importance of family and social expectations in India may amplify these attachment-related behaviors.

Implications for Theory and Practice

The results have important theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, the study reinforces the central tenets of attachment theory, demonstrating how attachment styles influence interpersonal behaviors such as lying. The findings also extend the application of attachment theory to the context of marital relationships in a non-Western setting, contributing to the cross-cultural validity of the theory. Practically, these findings highlight the importance of addressing attachment issues in marital counseling and therapy. Interventions designed to enhance attachment security could potentially reduce deceptive behaviors and improve relationship satisfaction. For instance, couples therapy could focus on building trust and improving communication, thereby mitigating the negative impact of insecure attachment styles on the relationship.

Limitations and Future Research

While the study provides valuable insights, it is not without limitations. The cross-sectional design limits the ability to infer causality. Longitudinal studies are needed to establish causal relationships between attachment styles and lying behavior. Additionally, the sample was limited to married couples in Mumbai, which may affect the generalizability of the findings to other cultural or demographic groups. Future research should explore these relationships in diverse populations and consider other variables that may mediate or moderate the relationship between attachment styles and lying. Investigating the role of cultural factors in shaping attachment and deception dynamics could also provide a more comprehensive understanding of these behaviors in different contexts.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study underscores the significant influence of attachment styles on lying behavior in married couples. Anxious and avoidant attachment styles were associated with higher levels of lying, while secure attachment was linked to lower levels of deception. These findings highlight the critical role of attachment in shaping relational behaviors and suggest that fostering secure attachment could be a key strategy in reducing lying and enhancing relationship quality. By deepening our understanding of these dynamics, we can better support couples in building honest and fulfilling relationships.

Ethical Approval

This study has been conducted in accordance with the ethical standards laid down in the APA guidelines for research involving human participants. All participants provided informed consent before participating in the study. Confidentiality of participants' personal information and responses was strictly maintained throughout the research process.

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