

# Investigating the Moderating Role of Caregiver Loss in the Relationship Between Attachment Style, Self-Esteem, and Romantic Relationship Satisfaction During Emerging Adulthood

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## BACKGROUND

- Emerging Adulthood:**
- Developmental period ages 18-29
  - Growth, development, & identity formation
  - Romantic relationships -> more serious (Arnett, 2000, 2007; Reifman et al., 2007)
- Caregiver Loss:**
- The death of a guardian
  - Grief, depression, & difficulties forming later relationships
  - Non-normative event (Hayslip et al., 2015; Høeg et al., 2018; Maier & Lachman, 2000)
- Attachment Style:**
- Early bonds between children and caregivers
  - Secure & insecure
  - Impacts thoughts & behaviors in relationships (Levy et al., 2011; Obegi & Berant, 2010; Simpson & Rholes, 2010)
- Self-Esteem:**
- How individuals value themselves
  - Impacts thoughts & behaviors in relationships (Orth & Robins, 2014; Zeigler-Hill, 2013)
- Romantic Relationship Satisfaction:**
- Perception & evaluation of current romantic relationships
  - Romantic relationships -> beneficial (Zhan et al., 2022)

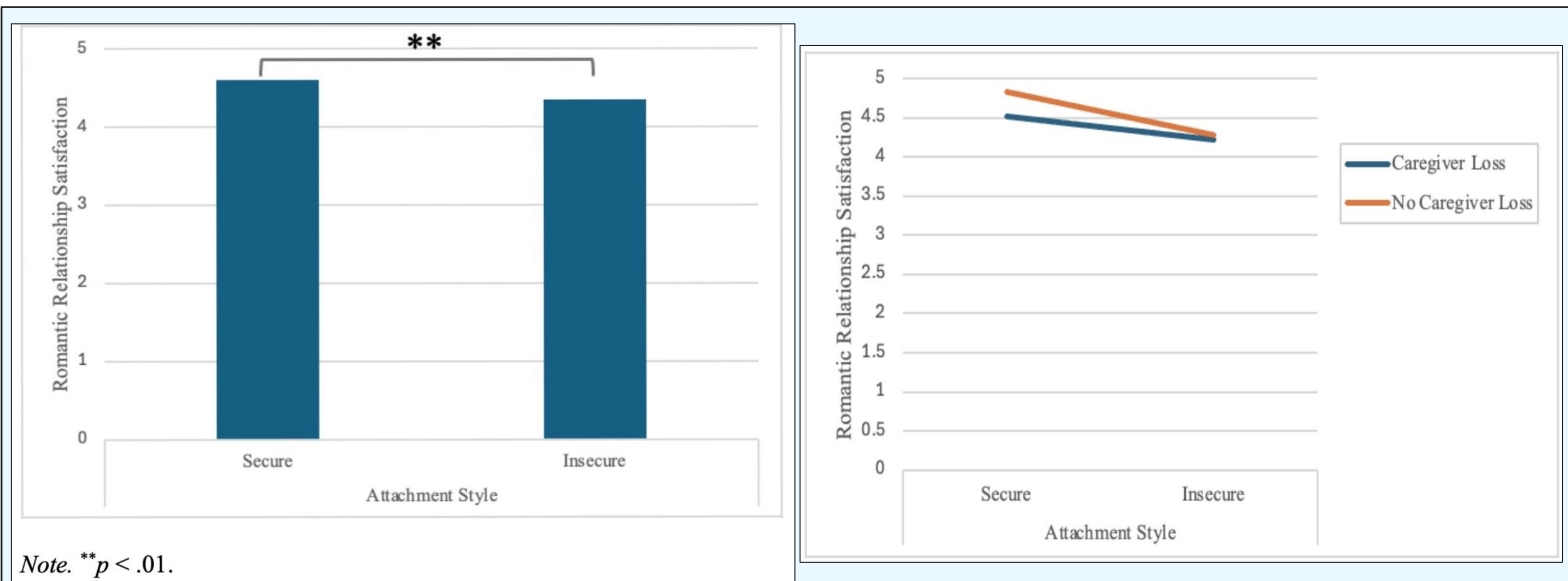
## HYPOTHESES

- **H1:** Emerging adults who are insecurely attached will feel less relationally satisfied.
- **H2:** Individuals who are securely attached and have not lost a caregiver will be the most relationally satisfied.
- **H3:** Emerging adults who have worse self-esteem will feel less relationally satisfied.
- **H4:** The relationship between self-esteem and romantic relationship satisfaction will be weaker for individuals who have experienced caregiver loss.

## METHOD

- Participants:**
- 94 participants (61 = caregiver loss, 33 = no loss)
  - Avg. age = 25.81 yrs
- Materials:**
- Attachment style, self-esteem, & romantic relationship satisfaction scales
- Procedure:**
- Qualtrics survey
  - Cloud Connect Research
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- Gender**
- 48.94% Women
  - 45.74% Men
  - 5.32% Non-binary
- Relationship Status**
- 52.10% Casually Dating
  - 35.10% Seriously Dating
  - 7.40% Engaged
  - 1.10% Married
  - 4.30% Other

## RESULTS



Variable	Model 1			Model 2		
	B	$\beta$	SE	B	$\beta$	SE
Constant	3.41**		.30	4.33**		.07
Self-Esteem	.31**	.31	.10	.21**	.30	.07
Caregiver Loss <sup>a</sup>				-.05	-.08	.07
Self-Esteem x Caregiver Loss				.10	.15	.07
R <sup>2</sup>	.095			.12		
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.085			.092		

Note. N = 94. Model 1 represents H3, model 2 represents H4. <sup>a</sup> No caregiver loss = 0, Caregiver loss = 1. \*\* $p < .01$ .

## DISCUSSION

- Attachment Style**
- Secure attachment = more satisfaction within romantic relationships
  - Insecure attachment = less satisfaction
  - Caregiver loss did not impact relationship further
- Self-Esteem**
- Better self-esteem = more satisfaction within romantic relationships
  - Worse self-esteem = less satisfaction
  - Caregiver loss did not impact relationship further

## LIMITATIONS & FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Better representation of avoidantly & disorganized attached participants
- Investigate the differences between recent & past losses of caregivers
- Investigate the differences between anticipated & sudden losses of caregivers

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