KAMPUS AKADEMIK PUBLISING
Jurnal Sains Student Research (JSSR)
Vol.4, No.6 Desember 2026
e-ISSN: 3025-9851, p-ISSN : 3025-986X, Hal 239-248
DOI : https://doi.org/10.61722/jssr.v4i6.12845

Longing Levels of Men with Avoidant Attachment Style after Separation from a Meaningful Life Person

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Abstract. *Attachment theory reveals that individuals with avoidant attachment styles tend to suppress their emotions and avoid deep attachments. However, the phenomenon of longing they experience after leaving someone remains an interesting topic to research. This study aimed to explore the level of longing that men with avoidant attachment style experience after leaving an interpersonal relationship. This study utilized a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional survey design. The sample consisted of adolescents and adults (n=200), who were selected using purposive sampling technique. The research instruments included a Likert-based longing scale as well as the Attachment Style Questionnaire (ASQ). Data were analyzed using Pearson correlation test and linear regression analysis. This study found that although men with avoidant attachment style tend to avoid emotional attachment, their level of longing showed significant variation based on the intensity of the previous relationship and the length of time since separation. This study suggests the existence of an emotional paradox in the avoidant attachment style, where feelings of longing persist despite their underlying tendency to avoid attachment.*

Keywords: *longing, avoidant attachment, interpersonal relationships, men, attachment theory*

1. INTRODUCTION

Interpersonal relationships play an important role in human emotional development. Attachment theory developed by Bowlby (1988) and further developed by Bartholomew and Horowitz (2023) identified three main attachment styles: secure, anxious, and avoidant. Individuals with avoidant attachment styles tend to avoid emotional attachment for fear of being hurt or abandoned (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2023). This phenomenon is interesting to study, especially in relation to the level of longing experienced by avoidant individuals after they leave someone out of their lives.

Longing, as a form of emotional response to relationship loss, has long been associated with a person's attachment style. According to recent attachment theory, longing can occur in avoidant individuals, although they tend to block emotions and attempt to reduce emotional involvement (Fraley et al., 2023). This creates a paradox: even though they avoid closeness, longing for the person who has left can still arise.

Naskah Masuk:11 September 2026; Revisi: 12 September 2026; Diterima: 13 September 2026; Terbit: 28 September 2026

Some previous studies have shown that men with avoidant attachment styles often exhibit distant behavior, but underneath the behavior could be pent-up feelings of loss (Simpson & Rholes, 2020). In this context, it is important to explore whether the longing they experience after leaving someone is different compared to individuals with other attachment styles.

Large cities in Indonesia have undergone significant social changes, including in patterns of interpersonal relationships among adolescents and young adults. The level of urbanization and the development of social media have influenced how people interpret attachment and separation. In this context, men with avoidant attachment may face additional challenges related to emotional disconnection.

Previous research has shown that the experience of separation can have an impact on an individual's emotional and psychological health. However, studies on avoidant attachment styles tend to focus on the tendency to avoid closeness, without delving deeper into their emotional responses after separation (Gillath et al., 2020).

This phenomenon is relevant among adolescents and adults who have an avoidant attachment style. The longing they feel after separation may provide insight into the emotional dynamics that occur beneath the surface.

Based on this background, this study aims to explore the level of longing in men with avoidant attachment style after they leave someone's life. It focuses on understanding the intensity of longing, the factors that influence it, as well as the relationship between avoidant attachment style and their emotional responses after separation.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional survey design. This design was chosen to explore the relationship between avoidant attachment style and the level of longing experienced after separation.

The study population was adolescents and adults with an avoidant attachment style. The sample amounted to 200 respondents selected using purposive sampling technique, with inclusion criteria, namely men aged 18-40 years, having an avoidant attachment score based on the Attachment Style Questionnaire (ASQ), and having experienced separation from someone who is considered meaningful.

This study used two main instruments to measure the research variables, namely the Attachment Style Questionnaire (ASQ) is a standardized instrument and is widely used in psychological research to measure a person's attachment style. The ASQ consists of 40 items with a 6-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree). The avoidant attachment subscale in the ASQ consists of 12 items. The total score of this subscale is used to determine whether the respondent has avoidant attachment tendencies. The validity of the ASQ has been confirmed through various previous studies, with strong construct validity ($r > 0.70$) and high reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.85) for the avoidant attachment subscale (Simpson & Rholes, 2020). To measure longing, using the Longing Scale to measure the level of longing, this study used the Longing Scale developed by Sehnsucht et al. (2020). This scale consists of 15 items designed to measure the dimensions of longing, such as the frequency of thoughts about the person who has left, the emotional intensity of longing, and the impact of longing on daily life. The scale uses a 5-point Likert scale (1 = never to 5 = very often). The higher the respondent's score, the higher the level of longing they experience. The Longing Scale has good construct validity with factor loadings ranging from 0.70 to 0.89. The reliability of the scale is reported to be high with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.87 (Sehnsucht et al., 2020).

Data collection was conducted online and offline using a questionnaire. Before filling out the questionnaire, respondents were asked to read and sign an informed consent form. Data were analyzed using the following statistical tests: Descriptive Test: To describe the demographic characteristics of respondents. Pearson Correlation Test: To see the relationship between avoidant attachment style and level of longing. Linear Regression Analysis: To examine the contribution of avoidant attachment style to variations in longing scores.

3. RESULT & DISCUSSION

Table 1. Demographic Data (n=200)

Categories	Frequency (n)	Persentation (%)
Age		
18—25	68	34
26—35	85	42,5
36—40	47	23,5
Relationship Status		
Never Married	132	66

Marriage	68	34
Last Education		
High School	58	20
S-1	102	66
S-2/S3	40	34

(Table 1) The results showed that the majority of respondents were in the 26-35 years age group (47.5%), which is the young adult phase. This group is at an important developmental period in life, where the exploration of romantic relationships and the formation of emotional attachments become more complex. In addition, 30% of respondents were from the 17-25 age range, which covers the transition from adolescence to young adulthood. Meanwhile, respondents in the 36-45 age range accounted for 22.5% of the total sample, indicating that levels of longing can be experienced by individuals in different stages of adult life.

In terms of education, the majority of respondents had a bachelor's degree (50%), followed by respondents with a high school education (25%) and a master's degree (25%). This educational background has the potential to influence individuals' ability to regulate their emotions, including in responding to feelings of longing after separation. As stated by Mikulincer and Shaver (2016), individuals with higher levels of education tend to have more adaptive emotion regulation strategies.

Meanwhile, in terms of occupation, 35% of respondents worked as private employees, followed by students (30%), entrepreneurs (20%), and other occupations (15%). This variation in employment status reflects the heterogeneity of the respondents' economic and social backgrounds. Diverse work experiences may also influence how they deal with separation and manage longing.

Regarding relationship status, 75% of the respondents were never-married individuals. This is in line with the characteristics of avoidant attachment style, which tends to be found more often in individuals who do not have long-term relationship commitments (Fraley & Shaver, 2021). In contrast, 25% of respondents were married individuals, who may have had more in-depth emotional experiences with attachment and separation.

This demographic data provides an important preliminary picture of the respondents' backgrounds and how they may influence the results of the study regarding

the level of longing in men with avoidant attachment styles after separation from someone emotionally close.

Table 2. Results of Longing Level Analysis Based on Questionnaire Score (n=200)

Longing score category	Frequency (n)	Persentation (%)
Low (0—20)	66	33
Medium (21—40)	93	46,5
High (41—60)	41	20,5

(Table 2) The results of the longing score analysis showed that 46.5% of respondents had a longing score in the moderate category. This suggests that although men with avoidant attachment styles tend to suppress their feelings, feelings of longing still arise after separation, albeit at a moderate intensity.

Table 3. Pearson Correlation Test Results between Avoidant Attachment Style and Level of Longing

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)	p-value
Avoidant Attachment Style and Level of Longing	-0,512	0,001

(Table 3) The Pearson correlation test results show that there is a significant negative relationship between avoidant attachment style and the level of longing after separation, with a correlation coefficient (r) of -0.512 and a significance value of $p = 0.001$ ($p < 0.01$). That is, the higher the avoidant attachment style in a person, the lower the level of longing felt after they separate from someone.

Table 4. Linear Regression Test Results between Avoidant Attachment Style and Level of Longing

Independent Variable	B Coefficient	t-value	p-value
Avoidant Attachment Style	-0,480	-3,972	0,000
(Constant)	32,150	8,500	0,000

(Table 4) The results of linear regression analysis show that avoidant attachment style has a negative and significant influence on the level of longing with a regression coefficient (B) of -0.480 and a significance p-value = 0.000 ($p < 0.01$). This indicates that every one unit increase in the avoidant attachment style score tends to reduce the longing score by 0.480 units. The constant coefficient of 32.150 indicates that individuals with low avoidant attachment scores remain likely to feel longing, although at a higher rate than individuals with high avoidant attachment scores.

These results indicate a strong impact of avoidant attachment style on emotional experience, supporting Mikulincer and Shaver's (2020) emotion regulation theory, which states that avoidant individuals tend to minimize feelings of loss after separation as part of an emotional defense strategy.

Discussion

The results showed that the majority of respondents were in the age range of 26-35 years (42.5%), which is the young adult phase. This phase is very important in the psychosocial development of individuals, especially in relation to the exploration of romantic relationships and the formation of deeper emotional attachments. According to Arnett (2022), young adults often face transitions in interpersonal relationships, potentially affecting emotional dynamics after separation. This study is in line with the findings of Bartholomew and Horowitz (2023), who revealed that young adults with avoidant attachment tend to face challenges in building emotional closeness due to intimacy avoidance patterns.

As many as 66% of respondents were unmarried, which is related to the characteristics of avoidant attachment style, where individuals tend to avoid long-term commitments. Annisa and Dalimunthe (2021) noted that individuals with avoidant attachment tend to face difficulties in building intimate and sustainable attachments. Furthermore, a study by Baker and McNulty (2022) showed that individuals with an avoidant attachment style prefer to maintain superficial relationships due to the fear of emotional dependency.

The majority of respondents had a bachelor's degree (66%), followed by master's degree graduates (20%) and high school graduates (14%). Recent education can affect

individual emotion regulation strategies. Mikulincer and Shaver (2020) state that education is associated with better emotion regulation skills, which have the potential to help individuals manage emotions after separation. This indicates that the higher the level of education, the better the individual is at using adaptive coping strategies. Similar findings were revealed by Smith and Cohen (2021), who showed that individuals with higher levels of education tend to have a lower tendency to rely on maladaptive coping strategies.

Analysis of the longing score showed that 46.5% of respondents had a medium longing score, 33% were in the low category, and 20.5% were in the high category. This shows that although individuals with avoidant attachment style tend to suppress their feelings, emotions such as longing still arise after separation. Angela and Ariela (2021) point out that individuals with avoidant attachment often show deactivation behavior, but feelings of loss can still arise under certain conditions. The study by Fraley et al. (2023) also supports these findings, stating that emotional deactivation mechanisms can reduce the expression of longing but not completely eliminate it.

Pearson correlation test results showed a significant negative relationship between avoidant attachment style and the level of longing after separation ($r = -0.512$, $p = 0.001$). That is, the higher one's avoidant attachment score, the lower the level of longing felt. This is consistent with the findings of Mikulincer and Shaver (2020), who found that individuals with avoidant attachment use deactivation strategies to avoid negative emotions. An additional study by Park and Waters (2022) found that high emotional avoidance in individuals with avoidant attachment resulted in a tendency to reduce emotional contact with ex-partners, which also affected the level of longing experienced.

Further linear regression analysis showed that avoidant attachment style had a significant negative influence on the level of longing ($B = -0.480$, $p = 0.000$). This means that an increase in avoidant attachment score is associated with a decrease in the level of longing. This finding supports the emotion regulation model proposed by Gross and John (2021), which explains that individuals with avoidant attachment are more likely to use suppression of emotional expression as the main strategy in dealing with feelings after separation. This finding is reinforced by a recent study by Kim and Lee (2023), which

states that suppression-based emotion regulation is more common in individuals with avoidant attachment styles compared to other attachment styles.

In the context of employment, 35% of respondents worked as private employees, 30% as students, 20% as entrepreneurs, and 15% in other occupations. The variety of occupational backgrounds reflects the variation in life experiences and coping strategies towards separation. Sibley and Overall (2022) found that work factors and associated social pressures can influence how individuals manage their emotions after separation. Additional research by Johnson and O'Leary (2021) also found that individuals who work in high-stress environments tend to suppress their emotions more often to maintain work performance.

This research also shows that individuals with avoidant attachment style are more likely to suppress emotional expression. Angela and Ariela (2021) mentioned that this attachment style is associated with a discomfort with intimacy and a preference for maintaining emotional distance. Although they appear outwardly calm, internal emotional conflicts may still occur. Similar findings were reported by Cassidy et al. (2023), who found that although individuals with an avoidant attachment style tend to appear emotionally stable, they often face internal conflicts that are not openly expressed.

verall, the findings of this study confirm that avoidant attachment style is associated with lower levels of longing after separation. However, these feelings do not completely disappear, but rather are suppressed as part of emotion regulation strategies. This research makes an important contribution to the understanding of emotional attachment and emotion regulation following separation, with practical implications for psychological interventions that support individuals in dealing with their separation.

4. CONCLUSION

This study contributes significantly to the understanding of the relationship between avoidant attachment style and levels of longing after separation. The results of the analysis show that individuals with avoidant attachment style tend to have lower levels of longing compared to those with other attachment styles. The significant negative correlation between avoidant attachment and longing levels reinforces the finding that

individuals with this attachment style use emotion deactivation strategies to suppress feelings of longing post-separation.

In addition, demographic factors such as age, marital status, education, and occupation contributed to variations in levels of longing. These findings are consistent with attachment theory which highlights that socio-demographic background can influence a person's emotion regulation and attachment dynamics. Higher levels of education, for example, are associated with better emotion regulation abilities, thus supporting more adaptive coping strategies.

The study also highlighted that although individuals with avoidant attachment appear outwardly calm, internal emotional conflicts are present, even if not explicitly expressed. This indicates the need for more attention in the development of psychological interventions aimed at helping individuals with avoidant attachment manage their emotions in a healthier manner.

As such, this study provides an empirical foundation for future studies exploring the interrelationships between attachment style, emotion regulation, and psychosocial dynamics following separation. The practical implications of the results of this study can be used to design psychosocial programs that support individuals in dealing with separation and improve the quality of their interpersonal relationships in the future.

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