Healthy Attachment and Commitment Levels in Early Marriage

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Introduction:
Data from the CREATE study were analyzed to observe how healthy, strong attachment affects commitment levels in newly married couples. Previous literature has identified the importance of attachment for romantic relationships. However, most literature has focused on how early childhood attachments (and not attachment to romantic partner) shape subsequent marital outcomes1. Furthermore, most studies studying the predictors of marital quality have examined marital satisfaction or happiness without considering how those predictors may be different for other dimensions of marital quality, such as marital commitment2. In this study, we examined whether higher levels of attachment to one’s romantic partner was significantly associated with commitment. Attachment, meaning the amount binding connection a couple forms to each other, affects commitment based on the amount of dedication and loyalty one spouse has for the other. The healthier the attachment, the greater the capacity for loyalty and dedication.

Hypothesis: Higher levels and healthier attachment in early marriage leads to higher commitment levels.

Methods:
Survey:
* Participants were selected randomly based on the following criteria: that they had been married for under a year, and that at least one of the spouses was under the age of 35. There were 48 participants that responded from a nationwide survey.

Measurement:
Independent Variable: Attachment
* Attachment was measured using 12 indicators. For example, “I worry about being abandoned”, items were measured on a 7-point scale assessing agreement in which agreement level was measured with 1 being “strongly disagree” and 7 being “strongly agree”.

Dependent Variable: Commitment
* The commitment was measured using 8 indicators. For example, “I think a lot about what it would be like to be married to (or dating) someone other than my partner.” Items were measured on a 7-point scale assessing agreement in which agreement level was measured with 1 being “strongly disagree” and 7 being “strongly agree”.

Discussion
In the models predicting commitment, we controlled for marital timing, gender, income, age, education, sexual relationship, religion, and religiosity to assess whether the relationship between attachment and commitment was systematic or spurious.

Results and Limitations:
Results indicate that there is a positive and statistically significant association between attachment and commitment. The other control variables did not have a statistically significant effect on the dependent variable: commitment. The R² for each of the models suggests that attachment explains a substantial portion of the variation in commitment. In fact, the final model accounts for 39% of the variance in commitment.

Although it is noteworthy that statistically significant results were obtained with this small sample size, the size of the sample is limited in its generalizability to a large population. There was enough data to show some correlation, but not enough representativeness to make inferences about the general population or support or falsify the hypothesis.

Future Exploration:
The CREATE study will continue to study a larger sample size of couples in a longitudinal study to observe the effects of attachment on commitment levels.