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Humour and attachment styles among college students

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Abstract

The cardinal aim of this study was to examine the relationship between humour and attachment styles among college students. This study comprises 50 samples of both genders (male=23;female=27) selected through random sampling techniques. Humour style questionnaire (Martin *et al*, 2003) and The Relationship Questionnaire (Hazan & Shaven,1987; revised by Bartholomew & Horowitz,1991) were administered to fulfill the purpose of the study. The data was statistically analyzed by correlational statistics through SPSS 20 version. The result revealed that attachment styles were significantly related to humor styles.

Keywords: humor style, attachment style, correlational statistics

Introduction

Research suggests that humor play an inevitable role in establishing and maintaining relationships. Humor styles can be either adaptive or maladaptive in nature. Among the four independent humor styles, the affiliative humor and self-enhancing humor is adaptive whereas self-defeating humor and aggressive humor is maladaptive in nature. Affiliative humor aims at enhancing interpersonal relationship by reduces stress and rivalries while self-enhancing humor is an emotion-regulating humor which helps to maintain a humorous prospect even in the difficult times in our lives. Self-defeating humor is maladaptive and self-disparaging in nature which is basically used towards the self to gain approval from others. Aggressive humor is detrimental which involves ridicules, criticisms, sarcasms and teasing others in order to enhance one's self (Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, & Weir, 2003) ^[9]. Attachment styles can be used as a predictor of the quality of relationship. A relationship with secure attachment style can reduce distress and anxiety and can improve the quality of the relationship, whereas negative attachment styles like fearful avoidant, preoccupied and dismissing avoidant can cause distress in a relationship (Besser *et al.*, 2012) ^[2].

The earlier studies have been found that the individual who tend to use self-defeating humor tend to have an insecure, especially anxious attachment. The use of maladaptive styles of humor like aggressive and self-defeating humor can cause distress and has been found negatively related to adaptive humors like affiliative and self-enhancing humor. The use of adaptive humors like affiliative and self-enhancing humor styles are associated with secure attachment (Cann *et al.*, 2008; Kazarian & Martin, 2004; Martin, 2007; Miczo *et al.*, 2009; Saroglou & Scariot, 2002; Taher, Kazarian, & Martin, 2008) ^[14]. The earlier studies have also been found that the use of maladaptive humor styles can cause disruptions in early attachment experiences (Dozois, Martin, & Bieling, 2009; Kazarian, Moghnie, & Martin, 2010) ^[8].

Objectives

- To study the types of humor and attachment styles among normal and mentally ill adults.
- To explore the relationship between humor and attachment styles.

Hypotheses

H1-There will be a significant relationship found between attachment styles among normal and mentally ill adults.

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Research Design

The Descriptive research design was used for the study.

Variables

Independent Variable	Humor Styles
Dependent Variable	Attachment Styles

Sample

The sample for the present study comprised of 50 adults with 23 males (46%) and 27 females (54%). The participants were the students of Annamalai University. Simple random sampling method was used for data collection.

Tools used

1. Humor Style Questionnaire (HSQ)
2. The Relationship Questionnaire (RQ)

Tool description

1. **Humor styles questionnaire (HSQ):** designed by Martin *et al* (2003) [9], is a 32 item self-reporting

Results

Table 1: Bivariate correlation between humor and attachment styles

	Affiliative Humor	Self-Enhancing Humor	Aggress Humor	Self Defeating	Secure Style	Fearful Avoidant	Preoccupied	Dis Avoidant missing
Affiliative Humor	1							
Self-Enhancing Humor	.981**	1						
Aggressive Humor	-.564**	-.609**	1					
Self-Defeating	-.593**	-.609**	.977**	1				
Secure Style	.888**	.901**	-.750**	-.770**	1			
Fearful Avoidant	-.695**	-.711**	.686**	-.706**	-.754**	1		
Preoccupied	-.751**	-.763**	.800**	.709**	-.825**	.719**	1	
Dismissing Avoidant	-.809**	-.832**	.775**	.761**	-.871**	.664**	.917**	1

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

The above table shows the relationship between humor styles and attachment styles. The results indicate a significant relationship between the humor style and attachment style. The participants who used the adaptive humors tend to have a secure attachment, while the maladaptive humors were associated with fearful avoidant, preoccupied and dismissing avoidant style attachments. On the whole the predicted relationship was supported by the study of Chong, J. (2014) [4], where the researcher found that the respondents who were more securely attached would use more positive humor.

Discussion

The findings of the present study supports the earlier studies (Besser *et al.*, 2012; Martin *et al.*, 2003; Chong 2014) [4], that have found that the humor styles and attachment styles are related and the maladaptive humor styles can cause distress. The findings of the present study reveals that the participants who tend to use adaptive styles like affiliative humor and self-enhancing humors tend to have secure and healthy attachment whereas the maladaptive humors like aggressive humor and self-defeating humors are related to negative styles of attachment. Thus the study reveals that the use of adaptive styles of humors can help to develop a secure and healthy relationship, whereas maladaptive humors can cause distress and can leads to a negative style of attachment.

questionnaire, with each style being measured with 8 items. It is a 7 point likert scale. It measures the four styles of humor- Affiliative humor, Self-enhancing Humor, Aggressive Humor and Self-Defeating Humor (Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, & Weir, 2003) [9].

2. **Relationships questionnaire (RQ):** revised by Bartholomew & Horowitz (1991), is a five item questionnaire with a 7 point likert scale. It is used to measure the four styles of adult attachment- Secure, Fearful Avoidant, Preoccupied/Ambivalent, Dismissing Avoidant. (Bartholomew & Horowitz,1991) Statistical Technique

Statistical technique

The data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 20.0. Bivariate correlation was used to find out the relationship between humor styles and attachment styles

The limitations of the present study include its descriptive design. The sample was non-clinical in nature, thus the results may not be generalized to other samples. Further studies can be done in other sample communities with a large sample size and can also be used to see the effect of humor on the treatment of clinical samples. Finally the present study was relied on self-report measures and future studies can be done using experimental and observational method (Besser *et al.*, 2012) [2].

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