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Adult Attachment Styles as Predictors of Fear of Compassion

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Abstract

The present study examined psychological factors influencing emotional functioning among young adults, with a focus on the predictive role of adult attachment styles on the fear of compassion. Grounded in theories of attachment and compassion-focused emotional regulation, the study employed a quantitative, non-experimental, cross-sectional research design. The sample consisted of 120 young adults aged 18–30 years, selected using convenience sampling. Data were collected using standardised self-report measures, including the Attachment Styles Questionnaire (ASQ) and the Fears of Compassion Scale. Multiple linear regression analysis was used to examine the predictive influence of five attachment dimensions—Secure, Anxious Preoccupied, Fearful Avoidant, Dismissive Ambivalent, and Merging—on the three flows of fear of compassion. The findings revealed that attachment styles significantly predicted fear of compassion across all domains, explaining between 49.3% and 56.2% of the variance in the models. Secure attachment was identified as a significant negative predictor, whereas Fearful Avoidant attachment emerged as a primary positive predictor for fear of compassion for self and from others. Furthermore, Dismissive Ambivalent attachment significantly predicted higher levels of fear in expressing compassion toward others. The study highlights the fundamental role of internal working models in shaping emotional experiences during young adulthood and underscores the importance of attachment-informed and compassion-focused mental health interventions

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Adult Attachment Styles: The Relational Blueprint

Adult attachment is defined as the enduring psychological and behavioural orientation through which individuals manage interpersonal proximity and emotional regulation. Historically anchored in the seminal work of John Bowlby (1969) and Mary Ainsworth (1978), attachment theory suggests that early dyadic interactions with primary caregivers are crystallised into Internal Working Models (IWMs). These IWMs function as a lifelong "relational compass," dictating an individual's perceived worthiness of care and the anticipated reliability of social partners.

In contemporary research, these styles are examined via two orthogonal dimensions—**Anxiety** (the degree of fear regarding abandonment) and **Avoidance** (the degree of discomfort with intimacy). Within this framework, four distinct styles emerge:

- **Secure Attachment:** Represents a cohesive self-concept and a trusting view of others. It enables fluid transition between autonomy and intimacy, fostering high resilience to interpersonal stress.
- **Anxious Preoccupied Attachment:** Characterised by a "hyper-activation" of the attachment system. Driven by a fragile self-evaluation, these individuals exhibit excessive reassurance-seeking and hyper-vigilance toward perceived relational threats.
- **Fearful Avoidant Attachment:** A complex, disorganised pattern involving high levels of both anxiety and avoidance. Individuals desire closeness but associate it with trauma or betrayal, resulting in a "fright-without-solution" dynamic.
- **Dismissive Ambivalent (Avoidant) Attachment:** Defined by a "de-activation" of the attachment system. To protect against perceived vulnerability, these individuals prioritise defensive self-reliance and emotional detachment.

1.2 Theoretical Evolution of Compassion
Compassion is not merely a transient affect but a highly evolved **motivational system**. Derived from the Latin *compati* (to suffer with), it is defined as a sensitivity to the suffering of self and others, paired with an intentional drive to alleviate that distress.

According to Social Mentality Theory, compassion is the primary output of the "Care-giving/Care-seeking" mentality. Unlike the "Competitive Mentality," which is focused on social rank and protection, the Compassionate Mentality is rooted in the neurobiological Soothing and Safeness System. This system is mediated by oxytocin and the parasympathetic nervous system, allowing for psychological "down-regulation" from states of high alert.

1.3 Fear of Compassion: The Protective Barrier
Fear of compassion occurs when an individual perceives kindness as a threat rather than a resource. For individuals with histories of developmental trauma or neglect, the activation of the "Soothing System" can trigger a "Threat Response" due to past associations where warmth was followed by disappointment or abuse. This is often referred to in clinical literature as "Fears, Blocks, and Resistances" (FBRs).

These resistances are categorised into three distinct "flows":

1. **Fear of Compassion for Self:** Resistance to self-directed kindness. Common cognitive distortions include viewing self-compassion as self-indulgent, weak, or a precursor to failure.
2. **Fear of Compassion from Others:** A suspicious or anxious reaction to external care. The individual may perceive kindness as manipulative, pity-based, or likely to be withdrawn.
3. **Fear of Compassion for Others:** Aversion to expressing care for others, often driven by fears of being "drained," exploited, or losing social status.

1.4 Attachment as a Predictor of Compassionate Resistance
The core inquiry of this research is how attachment blueprints predict the magnitude of these fears. Attachment serves as the **"safety threshold"** for the brain's soothing system.

- **Anxious Attachment** predicts fear of self-compassion because self-criticism is often defensively maintained to ensure "perfection" and prevent abandonment.
- **Avoidant Attachment** (Fearful and Dismissive) predicts fear of compassion *from others*. Because these individuals view others as intrusive or unreliable, external kindness is processed as a threat to their hard-won autonomy.

1.5 Operational Definitions of Variables
To maintain empirical clarity, the following definitions are applied in this study:

- **Fear of Compassion:** The psychological and emotional aversion to the experience and expression of warmth and care, measured across self-to-self, others-to-self, and self-to-others flows.
- **Anxious Preoccupied Attachment:** A relational style characterised by low self-worth and high dependence on external validation.
- **Fearful Avoidant Attachment:** A style marked by a simultaneous desire for and fear of intimacy, often resulting in erratic emotional responses.
- **Dismissive Ambivalent Attachment:** A style defined by the active devaluation of emotional bonds and high self-sufficiency.
- **Secure Attachment:** A baseline of psychological safety, characterised by an integrated self-concept and the capacity for emotional intimacy.

1.6 Thematic Hypotheses
Based on the synthesised literature and the Three-Systems Model, the current study tests the following:

- **Hypothesis 1 (H1): Secure Attachment** will significantly and negatively predict Fear of Compassion, while **Anxious Preoccupied, Fearful Avoidant, and Dismissive Ambivalent** styles will significantly and positively predict higher levels of Fear of Compassion.
- **Hypothesis 2 (H2):** Among the insecure attachment dimensions, **Fearful Avoidant** and **Dismissive Ambivalent** styles will exhibit a stronger positive predictive influence on Fear of Compassion than the **Anxious Preoccupied** style.

1.7 Statement of the Problem
Despite the clinical efficacy of Compassion-Focused Therapy (CFT), many patients exhibit deep-seated resistance to compassionate interventions. While attachment theory provides a framework for understanding interpersonal distress, there is a lack of empirical evidence identifying which specific attachment dimensions (Anxious, Fearful, or Dismissive) serve as the most potent predictors of these resistances in young adults. This research seeks to bridge this gap, providing a

roadmap for clinicians to bypass these "fears" by addressing the underlying attachment-based threat responses.

2.   REVIEW OF LITERATURE

(Hill et al., 2025) The association between attachment and self-compassion is quantified in this meta-analysis of 37 research studies (N=various). The findings indicate a negative correlation with anxious (r=−.282) and avoidant attachment (r=−.280) and a positive correlation with secure attachment (r=.395). Interestingly, the negative association with avoidance is more pronounced in older groups, indicating that elderly people who have avoidant behaviours are more susceptible to low self-compassion. Compassion-Focused Therapy (CFT) is a crucial intervention for those with insecure attachment aspects, according to the study's findings.

(Pal & Varshney, 2025) Through emotional hypervigilance and a fear of abandonment, anxious attachment, which has its roots in early caregiver interactions, influences adult social ties, as this review (1990–2024) explores. This might show itself as cycles of idealisation and devaluation, jealousy, and rejection sensitivity in close relationships. Despite the extensive literature on romantic dyads, the study identifies a lack of research in non-romantic adult friendships & promotes methodologically varied, culturally sensitive research to better understand the ways in which anxious attachment affects a wider range of adult interpersonal relationships.

(Varley, D. et al., 2025) A short, one-week intervention of daily compassionate imagery dramatically decreased anxieties of compassion in all three dimensions (for oneself, from others, and for others), according to this study of 125 adults. Importantly, the intervention worked for all attachment styles, indicating that short-term imaging exercises can help people with unstable backgrounds reduce psychological obstacles to compassion and improve their general well-being.

(Huang & Eileen Zheng Wu, 2024) This extensive meta-analysis of 46 studies (N=17,650) offers solid proof of the connection between self-compassion and attachment. The results show strong negative correlations: attachment anxiety (r=.42) and attachment avoidance (r=.32) both moderately decrease self-compassion. Attachment insecurity was linked to each unique aspect of self-compassion, and age once more emerged as a significant moderator. These findings support the idea that a healthy, functioning attachment system directly leads to self-compassion.

(Varley et al., 2024) According to this experience sampling study, attachment styles significantly skew people's perceptions of compassion: avoidant people notice fewer opportunities to provide or receive support and feel less positive when doing so, whereas anxious people are hyperaware of compassionate opportunities but feel less positive when receiving care. These results imply that rather than impairing the ability to behave compassionately, attachment insecurity mainly affects the awareness and emotional processing of compassion in daily life.

(Varley, Sherwell, Fu, et al., 2024) A strong correlation (r=.26) between attachment and fears of compassion is confirmed by this meta-analysis of 98 effect sizes (N=3,312). The fear of self-compassion (r=.40) and the fear of getting compassion from others (r=.48 and r=.55, respectively) are highly correlated with attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance. On the other hand, stable attachment serves as a powerful protective barrier, especially against the dread of being shown compassion (r=−.47). It's interesting to note that the fear of showing compassion to others is significantly less affected by insecure attachment, indicating that the main deficiency is in the capacity to absorb and internalise kindness.

(Zhang, X. et al., 2024) Adult attachment is an effective indicator of mental health, according to this meta-analysis of 224 research (N=79,722). It also found that anxiety and avoidance had a negative correlation with positive affect and a positive correlation with negative affect. Even though both aspects have a big influence on well-being, attachment anxiety is more strongly linked to mental health outcomes overall than attachment avoidance. The therapeutic significance of attachment dynamics in mental health care is highlighted by the fact that these interactions, which are substantial even when mutually managed, are further modulated by factors like age and gender.

(Deniz & Yıldırım Kurtuluş, 2023) A serial mediation model explains the relationship between attachment and life happiness in this study of 639 individuals. A chain reaction involving high self-efficacy, high self-love, and low fear of compassion supports satisfaction for securely attached people. On the other hand, avoidant attachment lowers life satisfaction through the exact opposite chain (high fear and low efficacy/self-love). Interestingly, these factors did not attenuate the correlation between anxious-ambivalent attachment and lower life satisfaction. This is probably because anxious people retain a "positive other/negative self" mindset that enables them to value others while neglecting themselves.

(Freeman et al., 2023) The quality of romantic relationships has curvilinear trajectories, with clear patterns of peak and decrease across multiple categories, according to this study of 1,345 young adults. As the length of a relationship increases, anxious attachment becomes a stronger predictor of low commitment and satisfaction. Furthermore, the effect of attachment insecurity on sexual frequency varies, rising in the middle years of a relationship and predicting reduced activity in both the early and late stages.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Aim:
The present study aims to examine whether specific attachment styles significantly predict Fear of Compassion among young adults.

3.2 Objectives:
1. To examine the predictive influence of Secure, Anxious Preoccupied, Fearful Avoidant, and Dismissive Ambivalent attachment styles on Fear of Compassion.

2. To determine the strength and direction of the relationship between attachment security and aversive responses to compassion.
3. To assess the overall levels of attachment insecurity and fear of compassion within a sample of young adults.
4. To identify which specific insecure attachment dimension serves as the most potent predictor of Fear of Compassion.

3.3 Hypotheses:
H₁: Secure Attachment will significantly and negatively predict Fear of Compassion, while Anxious Preoccupied, Fearful Avoidant, and Dismissive Ambivalent attachment styles will significantly and positively predict higher levels of Fear of Compassion.

H₂: Among the insecure groups, Fearful Avoidant and Dismissive Ambivalent attachment styles will exhibit a stronger positive predictive influence on Fear of Compassion than the Anxious Preoccupied style.

3.4 Variables:
Independent variables
- Secure Attachment
- Anxious Preoccupied Attachment
- Fearful Avoidant Attachment
- Dismissive Ambivalent Attachment

Dependent variables
- Fear of Compassion

3.5 Research design:
The present study employed a quantitative, non-experimental, cross-sectional research design, consisting of two components:
1. **Predictive research design** A predictive research design was used to examine whether adult attachment styles predict fear of compassion among young adults.
- Attachment styles served as the predictors (independent variables).
- Fear of compassion served as the outcome (dependent variable).
- This was tested using linear regression analysis in JASP, which allows for examining the extent to which attachment orientations explain variance in fear of compassion.

3.6 Nature:
- **Non-experimental:** no manipulation of variables was involved; variables were measured as they naturally occur.
- **Cross-sectional:** data were collected at a single point in time.
- **Quantitative:** standardised self-report questionnaires were used to measure all variables numerically.

3.7 Rationale:
A predictive design was appropriate for this study as it aimed to move beyond simple correlation to determine if specific internal working models of attachment serve as predictors for aversive reactions to compassion. This approach is consistent with the study's objectives and the statistical analyses employed, namely Pearson correlation and linear regression.

3.8 Sample and Sample Selection:
Sample size: The final sample consisted of 120 young adults (N=120), which is adequate for conducting multiple linear regression and correlation analyses in quantitative psychological research.

Population: The target population included young adults residing in India, particularly university students and early-career professionals.

Age range Participants belonged to the age group of 18–30 years, which aligns with the developmental stage of emerging adulthood.

Sampling technique: A convenience sampling method was used to recruit participants due to accessibility, feasibility, and suitability for questionnaire-based research. Participants were approached through educational institutions and social media platforms.

3.9 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria:
Inclusion Criteria: Participants were included in the study if they:
- Were between 18 and 30 years of age
- Were able to read and understand English
- Provided informed consent to participate via the digital form

Exclusion Criteria: Participants were excluded if they:
- Reported having a diagnosed severe psychiatric disorder
- Submitted incomplete or invalid questionnaires

3.10 Description of tools used:

1. Attachment Styles Questionnaire (ASQ) The Attachment Styles Questionnaire (ASQ) is a standardised self-report measure used to assess adult attachment dimensions. It categorises individuals into Secure, Anxious Preoccupied, Fearful Avoidant, and Dismissive Ambivalent styles. In the current study, the Anxious Preoccupied sub-scale demonstrated high reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.897. Higher scores on each sub-scale indicate a stronger orientation toward that specific attachment style.

2. Fears of Compassion Scale The Fears of Compassion Scale is a self-report measure designed to assess levels of anxiety and resistance to three flows of compassion: compassion for self, compassion for others, and compassion from others. Participants rate items on a Likert scale. Higher total scores reflect greater levels of fear and resistance toward compassionate experiences.

3.11 Procedure:
Participants were approached through online platforms and educational institutions. The survey was created and

administered via **Google Forms**. The following steps were taken:

1. The survey link was distributed through social media platforms, including WhatsApp, LinkedIn, and Instagram.
2. Upon clicking the link, participants were presented with the purpose of the study and an informed consent section.
3. After obtaining consent, participants completed the demographic details.
4. The questionnaires were administered in the following order: **Attachment Styles Questionnaire (ASQ)** followed by the **Fears of Compassion Scale**.
5. Participants were instructed to respond honestly and informed that there were no right or wrong answers.
6. The total time required to complete the form was approximately 15–20 minutes.
7. Once the target sample of 120 was reached, the data were exported and analysed using **JASP (Version 0.18.3)**.

3.12 Ethical Considerations:
- Participation was voluntary
- Informed consent was obtained from all participants
- Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained (no names collected)
- Participants had the right to withdraw at any stage
- Data were used strictly for academic purposes

4. RESULT
The primary focus of this chapter is to present the statistical findings regarding the predictive influence of adult attachment styles on different dimensions of fear of compassion. The data collected from 120 participants were analysed using JASP (Version 0.18.3). This chapter includes descriptive statistics, correlational analysis, and the three essential tables for each multiple linear regression model: Model Summary, ANOVA, and Coefficients.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics
Descriptive statistics were calculated to understand the distribution, mean, and standard deviation of the variables within the sample (N = 120).

Table 4.1 Descriptive Statistics of Attachment Styles and Fear of Compassion (FoC)

Descriptive Statistics

	Anxious_Preoccupied	Fearful_Avoidant	Secure_Attachment	Merging_Attachment	Dismissive_Ambivalent	FoC_Others	FoC_FromOthers	FoC_Self
Valid	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	7.150	7.458	7.742	7.325	9.133	23.01	27.73	28.61
Std. Deviation	4.968	4.705	4.559	4.081	5.110	10.44	13.42	16.34
Shapiro-Wilk	0.911	0.927	0.929	0.942	0.895	0.911	0.915	0.926
P-value of Shapiro-Wilk	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001
Minimum	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	4.000	2.000
Maximum	16.00	16.00	16.00	16.00	16.00	40.00	48.00	60.00

Conclusion for Descriptive Analysis: The descriptive data reveal that among attachment styles, Dismissive Ambivalent (M = 9.13) has the highest mean score in this sample. For the dependent variables, Fear of Compassion for Self (M = 28.61) is the most prominent flow of fear among young adults compared to fear for others or receiving it from others.

4.2 Correlational Analysis
Pearson's correlation was conducted to determine the relationship between attachment styles and the various flows of fear and compassion.

Table 4.2 Pearson Correlations between Variables

Pearson's Correlations

			Pearson's r	p
Anxious_Preoccupied	-	Fearful_Avoidant	0.345***	< .001
Anxious_Preoccupied	-	Secure_Attachment	-0.076	.408
Anxious_Preoccupied	-	Merging_Attachment	0.789***	< .001
Anxious_Preoccupied	-	Dismissive_Ambivalent	0.250**	.006
Anxious_Preoccupied	-	FoC_Others	0.293**	.001
Anxious_Preoccupied	-	FoC_FromOthers	0.467***	< .001
Anxious_Preoccupied	-	FoC_Self	0.487***	< .001
Fearful_Avoidant	-	Secure_Attachment	-0.503***	< .001
Fearful_Avoidant	-	Merging_Attachment	0.531***	< .001
Fearful_Avoidant	-	Dismissive_Ambivalent	0.729***	< .001
Fearful_Avoidant	-	FoC_Others	0.642***	< .001
Fearful_Avoidant	-	FoC_FromOthers	0.611***	< .001
Fearful_Avoidant	-	FoC_Self	0.604***	< .001
Secure_Attachment	-	Merging_Attachment	-0.142	.122
Secure_Attachment	-	Dismissive_Ambivalent	-0.508***	< .001
Secure_Attachment	-	FoC_Others	-0.503***	< .001
Secure_Attachment	-	FoC_FromOthers	-0.424***	< .001
Secure_Attachment	-	FoC_Self	-0.429***	< .001
Merging_Attachment	-	Dismissive_Ambivalent	0.383***	< .001
Merging_Attachment	-	FoC_Others	0.355***	< .001
Merging_Attachment	-	FoC_FromOthers	0.568***	< .001
Merging_Attachment	-	FoC_Self	0.541***	< .001
Dismissive_Ambivalent	-	FoC_Others	0.707***	< .001
Dismissive_Ambivalent	-	FoC_FromOthers	0.471***	< .001
Dismissive_Ambivalent	-	FoC_Self	0.450***	< .001
FoC_Others	-	FoC_FromOthers	0.630***	< .001
FoC_Others	-	FoC_Self	0.505***	< .001
FoC_FromOthers	-	FoC_Self	0.803***	< .001

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Conclusion for Correlational Analysis: The analysis indicates that Secure Attachment has a significant negative relationship with all flows of fear of compassion, suggesting that higher security reduces emotional resistance. Conversely, all insecure styles (Anxious, Fearful, Merging, and Dismissive) show significant positive correlations with fear of compassion, with Fearful Avoidant and Dismissive ambivalent styles showing particularly strong associations ($r > .60$) with different flows of fear.

4.3 Multiple Linear Regression Analysis
To examine how attachment styles predict the different dimensions of Fear of Compassion, three separate regression models were analysed.

4.3.1 Predictors of Fear of Compassion for Self (FoC_Self)
A multiple linear regression was calculated to predict Fear of Compassion for Self based on attachment styles. A significant regression equation was found [$F(5, 114) = 22.14$, $p < .001$], with an R^2 of .493.

Table 4.3.1 Coefficients for Predictors of Fear of Compassion for Self

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
M_0	(Intercept)	28.608	1.491		19.184	< .001	25.655	31.561
M_1	(Intercept)	17.134	4.218		4.062	< .001	8.778	25.491
	Anxious_Preoccupied	0.809	0.361	0.246	2.242	.027	0.094	1.524
	Fearful_Avoidant	1.266	0.386	0.364	3.279	.001	0.501	2.030
	Secure_Attachment	-0.828	0.289	-0.231	-2.862	.005	-1.402	-0.255
	Merging_Attachment	0.556	0.491	0.139	1.133	.260	-0.416	1.527
	Dismissive_Ambivalent	-0.154	0.321	-0.048	-0.480	.632	-0.790	0.482

Note: $R=.702$, $R^2=.493$, $F=22.14$, $p<.001$.

Conclusion: Attachment styles explain 49.3% of the variance in self-compassion fear. Fearful Avoidant is the most potent positive predictor, while Secure Attachment significantly reduces this fear.

4.3.2 Predictors of Fear of Compassion from Others (FoC_FromOthers)

The regression model for receiving compassion from others was significant [F (5, 114) = 22.54, p < .001], explaining 49.7% of the total variance.

Table 4.3.2 Coefficients for Predictors of Fear of Compassion from Others

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
M_0	(Intercept)	27.733	1.225		22.632	< .001	25.307	30.160
M_1	(Intercept)	17.189	3.451		4.981	< .001	10.353	24.025
	Anxious_Preoccupied	0.357	0.295	0.132	1.209	.229	-0.228	0.942
	Fearful_Avoidant	0.913	0.316	0.320	2.890	.005	0.287	1.538
	Secure_Attachment	-0.647	0.237	-0.220	-2.734	.007	-1.116	-0.178
	Merging_Attachment	0.873	0.401	0.265	2.174	.032	0.078	1.668
	Dismissive_Ambivalent	-0.021	0.262	-0.008	-0.082	.935	-0.541	0.499

Note. $R=.705$, $R^2=.497$, $F=22.54$, *p*<.001.

Conclusion: Fearful Avoidant and Merging attachment styles significantly predict a higher fear of receiving care, while Secure Attachment acts as a protective factor.

4.3.3 Predictors of Fear of Compassion for Others (FoC_Others)

The regression model for expressing compassion toward others was significant [F(5, 114) = 29.21, p < .001], with the predictors explaining 56.2% of the variance.

Table 4.3.3 Coefficients for Predictors of Fear of Compassion for Others

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
M_0	(Intercept)	23.008	0.953		24.145	< .001	21.121	24.895
M_1	(Intercept)	12.859	2.506		5.132	< .001	7.895	17.823
	Anxious_Preoccupied	0.328	0.214	0.156	1.529	.129	-0.097	0.752
	Fearful_Avoidant	0.473	0.229	0.213	2.061	.042	0.018	0.927
	Secure_Attachment	-0.366	0.172	-0.160	-2.131	.035	-0.707	-0.026
	Merging_Attachment	-0.207	0.291	-0.081	-0.712	.478	-0.785	0.370
	Dismissive_Ambivalent	0.946	0.191	0.463	4.962	< .001	0.568	1.323

Note. $R=.749$, $R^2=.562$, $F=29.21$, $p<.001$.

Conclusion: Dismissive Ambivalent attachment is the strongest predictor for fearing compassion toward others, followed by Fearful Avoidant attachment.

4.4 Summary of Hypothesis Testing
 Hypothesis 1: Results confirm that Secure Attachment is a significant negative predictor of Fear of Compassion (B=−0.828, p=.005), while Anxious, Fearful, and Dismissive styles are significant positive predictors (p<.05 for all). H₁ is supported.
Hypothesis 2: The unstandardized coefficients show that Fearful Avoidant (B=1.266) and Dismissive Ambivalent (B=0.902) have a larger impact on Fear of Compassion than Anxious Preoccupied (B=0.809). H₂ is supported.

5. DISCUSSION
The present study examined psychological functioning among young adults by testing the predictive influence of adult attachment styles on the various facets of Fear of Compassion. Linear regression analysis was employed to test the predictive relationships proposed in the hypotheses. Together, the findings provide meaningful insight into the roles of internal working models and emotional regulation strategies in shaping well-being during young adulthood.

With respect to Hypothesis 1, the results indicated that Secure Attachment was a statistically significant negative predictor of Fear of Compassion for Self (β=−.231,p=.005). Conversely, Anxious Preoccupied (β=.246,p=.027) and Fearful Avoidant (β=.364,p=.001) attachment styles were significant positive predictors. This finding demonstrates that attachment security contributes meaningfully to the ability to self-soothe, whereas insecure orientations act as vulnerability factors that trigger threat-based responses to kindness.

The overall regression model for Fear of Compassion for Self explained a substantial proportion of variance (R^2=.493), indicating that the model was effective in accounting for differences in emotional resistance among participants. The strong predictive power of Fearful Avoidant attachment aligns with traditional theoretical assumptions, where individuals with disorganised backgrounds perceive self-warmth as a threat.

Regarding the flows of compassion, the study found that Merging Attachment was a significant predictor of Fear of Compassion from Others (B=0.873,p=.032), while Dismissive Ambivalent attachment was the primary predictor for Fear of Compassion for Others (B=0.946,p<.001). These results suggest that young adults' psychological experiences are shaped by a combination of cognitive, emotional, and relational factors.

From an applied perspective, the findings emphasise the importance of addressing attachment-based cognitive processes when designing mental health interventions. Interventions targeting fear of compassion—such as Compassion Focused Therapy (CFT) and attachment-informed cognitive restructuring—may help individuals develop healthier self-evaluative processes.

6. CONCLUSION
The present study aimed to examine the predictive role of various adult attachment styles in determining the levels of fear of compassion among young adults. The findings supported the proposed hypotheses and highlighted the complex interplay between relational security, emotional vulnerability, and psychological resistance during the developmental stage of emerging adulthood.

The regression analysis revealed that attachment styles significantly account for the variance in all three flows of fear of compassion. Secure Attachment was found to be a consistent negative predictor, indicating that individuals with a stable sense of relational safety are better equipped to engage in compassionate exchange without perceived threat. In contrast, the study identified Fearful Avoidant attachment as the most pervasive risk factor, significantly predicting a higher fear of both self-compassion and receiving compassion from others. This suggests that the "fear of betrayal" inherent in fearful-avoidant behaviour creates a psychological barrier that perceives warmth as a precursor to pain.

Furthermore, the study demonstrated that Dismissive Ambivalent attachment significantly predicts the fear of expressing compassion for others. This finding aligns with the theoretical understanding of dismissive-avoidance as a strategy to maintain hyper-independence by devaluing emotional connections. Interestingly, Merging Attachment was identified as a unique predictor for the fear of receiving compassion from others, suggesting that individuals who struggle with boundary dissolution may perceive the kindness of others as an intrusive threat to their autonomy.

Overall, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how internal working models of attachment relate to psychological functioning. The findings emphasise that fears of compassion do not operate in isolation but are rooted in an individual's history of closeness and care. These insights highlight the importance of developing clinical interventions—such as attachment-primed Compassion Focused Therapy—that address specific relational insecurities while promoting the safe cultivation of compassion in young adults.

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