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Models of attachment, confirmation of positive affective expectations, and satisfaction with vacation activities: A pre–post panel design study of leisure

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Abstract

Utilizing a pre–post panel design, we explored direct and mediated associations between models of adult attachment (positive Model of Self [PS] and positive Model of Other [PO]) on one hand, and negative mood during vacation and satisfaction with vacation leisure activities on the other. Our sample consisted of 112 community-based vacationers measured at entrance and checkout after spending a week at an all-inclusive vacation village. Higher PO ratings were related to lower negative mood during vacation, higher confirmation of positive affective expectations, and greater satisfaction with vacation leisure activities. The confirmation of positive affective expectations mediated the effect of PO on low negative mood during vacation. Participants with high PO felt they had fulfilled their positive affective expectations, which lowered their levels of negative mood during the vacation and promoted higher levels of satisfaction with various vacation leisure activities. The reported quasi-field study shows one way in which attachment theory contributes to the theoretical framework of positive psychology.
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1. Introduction

In our culture, vacations and leisure are viewed as time devoted to pleasure, rest, or relaxation, namely, engagement in enjoyable non-work activities. However, at the end of a vacation, people sometimes find that they actually did not enjoy themselves. Findings from research in the field of leisure show that personality can influence individuals' approaches to leisure (e.g., Melamed, Meir, & Samson, 1995). Yet some studies have begun to document individual differences regarding mood regulation during vacations (e.g., Carnelley & Ruscher, 2000; Hull, Michael, Walker, & Roggenbuck, 1996; Stewart, 1998), showing that affective and cognitive responses often change throughout the experience, producing negative affective experiences (Tinsley & Tinsley, 1986). In line with accumulating evidence showing relations between adult attachment dimensions and affect regulation (e.g., Kobak & Sceery, 1988; Mikulincer, Shaver, & Pereg, 2003), as well as between adult attachment dimensions and cognitive-affective processing (e.g., Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002), we propose that attachment dimensions will be associated with experienced confirmation of positive affective expectations.

While the majority of attachment studies have centered on the explanation and prediction of interpersonal difficulties, anxiety, and depression, the present study belongs to the field of positive psychology, which, focusing on the beneficial effects of positive emotions, aims to identify human qualities that buffer against psychopathology. Two aspects of the science of positive psychology are relevant to the present study: the study of positive *subjective experience* (cognitive, emotional, and behavioral), and the study of *positive individual traits* (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Leisure and vacation are generally associated with a positive subjective experience involving feelings of relaxation and well-being (Baum, 1999).

In the last two decades, attachment theory (Bowlby, 1973, 1980, 1982) has become one of the most important conceptual frameworks for understanding individual differences and the process of affect regulation in experiences of negative mood. Recent studies of adult attachment patterns (e.g., Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998) propose a classification of adult internal working models of attachment in terms of two orthogonal dimensions: attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance. *Adult attachment anxiety* is defined as the fear of rejection and abandonment. *Adult attachment avoidance* is characterized as the fear of intimacy and discomfort with closeness. Both dimensions can be measured with reliable self-report scales (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Brennan et al., 1998). Bartholomew and Horowitz proposed, on theoretical grounds, a classification of adult internal working models of attachment determined by the positivity of the models of self and other. The positivity of the self (PS) involves the degree to which the self is loveable and worthy and the degree to which others are expected to be responsive to the self. The positivity of the other (PO) involves a person's expectations about significant others' availability and support. Low PS is characterized by *anxiety* about closeness and dependence on others for self-esteem, and low PO is characterized by the *avoidance* of intimacy. High and low PS and PO define four different patterns of attachment: secure (high PS and high PO), preoccupied (low PS and high PO), dismissing (high PS and low PO), and fearful (low PS and low PO) (Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994).

Attachment dimensions have been found to be positively linked to indices of psychological distress (Lopez, Mitchell, & Gormley, 2002; Wei, Mallinckrodt, Russell, & Abraham, 2004) and negative affect (e.g., Simpson, 1990), and positively linked to interpersonal difficulties (Bartholomew

& Horowitz, 1991; Horowitz, Rosenberg, & Bartholomew, 1993) and greater hostility toward others (e.g., Mikulincer & Shaver, 2001).

In accordance with these empirical findings, we predicted that vacationers with high PS, and especially those with high PO, would show the highest positive expectations, the lowest negative mood during the vacation, and the greater satisfaction with vacation leisure activities. We assumed that individuals with high PO and high PS have the capacity to process new situations without negatively distorting them, experiencing greater congruence between expected and actual experiences. Moreover, we predicted that these expectations would mediate the effect of attachment on changes in vacationers' negative mood during vacation. Specifically, we expected that vacationers with high PO and high PS would feel they had positively fulfilled their affective expectations of the vacation experience, which would reduce their levels of negative mood during the vacation, and also promote higher levels of satisfaction with various vacation leisure activities, controlling for levels of negative mood during vacation.

Based on adult attachment theory, and within the context of vacation, we explored the following hypotheses:

H1: Pre-vacation positive affective expectations will be positively associated with post-vacation positive affective experiences (i.e., confirmation of positive affective expectations).
H2: High PO and high PS dimensions of attachment will be associated with lower negative mood during vacation and with greater satisfaction with vacation leisure activities.
H3: The association between the high PO and high PS dimensions of attachment and (a) negative mood during vacation and (b) satisfaction with vacation leisure activities will be mediated by the confirmation of positive affective expectations.

For the purposes of this study, affective expectations refer to the extent of enjoyment, excitement-fun, and entertainment-satisfaction vacationers expect to derive from their vacation.

2. Method

2.1. Participants and procedure

Participants were a community sample of 112 adults (ages 23–45 with $M = 34.67$, SD = 5.75 years and with $M = 13.56$, SD = 1.66 years of formal education) who spent a week's vacation with their spouses and at least one of their children at an all-inclusive vacation village in a resort city in southern Israel (Eilat). Participants were from urban areas across Israel, with above-average socioeconomic status. According to the vacation village's records and participant interviews, none of the individuals participating in the study experienced any inconvenience, or traumatic or unexpected negative events such as illness or injury, during their vacation.

Participants volunteered and were individually interviewed by a research assistant at arrival: before checking in (Time 1) and just before checking out (Time 2). Interviews took place in a specially arranged quiet room. Eighty percent of the participants we approached agreed to take part in the study. Only one partner was interviewed: if the husband volunteered we excluded the wife and vice versa, so not more than one family member is represented in the study. All of the participants who

agreed to participate at Time 1 were reached and interviewed at Time 2. The order of presentation of questionnaires between and within participants at both times was randomized.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Attachment style

Participants were administered a two-dimension, four-category measure of adult romantic attachment called the Relationship Questionnaire (RQ; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). This measure includes one secure-attachment item. Participants used a 7-point Likert-type scale to rate the secure-attachment item, ranging from 1 (*does not describe me*) to 7 (*very accurately describes me*). A high score on the secure scale indicates that a participant possesses internal working models representing high PS and high PO. The Relationship Questionnaire has three items that measure insecure romantic attachment styles. The first is the dismissing romantic attachment item. High scores on the dismissing item indicate high PS and low PO. High scores on the preoccupied romantic attachment item correspond to low PS and high PO. Finally, a high score on the fearful romantic attachment item indicates low PS and low PO. Following recommendations regarding the relevance of continuous over categorical measures of adult attachment (Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994), our analyses focused on summary scores of PS and PO in the form of continuous attachment dimensions. An overall Model of Self scale can be created by adding together a participant's secure and dismissing scores and then subtracting the sum of preoccupied and fearful scores (see Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994). The Model of Other scale is calculated by adding together the secure and preoccupied scores and then subtracting the sum of the dismissing and fearful scores. The Relationship Questionnaire is the only measure among popular measures of attachment to demonstrate independence from self-deceptive biases (Leak & Parsons, 2001). Moreover, there is ample evidence for the validity of the RQ. Its self-report scales significantly converge with interview-based ratings of attachment (Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994) and are significantly related to various interpersonal personality-based outcome measures (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Besser & Priel, 2005; Besser, Priel, & Wiznitzer, 2002; Priel & Besser, 2001). In the present sample, we obtained an internal consistency reliability coefficient of $\alpha = .83$ for the continuous attachment classification.

2.2.2. Pre- and post-vacation negative mood

Current affect was assessed at Time 1 and Time 2 using the Visual Analogue Scale (VAS; Albersnagel, 1988), composed of 18 mood adjectives. The participant is asked to indicate how he or she is feeling "at the moment" by placing a vertical mark on an 80-mm line anchored at 0% and 100% with opposing labels for each adjective (e.g., *not at all sad* to *extremely sad*). The three affective states assessed were: dysphoria (depressed, sad, blue, and lost), hostility (hostile, irritable, annoyed, and disagreeable), and anxiety (anxious, nervous, uneasy, and tense). In the present sample, we obtained internal consistency reliability coefficients of .78 and .81 for dysphoria, .83 and .80 for hostility, and .79 and .76 for anxiety at Time 1 and Time 2, respectively.

2.2.3. Affective expectations (pre-vacation) and subjective experience (post-vacation)

At Time 1, participants rated three statements designed to capture their anticipated overall subjective experience (i.e., affective expectations), on a scale ranging from 1 (*disagree*) to 10 (*agree*): "I

expect to enjoy this vacation," "I think this vacation will be fun," and "I will be satisfied with this vacation" (adapted from Klaaren, Hodges, & Wilson, 1994; Mitchell, Thompson, Peterson, & Cronk, 1997; Wirtz, Kruger, Scollon, & Diener, 2003). At Time 2, participants completed a set of identical items with the verb tense changed to evaluate their overall subjective experience (e.g., "*I enjoyed this vacation*"). In the present sample, we obtained internal consistency reliability coefficients of .78 and .76 for pre-vacation Affective expectations and post-vacation subjective experience, respectively.

2.2.4. Satisfaction with vacation leisure activities

Actual vacation leisure experiences were assessed using all possible free activities available in the vacation village and in the resort city where the vacation village is located. We asked local tourism experts as well as hoteliers to define all possible activities in a week's vacation at the all-inclusive village and in the resort city. This process generated 23 categories of engagement in a range of leisure exploration activities; the categories received 100% agreement among three independent judges. Participants indicated the categories of activities they actually engaged in during this vacation and rated their satisfaction with each category in which they participated on a 7-point scale (*not at all* to *very much*). A satisfaction with vacation leisure activities score was calculated as the mean satisfaction on the number of activity categories in which the participant indicated that he or she participated. In the present sample, we obtained an internal consistency reliability coefficient of $\alpha = .81$ for the satisfaction with vacation leisure activities items.

3. Results

3.1. Preliminary analyses

3.1.1. Affective expectations (pre-vacation) and subjective experience (post-vacation): confirmation of positive affective expectations

Correlational analyses indicated significant positive moderate associations between pre-vacation positive affective expectations ("expect to enjoy this vacation" [$M = 8.56$, SD = 1.59], "think this vacation will be fun" [$M = 8.58$, SD = 1.57], and "will be satisfied with this vacation" [$M = 8.52$, SD = 1.65]) and post-vacation positive affective experiences of these affective expectations ("I enjoyed this vacation" [$M = 9.21$, SD = 1.41], "this vacation was fun" [$M = 8.97$, SD = 1.51], and "I am satisfied with this vacation" [$M = 9.04$, SD = 1.18]) ($r = .25$, $p < .009$; $r = .27$, $p < .004$; and $r = .34$, $p < .0001$, for enjoyment, pleasurable, and satisfaction with vacation, respectively). Paired samples t-test statistics indicated that participants reported significantly higher subjective experiences at Time 2 compared to their reported affective expectations measured at Time 1, ($t(111) = 3.7$, $p < .0001$; $t(111) = 2.23$, $p < .028$; and $t(111) = 3.28$, $p < .001$ for enjoyment, pleasurable, and satisfaction with vacation, respectively). Hence, participants had a better time than they expected they would.

3.1.2. Pre- and post-vacation negative mood

Correlational analyses indicated significant positive moderate associations between pre- and post-vacation negative mood ($r = .41$, $p < .0001$; $r = .26$, $p < .006$; and $r = .15$, Ns., for dysphoria,

anxiety, and hostility, respectively). Paired samples *t*-test statistics indicated nonsignificant overall differences between measures of negative mood at Time 1 and Time 2.

3.1.3. Working models of attachment effect on satisfaction with vacation leisure activities: the roles of confirmed positive affective expectations and change in negative mood

We measured Confirmed Positive Affective Expectations and Change in Negative Mood through a method known as a "before–after" or "pre–post" panel design. This method compares individual characteristics in the same research subjects, measured in similar ways before and after an intervention (e.g., vacation). Variable scores are expressed as standardized residual scores representing individuals' changes in mood and experiences relative to prior expectations during a clearly defined period of time, in our case before vacation to after vacation.

3.2. Data analysis

Analysis was conducted in three stages. First, we confirmed the *measurement* model of the study variables (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Second, we employed structural equation modeling (SEM) to examine the simultaneous *direct* effect of PO working models of attachment (predictor) on Negative Mood During Vacation and on satisfaction with vacation leisure activities (outcomes). Finally, in the third stage, we employed SEM to examine the *mediational* model proposed in Fig. 1. In both the direct and mediational models, we specified and controlled for the covariance among the outcome variables; that is, the correlation between Negative Mood During Vacation (disturbance) and satisfaction with vacation leisure activities (error terms; see Farrell, 1994).
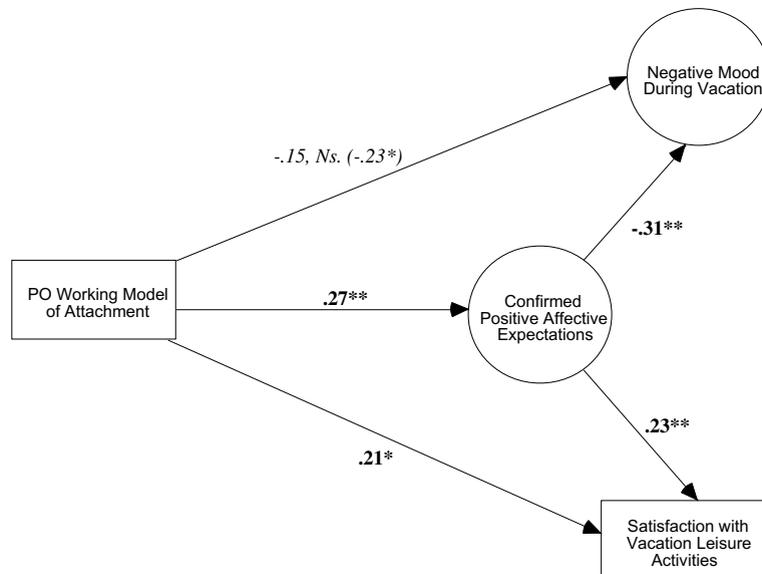

Fig. 1. Results of a mediating model that includes internal Working Model of Attachment (PO), Confirmed Positive Affective Expectations, Change in Negative Mood, and satisfaction with vacation leisure activities. *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$.

Table 1
Correlations among the study variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Confirmed Positive Affective Expectations								
1. Enjoyment	–							
2. Fun	.93	–						
3. Satisfaction	.91	.91	–					
Change in Negative Mood								
4. Dysphoria	−.20	−.22	−.20	–				
5. Anxiety	−.21	−.27	−.24	.57	–			
6. Hostility	−.35	−.34	−.28	.56	.63	–		
Attachment Dimensions								
7. PS[a]	−.00	.02	−.01	−.28	−.09	−.10	–	
8. PO[b]	.27	.27	.23	−.21	−.21	−.12	.18	–
9. Satisfaction with Vacation Leisure Activities	.30	.26	.27	.10	.15	−.01	−.02	.27

Note. The Confirmed Positive Affective Expectations and Change in Negative Mood variables are expressed as standardized residual scores.
[a] Positive-Self = (Secure + Dismissing) − (Fearful + Preoccupied).
[b] Positive-Other = (Secure + Preoccupied) − (Dismissing + Fearful) $N = 112$; rs of .20 and higher are significant at $p < .05$ or lower (two-tailed).

Analyses were conducted by means of the AMOS 4.01 program (Arbuckle, 1999). Model fit was assessed using the following indices: χ^2 divided by degrees of freedom (χ^2/df), the Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI; Bentler & Bonett, 1980), the Comparative Fit Index (CFI; Bentler, 1990), and the Root Mean Square of Approximation (RMSEA; Steiger, 1980).

The correlations among the variables are presented in Table 1. As can be seen in Table 1, among the attachment dimensions (predictor), the PO but not the PS working model of attachment was significantly associated with Confirmed Positive Affective Expectations (mediator) and with satisfaction with vacation leisure activities (outcome). Accordingly, PS was excluded in subsequent analyses. The only significant association found for PS was with low levels of dysphoria during vacation ($r = −.28$, $p < .002$).

3.2.1. Measurement model

The CFA yielded a very good fit ($\chi^2 = 24.3$; $df = 16$; $\chi^2/df = 1.52$; NNFI = .96; CFI = .99; RMSEA = .06). Loadings of the manifest indicators on their respective latent variables (Negative Mood During Vacation and Confirmed Positive Affective Expectations) were strong, in expected directions (γs = .71, .81, and .77 for dysphoria, anxiety, and hostility, respectively, and γs = .94, .97, and .96 for satisfaction, fun and enjoyment, respectively), and statistically significant ($p < .001$).

3.2.2. Direct effects model

The model fit the data well ($\chi^2 = 8.33$; $df = 4$; $\chi^2/df = 2.08$; NNFI = .94; CFI = .97; RMSEA = .06). PO working models of attachment statistically predicted higher levels of satisfaction with vacation leisure activities ($\beta = .27$, $p < .003$) and lower levels of Negative Mood During Vacation ($\beta = −.23$, $p < .027$).

3.2.3. Mediational effects model

In specifying the SEM model, we expected that the effect of the PO dimension of the working model of attachment on (a) satisfaction with vacation leisure activities and on (b) Negative Mood During Vacation would be mediated by the effect of the PO working model of attachment on Confirmed Positive Affective Expectations. This SEM model fit the data well ($\chi^2 = 24.3$; $df = 16$; $\chi^2/df = 1.52$; NNFI = .96; CFI = .99; RMSEA = .06) (see Fig. 1). Results indicated that the significant effect found for the PO working model of attachment on Change in Negative Mood During Vacation ($\beta = -.23$, $p < .034$) became nonsignificant ($\beta = -.15$, Ns) when the assumed mediator Confirmed Positive Affective Expectations was included in the model. High PO working models of attachment were significantly associated with high Confirmed Positive Affective Expectations ($\beta = .27$, $p < .003$), which in turn was associated with lower levels of Negative Mood During Vacation ($\beta = -.31$, $p < .004$). This mediated effect was found to be significant ($z' = 2.28$, $p < .02$). Furthermore, results indicated that PO working model of attachment scores had a significant direct effect on satisfaction with vacation leisure activities ($\beta = .21$, $p < .027$) as well as an indirect effect through its effect on Confirmed Positive Affective Expectations, which in turn was associated with higher satisfaction with vacation leisure activities ($\beta = .23$, $p < .014$). This indirect effect was found to be significant ($z' = 2.27$, $p < .02$).

The final model (see Fig. 1) indicated that the effect of the PO working model of attachment levels on Change in Negative Mood was mediated by its effect on Confirmed Positive Affective Expectations, and that the PO working model of attachment had direct and indirect pathways to satisfaction with vacation leisure activities through the effect on Confirmed Positive Affective Expectations. Confirmed Positive Affective Expectations, in turn, had an effect both on Negative Mood During Vacation and satisfaction with vacation leisure activities. Thus, vacationers high on PO models of attachment experienced higher fulfillment of their pre-vacation positive affective expectations, which lowered their levels of Negative Mood During Vacation and increased their levels of s satisfaction with vacation leisure activities.

4. Discussion

The present study developed a model that underscores the importance of positive expectancies in a real-life leisure situation. This study proposed a model of the links between vacationers' positive Model of Other and the satisfaction of their positive affective expectations, their change in negative mood, and their ability to enjoy their vacation.

Our results indicated relatively stable levels of negative mood during vacation, and significant fulfillment of positive affective experiences when compared to initial positive affective expectations. Only a single significant negative correlation was found during vacation: between the PS dimension and dysphoria. This result is congruent with accumulating research reporting that low PS constitutes a vulnerability to depression (Besser & Priel, 2003, 2005; Besser et al., 2002; Hammen et al., 1995; Rice & Mirzadeh, 2000). However, this study's results indicated the centrality of the high PO dimension of attachment in the context of experienced confirmation of positive affective expectations, low negative mood during vacation, and satisfaction with vacation leisure activities.

Despite the finding that overall levels of negative mood remain stable during vacations, participants high on the PO dimension reported experiencing lower levels of negative mood during

vacations. Moreover, among these participants, high levels of confirmation of positive affective expectations mediated their experience of lower negative mood. It seems that individuals high on the PO dimension shape their affective experiences to fit their prior expectations. Wilson and colleagues have amassed considerable evidence showing that people frequently assimilate affective experiences to their prior expectations. This general tendency seems to play an important role in the affect regulation process, promoting positive affect and satisfaction with vacation leisure activities among participants high on the PO dimension. The effect found for the PO dimension of attachment on participants' negative mood and positive affective expectations and experiences is in line with theories of affect contending that prior knowledge structures such as goals and expectations partially determine individuals' affective reactions (see, e.g., the review by Clore, Schwarz, & Conway, 1994).

Our findings suggest that PS does not contribute to vacationers' mood. This finding was unexpected; a possible explanation is that low levels of PS are not disturbing or anxiety-provoking in a situation in which, by definition, challenges to self-worth are minimized and individuals are expected to relax and enjoy themselves. These unexpected findings may be important in showing the specificity of the effects of the PO dimension. The exclusive effects of PO on vacationers' mood underscore the effects of this personality dimension beyond the effects of general well-being.

Our findings are congruent with theoretical tenets about the roles of confirmation of affective expectations in predicting satisfaction with vacation leisure activities, as in the predictions of the Affective Expectations Model (AEM; Wilson, Lisle, Kraft, & Wetzel, 1989). Wilson and colleagues reported that affective expectations influence the information that people recall from events, and even the judgments people make about repeating an experience (e.g., Klaaren et al., 1994).

Further studies should be designed to test specific hypotheses concerning the relevance of the model presented here for the study of other situations defined as positive (participation in sports, involvement in hobbies, etc.). Moreover, further research should dwell on the potential long-term effects of confirmed positive affective expectations, reduced negative mood, and satisfaction with lived experiences on individuals' well-being (see Fredrickson, 2001). Finally, given that people take vacations with their partners, further studies would be enhanced by interviewing both dyad members and examining partner effects, including, for instance, a relationship-specific measure of attachment to the partner (e.g., Klohnen, Weller, Luo, & Choe, 2005).

Our exclusive use of self-report measures is a limitation of the present study. Further studies should involve more direct observation of vacationers' behaviors and involvement in activities, as well as additional measures of mood, stress, and well-being using psychobiological indicators. Specifically, the ideas under investigation in the present study might relate to self-fulfilling prophecies and to the stability/set-point of general well-being (e.g., Diener, 2000). If people generally do not have a good outlook on their future, then they probably are not very happy. Thus, being negative before vacation and reporting negative experiences after vacation could simply reflect stability in general well-being. Despite the present's study limitations, its results clearly illustrate the value of integrating apparently different theoretical frameworks such as positive psychology and models of adult attachment for the purpose of understanding individual differences in mood and psychological well-being. Our results might encourage further researchers to identify the positive human qualities that buffer against psychopathology, including the capacity for pleasure (Seligman & Peterson, 2003).

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