



Acta Colombiana de Psicología

ISSN: 0123-9155

ISSN: 1909-9711

Universidad Católica de Colombia

Retana-Franco, Blanca Estela; Sánchez-Aragón, Rozzana
The impact of emotional attachment and culture on the breakup strategies perceived by the abandoned
Acta Colombiana de Psicología, vol. 23, no. 1, 2020, pp. 66-77
Universidad Católica de Colombia

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14718/ACP.2020.23.1.4>

Available in: <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=79868104004>

- How to cite
- Complete issue
- More information about this article
- Journal's webpage in redalyc.org

UAEH  redalyc.org

Scientific Information System Redalyc
Network of Scientific Journals from Latin America and the Caribbean, Spain and
Portugal

Project academic non-profit, developed under the open access initiative

El peso del apego y de la cultura en las estrategias de rompimiento amoroso percibidas por los abandonados

Blanca Estela Retana-Franco; Rozzana Sánchez-Aragón

How to cite this article:

Retana-Franco, B.E., & Sánchez-Aragón, R. (2020). The impact of emotional attachment and culture on the breakup strategies perceived by the abandoned. *Acta Colombiana de Psicología*, 23(1), 66-77. doi: <http://www.doi.org/10.14718/ACP.2020.23.1.4>

Recibido, noviembre 7/2018; Concepto de evaluación, abril 1/2019; Aceptado, abril 11/2019

Blanca Estela Retana-Franco

Universidad Pedagógica Nacional, Ciudad de México, México

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1393-3665>

Rozzana Sánchez-Aragón

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Ciudad de México, México

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5952-8972>

Resumen

Dada la importancia que se confiere a las relaciones de pareja, su rompimiento generalmente repercute de manera negativa en la vida de sus miembros, sobre todo en quien es víctima de la decisión del otro —es decir, quien ejerce un papel pasivo—. Así, desde el punto de vista cultural, cuando se le atribuye a la relación de pareja un valor importante como fuente de realización personal y familiar, y ello se transmite a través de los miembros —lo que facilita el desarrollo de creencias, normas, actitudes y expectativas del amor—, su búsqueda y consumación se vuelve una directriz en la vida de las personas. Adicional a esto, si el apego —que representa el medio por el cual se cubren las necesidades biológicas de afecto y seguridad— se ve satisfecho en la vinculación con el otro, puede que resulte devastador perder la fuente de tales satisfactores. Con base en lo anterior, el propósito de este estudio fue identificar la relación entre los estilos de apego y las premisas histórico-socioculturales (PHSC) del duelo romántico con las estrategias de rompimiento percibidas por los abandonados con historia romántica positiva o negativa. Para ello, se trabajó con una muestra no probabilística de 547 personas residentes de la Ciudad de México que habían sido dejadas por su pareja. Tras realizar algunos análisis de correlación, los resultados indicaron que las PHSC tienen mayores efectos sobre la percepción de estrategias de rompimiento negativo tanto en personas con historia romántica positiva como negativa. Los efectos incrementan cuando se trata de las PHSC sobre el sentir, principalmente en abandonados con historia negativa y con estilo de apego ansioso-ambivalente, seguido del evitativo. Por su parte, las PHSC positivas se asocian, pero en un nivel bajo, con cualquier estrategia percibida.

Palabras clave: apego, cultura, rompimiento amoroso, abandonados, México.

The impact of emotional attachment and culture on the breakup strategies perceived by the abandoned

Abstract

Considering the importance that has been given to couple relationships, their breakdown has a negative impact on its members, especially on those who are victims (passive role) of the other's decision. Thus, from the cultural point of view, when a great value is attributed to romantic relationships, in terms of personal and family fulfillment, and this is transmitted to the members of the couple, facilitating the development of beliefs, norms, attitudes and expectations about the love experience, the search and consummation of that love becomes a guideline in people's lives. And if coupled with this, the attachment representing the means by which the biological needs for affection and security are met through the connection with another, it can be devastating to lose the source of such satisfactions. Based on the foregoing, the purpose of this study was to identify the relationship between the historic socio-cultural premises (PHSC, for its Spanish acronym) about

* Calzada Azcapotzalco, La Villa, n.º 1011, San Andrés de las Salinas, C. P.: 02320, Azcapotzalco, Ciudad de México. bretana@upn.mx

romantic mourning and the attachment styles with the breakup strategies perceived by the passive subjects with a positive and negative romantic history. To do this, the study used a non-probabilistic sample of 547 residents of Mexico City who had been left by their partner. After performing some correlation analyzes, results indicated that the PHSC's have greater effects on the perception of negative breakup strategies in people with a positive or negative romantic history. The effects increased when dealing with PHSC's about feelings, mainly in passive members with a negative history and with an anxious attachment style followed by those with avoidant style. For their part, positive PHSCs are associated, but at a low level, with any perceived strategy.

Key words: attachment, culture, breakup, abandoned, Mexico.

Introduction

The establishment of affective relationships is of great importance in certain stages of an individual's life, particularly in the young adult population. There are transcendental situations at this stage such as the process of choosing a professional career that gives a sense of life, provides resources and the possibility of personal growth, as well as of starting a relationship and learning to develop oneself in the company of others (Rage, 2002).

Taking this into account, couple's relationships represent a fundamental aspect in the life of the individual (Becerril, 2001), and within them communication and understanding are essential for the proper development of each person and their life in society. Likewise, given that these relationships are the most intimate, in the same manner they provide ample support to the individual at the emotional and social levels.

But, what happens when these relationships do not work? Rupture occurs, which implies the experience of a relevant and painful stressor that causes the collapse of perspectives and aspirations, as well as modifications in the personal, family, economic and social spheres, and a discouraging and frustrating atmosphere (Jaramillo Bustamante, 2015). On the other hand, Caruso (2003) argues that love breakup is one of the most painful experiences for the human being, which varies in intensity depending on the factors that intervene in it, which, if not handled properly, can have very serious consequences ranging from sadness and anger, to psychological disorders such as anxiety and depression (Fisher, 2005).

In this regard, it can be pointed out that: (a) the culture in which one is born has a series of norms and beliefs regarding what love is, its value and working mechanisms within relationships, as well as what comes along with its loss (Díaz Loving & Sánchez Aragón, 1998, Sánchez Aragón, 2018); (b) the attachment style will determine -to a certain extent- how, when, why and with whom to relate emotionally (Le, Dove, Agnew, Korn, & Mutso, 2010); (c)

the love history of each person will predispose the experience and grieving process, and (d) the strategy that has been performed to terminate the relationship will also be affected by the aforementioned factors (Collins & Gillath, 2012; Jiménez Rodríguez & Sánchez Aragón, 2017).

It is important to remember that relationships and bonds are not established in an empty space. Conversely, they are governed by cultural norms or precepts where the love relationship develops. Thus, for Díaz-Guerrero (2003) socio-culture is a system of interrelated beliefs, generated from culture and society, which regulate or govern feelings, ideas, the hierarchy of interpersonal relationships, the stipulation of social roles to be played and the rules for the interaction of individuals in such roles. These mechanisms are represented by Historical Sociocultural Premises (PHSC, for its Spanish acronym) that refer to a system of beliefs and values that work as norms or mandates stipulating the roles of individuals, social practices and confrontational styles of a socio-culture.

Therefore, when the members of a society grow up believing that romantic love and the couple are the foundation of the family, and also believe that through it, personal fulfillment is achieved (Guttmann, 1993), the love breakup and its legal consequence, divorce (or separation), are seen as a wrong decision, as something personal and not as a socio-structural failure. This continues to push people to try again and again to embark on the search for a new and more compatible partner (Feldberg & Kohen, 1980). In this way, socioculture will mold the positive and negative experiences inherent to romantic love such as the mourning for the love breakup.

In Mexico, Díaz Loving and Sánchez Aragón (1998) identified a series of premises of the Mexican couple, related to: conflict-separation, passion, companionship love, maintenance, commitment, romance, sadness, tragic love, lack of love, detachment and lastly, attraction. Regarding the content of those PHSC related to the process of romantic mourning, items were obtained such as: "When a relationship

becomes unbearable, separation must happen”, “Evading the partner is a sign of distancing”, “When the partner takes distance, it is because they already lost interest in the relationship”, “Separation of the couple produces sadness and depression”, “When you have lost a love, you suffer”, “During the separation of the couple there is loneliness”, “When partners take distance from one another it's because they no longer love each other”.

Along this line, Sánchez Aragón (2018) carried out an exploratory study and designed a measure of PHSC romantic grief, which broadly addresses the way in which Mexicans must feel, think and behave in the event of breakup, and where aspects such as the following emerge: with respect to thoughts, thinking positively about the reasons, the reconciliation; or thinking with fatalism. Concerning feelings, feeling devalued, melancholic, terrible, resentful. Regarding behaviors, behaving with strength, in peace, courage and seeking alternatives.

Based on the above, it becomes evident that culture has relevance in the way romantic mourning is experienced, because it qualifies and adjusts their beliefs, rules of interpretation and appropriate behavior when facing a situation of personal and relational crisis in a cultural group.

However, the attachment style that each person develops from their relationship with their primary caregiver and consequently with other significant people through their romantic life has an impact on the experience of romantic grief brought together with culture. (Le et al., 2010).

Attachment has been defined as a kind of “psychological bond”, resulting from the pleasant and unpleasant sensations that are experienced with that significant person (in the case of the newborn, their primary caregiver, and subsequently other people) who is expected to be accessible, in order to satisfy the needs for attention, care and affection (Ainsworth, 1969; Bowlby, 1973) and with whom one seeks to share, feel comfort, closeness and enjoy their company in terms of meaning and sense for personal life (Bowlby, 1973).

Depending on the infant's interactions with their primary caregiver and the effectiveness of this person as an attachment figure (in response to the needs and demands of the child), different patterns or relationship styles develop predisposing people to bond with others (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991), as it is the case with couples (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). The best identified styles are:

Safe style. It is characteristic of someone whose attachment figure has promptly and adequately responded to the needs of the individual having an impact that shows in a feeling of being protected, calm, full of confidence and without a self-perception of vulnerability. Therefore, in the face of separation, their behavior lacks fear or anxiety, they remain calm and when they face the presence and absence

of the attachment figure, they are able to perform behaviors that express accessibility, certainty and care (Bowlby, 1973). These individuals can gravitate towards the stable development of their interpersonal relationships, since they withstand relatively high levels of trust, interdependence, commitment and satisfaction (Simpson, 1990). They are characterized by being tolerant to disagreements with the other member of the relationship (Remshard, 1998).

Anxious ambivalent style. When the individual has this type of attachment, it is due to the lack of precise and constant response from the attachment figure, which favors a persistent doubt and uncertainty of having access to this person, as well as a permanent feeling of restlessness. So, in the face of separation, people with this type of attachment often express excessive anxiety, little concentration in the tasks they used to perform, and even feelings of nostalgia and, in the presence of the attachment figure, they express their lack of trust with behaviors of anger and protest (Tzeng, 1992).

Avoidant style. It is characterized by the permanent inaccessibility of the attachment figure to satisfy the needs of attention and care, and for the emotional interpretation of the stimuli that they experience as stressful, painful and rejecting. In this case, when facing separation, these people usually show anguish, passivity and sadness, or exhibit an apparent disinterest and insecurity towards others and prefer to stay distant from them. In addition to it, they have a fear for intimacy and show difficulties in depending on other people (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003). The difference with this attachment style is that there is no claim or grievance to the attachment figure about the absence. When the figure returns, the avoidant style individual simply avoids contact and rejects it, as a way of self-protection and defensive response (Tzeng, 1992). They tend to develop mental models somewhat suspicious, distant and skeptical, so their relationships become very poor. In terms of the intensity and depth of their level of intimacy, they tend to develop fear, distrust and over appreciation, somewhat unreal for others, and are unable to surrender to a permanent relationship (Fuller & Fincham, 1995).

That said, in the scenario of a love breakup, Davis, Shaver and Vernon (2003) analyzed the attachment styles in young American adults who had undergone this situation. They found that those participants with an anxious attachment style had a greater difficulty in overcoming this experience, while those with a secure attachment style were more likely to seek social support to cope with the loss. Moreover, Sbarra (2006) endorsed these findings by reporting that for those participants with an anxious attachment style it was much more difficult to overcome the sadness of the loss and to accept that the relationship

was over. In addition, at the time of the study, individuals with this attachment style continued to be extremely in love with their ex-partner and at the same time expressed strong feelings of anger toward them.

Several associations between union patterns and ruptures have been identified. For example, anxious attachment is positively associated with the concern for the breakup, physical and emotional distress and behavior of anger and revenge after a breakup. In addition, anxiety is related to more attempts to reestablish the relationship and more unwanted searching behavior towards the ex-partner, leading to a vicious circle (Dutton & Winstead, 2006). Avoidance attachment is associated with a greater tendency to break up (Feeney & Noller, 1992), as well as weaker emotional reactions and fewer proximity seeking behaviors after it happens. These findings agree with the tendency of individuals with a high degree of avoidance to evade intimacy and potential confrontations with their partner (Schachner & Shaver, 2002).

Finally, self-confident people (low in anxiety and avoidance) tend to experience fewer breaks, they use more social and less self-destructive coping strategies, and are more likely to reach a resolution after the breakup (Davis et al., 2003). These findings, together with the literature on attachment patterns and prosocial tendencies, suggest that attachment dimensions could predict the type of breakup strategies that people prefer.

It is precisely these findings that perfectly exemplify the fact that a person with a certain kind of attachment is to some degree “predestined” to experience –repetitively– certain kinds of emotions and thoughts regarding their relationships in the course of their life, which defines their love story in positive or negative terms. Likewise, the attachment style determines the perception and interpretation the person will make of everything regarding the circumstances that surround the love break.

In addition to the foregoing factors, the literature points out that in the experience of love breakup, it is crucial to consider who made the decision to break up. If the decision was made by both members of the couple, the process of loss will be less disconcerting or intense than in situations where the decision of the breakup was unilateral, either by who terminated the relationship (agent) or by who had to accept the other’s decision (passive) (Agnew, 2000).

Tashiro and Frazier (2003) investigated the differences between the levels of emotional distress experienced by the people who started the breakup and those who ended a relationship against their will, but found no significant differences. These results coincide with those reported by Waller (2008) and Locker, McIntosh, Hackney, Wilson and Wiegand, (2010) but not with the findings of Perilloux and

Buss (2008) who found that those participants who had undergone a love breakup against their will, experienced more feelings of sadness, anger, confusion and jealousy after a breakup, in addition to a greater depression, lower self-esteem and more intrusive thoughts compared to those who started the separation. Lewandowski and Bizzoco (2007) found more positive and less negative emotions in the people who had started the separation, compared to the participants who reported being the target of the breakup.

Being a little more specific about the strategies that people use to communicate their message of rupture, Banks, Altendorf, Greene and Cody (1987) claim that depending on it, people can experience different degrees of anguish. In general, strategies tend to vary in their level of openness and in the amount of care or concern expressed towards the passive individual in the breakup (Sprecher, Zimmerman, & Abrahams, 2010). For example, those strategies that imply indirect communication of the breakup message with the partner, such as avoiding this person, show less compassion for the receiver, and are associated with more negative results after the breakup (Metts, Cupach, & Bejlovec, 1989; Sprecher et al., 2010). On the contrary, breakup strategies that are more sincere, such as openly expressing the desire to break up, reflect greater compassion or concern for the partner and are associated with less negative results (Sprecher et al., 2010).

Based on all the ideas put forward so far and also on the importance of investigating the way in which these variables are linked in a single approach, the purpose of this research was to identify the relationship between the PHSC about romantic mourning and the attachment styles with breaking strategies perceived by the abandoned with a positive and negative romantic history.

Method

Participants

A non-probabilistic purposive sample was used (Kerlinger & Lee, 2002) consisting of 547 participants who had been left by their partner and were experiencing a romantic grief. 262 of them were men and 285 women whose ages were between 14 and 48 years ($M = 20.03$, $SD = 4.22$). Regarding schooling, they had finished high school (38.7%) and graduate studies (59.7%). Their relationship had lasted 16.11 months and had ended 5.61 months ago on average. Of the total participants, when they were asked the question: How would you rate your history of romantic relationships?, 380 reported they had a positive history and 160 said they had a negative one.

Type of study

This research consisted of a correlational, quantitative study, since it measured the degree of relationship between two or more variables. Such correlations are expressed in hypothesis. In this research the variables were: Attachment, Historical-Socio-Cultural Premises of Romantic Grief and Strategies of Romantic Breakup in the abandoned (Kerlinger & Lee, 2002).

Instruments

Scale of Historical-Socio-Cultural Premises of Romantic Grief (Sánchez Aragón, 2018). This scale comprises three sub-scales: Cognitive, Affective and Behavioral, which evaluate how a person should think (cognitive scale, 31 items), feel (affective scale, 27 items) and do (behavioral scale, 26 items) when undergoing a romantic grief. All items have a five-point Likert type answer format indicating levels of agreement. And depending on the sub-scale, participants responded to a stimulus such as: "When people experience a Love Breakup, they MUST Think / Feel / Do ..."

The *Cognitive sub-scale* includes five components: a) Optimism ($\alpha = .84; .81$) with items such as: "must think of ...overcoming it", "one must go on" and "positive"; b) Alternatives and acceptance ($\alpha = .79; .88$) with items such as: "must think that "there are better people in the world", "maybe he / she was not the right person for him / her" and "" there are better opportunities in life "; c) Reasons ($\alpha = .73; .74$) with statements such as: must think... about the reasons that led to the breakup", "about the reasons why he/she left" and " I did something to make this happen"; d) Reconciliation ($\alpha = .69; .71$) with sentences such as: "must think of... moments that we lived together", " planning a solution" and "about reconquering him / her"; and e) Fatalism ($\alpha = .64; .64$) with affirmations such as: "must think... "about suicide", "about the drawbacks of the relationship" and "life has no meaning".

The *Affective sub-scale* includes four components: a) Devaluation ($\alpha = .89; .90$) with items such as: "must feel that " I am worthless", "desire to die" and "insecurity"; b) Melancholy ($\alpha = .83; .83$) with items such as: "must feel ... "nostalgia", "sadness" and "eagerness to cry"; c) Terrible ($\alpha = .83; .83$) with statements such as: "must feel ugly", "bad" and "horrible"; and d) Resentment ($\alpha = .82; .83$) with sentences such as:... "must feel ,, "resentment", "rage" and "hatred".

And lastly, the *Behavioral sub-scale* includes four components: a) Strength ($\alpha = .91; .92$) with items such as: "must: go ahead", "reassure" and "overcome"; b) Stay in peace ($\alpha = .72; .73$) with sentences such as: "must: "search

for a reconciliation", "fix the problem" and "talk to your ex about what happened"; c) Encouraging ($\alpha = .69; .69$) with items such as: "must: "not do silly things", "not get depressed" and "let off steam"; and d) Find alternatives ($\alpha = .65; .65$) with affirmations such as: "must: find another partner", "wait for another person to love you" and "meet other people".

Adult Attachment Styles Scale (Márquez Domínguez, Rivera Aragón, & Reyes Lagunes, 2009). This instrument (in its short version) consists of 18 items with a Likert type answer format and five levels of agreement. It is composed of three factors: a) *avoidant attachment* ($\alpha = .94; .79$) with statements such as: "It bothers me that my partner seeks a lot of closeness", "I realize that just when my partner starts to achieve something of emotional intimacy with me, I walk away" and "I'd rather not be close to my partner"; b) *anxious attachment* ($\alpha = .93; .78$) with affirmations such as: "I worry that my partner is not as interested in me as I am in him/her", "I need my partner to constantly confirm that he/she loves me" and "Sometimes I feel that I push my partner to commit and show me that he/she loves me"; and c) *secure attachment* ($\alpha = .90; .75$) with items such as: "I think the relationship is going well", "I tend to be happy" and "I am confident that my partner loves me as much as I love him/her".

Scale of Love Relationship Breakup Strategies in the Abandoned (Jiménez Rodríguez & Sánchez Aragón, 2017).

This instrument consists of 41 items with Likert-type answer format and five options indicating levels of agreement. These items are divided into six components: a) *disinterest and apathy* ($\alpha = .89; .89$) with items such as: "He/she was indifferent"; "He/she made many excuses not to see each other" and "He/she was rude and indifferent"; b) *withdrawal* ($\alpha = .86; .87$) with sentences such as: "He/she spoke very little about their personal activities and interests when we were talking", "He/she tried not to ask me for favors" and "He/she avoided planning future meetings whenever he/she could"; c) *compassionate care and courtesy* ($\alpha = .79; .80$) with statements such as: "He/she tried to comfort me despite how negative the situation was", "He/she was gentle and direct when telling me what he/she felt" and "He/she looked for an appropriate place", "He/she looked me in the eye and held my hand to tell me that the relationship between us should not continue"; d) *excuses* ($\alpha = .78; .78$) with items such as. "He/she provoked a discussion as an excuse to end the relationship", "He/she provoked fights" and "He/she became unpleasant in the hope that I would take the initiative to end the relationship"; e)

justification ($\alpha = .71; .71$) that included items such as: "He/she verbally explained the reasons for wanting to end the relationship", "He/she openly expressed their desire to end the relationship" and "He/she was totally honest and sincere in explaining their desire to end the relationship"; and f) *persuasion* ($\alpha = .70; .70$) with affirmations such as: "He/she gave me many explanations to understand his/her position", "He made it seem that the relationship was more costly for me by telling me his/her defects" and "He suggested to me that we should have another kind of relationship like becoming friends".

Procedure

Initially, educational and labor centers were visited to request the consent and voluntary participation of people who had been left by their partner within a period of less than six months. Requirements were a high school educational level as a minimum, and a one year duration of their relationship. Once they accepted to participate, they were given the instruments and they were allowed enough time to answer them. This took them approximately half an hour. The questions that arose were clarified and their results were made available to them. Every participant was guaranteed the anonymity and confidentiality of their answers. Once the data were available, the participants were divided into two groups, the first with a positive romantic history and the second with a negative one.

Data Analysis

In the first place, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was performed to evaluate whether the data fulfilled the assumption of normality. Since the data did not meet the requirements of normal data distribution and homogeneous dispersions, the correlations were calculated by means of the Spearman correlation coefficient (ρ). In all cases, the level of significance was set at <0.05 .

Results

To fulfill the objective of this study, and after performing the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and verifying that the variables did not meet the assumption of normality, it was taken into account that the selection of the appropriate statistical test, when adjusted to the real distribution type with which it works, causes a reduction of type I error (Schucany & Ng, 2006). So, the Spearman correlation coefficient (ρ) was performed, one for the abandoned participants with a positive love history and another one for those with a negative love history.

Results are presented below. They are divided into two sections. In the first section, the analysis of the relationship between attachment and HSCP's with the mourning in abandoned people with positive history. Then, a subsequent analysis of people with a negative romantic history.

First, as seen in Table 1, the findings for the abandoned participants (men or women) with a positive romantic history were as follows:

1. When the participant believes that facing the grief one must feel resentment, that everything is terrible, that he should feel encouraged and optimistic, in addition to having an anxious-ambivalent attachment style and believing that he should feel devalued, then this person perceives that his ex-partner showed great disinterest and that was sharp and rude as a strategy to end the relationship.

2. When the participant believes that one must feel resentment, that the situation is terrible, but that there is some optimism, and does not believe in reconciliation in the face of the breakup, this person perceives that his ex-partner was gradually moving away.

3. When the participant believes that one must reconcile and be at peace with the ex-partner, in addition to having an avoidant attachment style, then he/she perceives that the ex-partner used the strategy of compassionate and courteous care.

4. When the participant has an avoidant, anxious or secure attachment style, but believes that he should feel resentment, devaluation or that the breakup is terrible, in addition to believing that he should think in a fatal manner about the reasons for separation, and not in overcoming it, although being optimistic and believing that one must be strong, then he perceives that his ex-partner used pretexts to end the relationship.

5. When the participant believes that he has other alternatives and that he must be optimistic, then he perceives that his ex-partner ended the relationship justifying himself/herself.

6. Finally, when the participant believes that in facing the grief what one has to do is not to overcome the situation and rather be fatalistic, feel devaluated and resentful, and not show any strength; and additionally he/she has an avoidant attachment style, then this person perceives that his ex-partner explained in a sincere, honest and open way the reasons why the most adequate solution was to end the relationship.

In second place, in the case of the abandoned participants with a negative romantic history (see Table 2), it was observed that:

1. To the extent that the participant with the passive role believes that in facing the breakup they should feel terrible, as well as experiencing devaluation, melancholy

Table 1.

Relationship between attachment Styles and PHSC's of romantic grief with breakup strategies in abandoned partners with a positive romantic history

		Disinterest and Apathy	With- drawal	Compassionate Care and Courtesy	Excuses	Justification	Persuasion
PHSC's Affective sub-scale	Devaluation	.114*	--	--	.247**	--	.163**
	Melancholy	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Terrible	.151**	.129*	--	.153**	--	--
	Resentment	.188**	.154**	--	.291**	--	.132*
	Overcoming	--	--	--	-.138**	--	-.179**
PHSC's Cognitive	Optimism	.115*	.105*	--	.105*	.114*	--
	Reasons	--	--	--	.155**	--	--
	Reconciliation	--	-.102*	.232**	--	--	--
	Fatalism	--	--	--	.254**	--	.158**
	Strength	--	--	--	-.145**	--	-.126*
PHSC's Behavioral	Stay in Peace	--	--	.137**	--	--	--
	Encouraging	.146**	--	--	--	--	--
	Find Alternatives	--	--	--	--	.133*	--
	Secure Attachment	--	--	--	-.203**	--	--
Attachment Styles	Anxious Attachment	.118*	--	--	.231**	--	--
	Avoidant Attachment	--	--	.184**	.233**	--	.171**

Table 2.

Relationship between attachment styles and PHSC's of romantic grief with breakup strategies in abandoned partners with a negative romantic history

		Disinterest and Apathy	With- drawal	Compassionate Care and Courtesy	Excuses	Justification	Persuasion
PHSC's Affective sub-scale	Devaluation	.231**	.170*	--	.325**	.145*	.170*
	Melancholy	.221**	--	--	.155*	--	--
	Terrible	.239**	.146*	--	.270**	--	.214**
	Resentment	.149*	.106	--	.274**	--	.136*
	Superación	--	--	--	--	--	--
PHSC's Cognitive	Optimism	--	--	--	--	--	.155*
	Reasons	.170*	.181**	--	.212**	--	--
	Reconciliation	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Fatalism	--	--	--	.319**	--	--
	Strength	--	--	--	--	--	--
PHSC's Behavioral	Stay in Peace	.142*	--	.150*	--	--	--
	Encouraging	--	--	--	-.144*	--	--
	Find Alternatives	--	--	--	--	--	.165*
	Secure Attachment	--	--	--	-.147*	--	--
Attachment Styles	Anxious Attachment	.330**	.243**	--	.299**	--	.307**
	Avoidant Attachment	--	--	.157*	.164*	--	.165*

and resentment, in addition to believing that they should think about the reasons for the breakup and try to stay in peace, and all of this is linked to having an anxious-ambivalent attachment, then this person perceives that the strategy used by his ex-partner to end the relationship was of disinterest and apathy.

2. When the participant has an anxious-ambivalent attachment and believes that after the breakup he has to

feel devalued, terrible and resentful, in addition to thinking about the reasons that ended the relationship, then he will perceive that his ex-partner used the estrangement as a strategy to the rupture.

3. To the extent that the participant has an avoidant attachment style and believes that after the breakup, one must remain at peace with the other, then he perceives

that his ex-partner used as a strategy compassionate care and courtesy.

4. When the participant believes that in the grief one should feel devaluation, resentment, terrible and melancholy, in addition to thinking about the reasons for the breakup and not believing that there is reason to feel good, and at the same time has an anxious-ambivalent or avoidant attachment style, then this person perceives that his breakup was based on continuous pretexts, becoming unpleasant and causing fights.

5. Finally, to the extent that the participant has an anxious-ambivalent attachment and believes that in the face of grief one must feel terrible and worthless, in addition to thinking optimistically and that there may be alternatives for the future, then he perceives that his ex-partner tried to convince her/him by all means to believe that ending the relationship was the best option.

Discussion

The bond with another is a need that humans have from the moment of birth, and it is preserved throughout life. When the individual grows up, the attachment figure is not the mother any more, but he/she chooses with whom to establish a bond, which among others, includes romantic relationships that throughout the years become the center of each person's life. The problem arises when these relationships are over and one has to face the breakup of love; one goes through an extremely painful process that is complicated by the variables involved, and it requires to be studied by psychology. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to examine the relationship between the HSCP's of romantic mourning and the attachment styles with the breakup strategies perceived by the abandoned partner with a positive and negative romantic history.

PHSC, attachment styles and perception of breaking strategies in participants with positive romantic history

Findings show that for the abandoned participants with a positive romantic history, to the extent that the participant believes that in the face of mourning they must feel resentful, that everything is terrible, that they should encourage themselves and be optimistic, added to the fact that they have an anxious attachment style and believe that they should feel devalued, then the person perceives that his ex-partner showed great disinterest, was indifferent and rude as a strategy to end the relationship.

In this regard, Merino Ramírez (2014) found that resentment as a negative emotion is not convenient in this grieving process; on the contrary, it slows down all

progress. This author argues that if people focus on the positive side of this injustice, it will be of great help for the person to see the ex-partner in a different way and can be freed from hatred and resentment, opening their mind to phases of greater acceptance, optimism and positivity (Sánchez Aragón & Retana Franco, 2013). If, in addition to this, people have an anxious-ambivalent attachment style, that is to say, they perceive they have little access to their ex-partner, but a great need to have him/her (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003), the fact that they have been left by him/her, reaffirms the anxiety experienced by not having the person to the extent they need it.

On the other hand, when the participant believes that there is to feel resentment and that the situation is terrible, but there is some level of optimism and does not expect a reconciliation in the event of the breakup, the person perceives that his ex-partner went away little by little. In this case, the fact that people consider that the way they were left by their partner was by taking distance from the relationship and by letting pass aspects that were previously relevant in the relationship, favors rancor. And this, coupled with the belief that they should feel terrible in such a situation, with little optimism and no hope in reconciliation, makes the process they are going through harder and more hopeless, as mentioned by Caruso (2003) and Fisher (2005), who argue that love breakup is one of the most painful experiences for the human being, that varies in intensity and favors negative affectivity (Rosales Sarabia, Rivera Aragón & García Méndez, 2015). They also affirm that if not handled properly, it can have very serious consequences and lead to anxiety and depression.

It is worth mentioning that the slight optimism that can be observed might be an objective re-evaluation effect that the person makes about the situation, which allows him/her to think that things happen for one reason and that better things will come in future relationships. This positive vision allows the individual to minimize negative experiences (Páez, Bilbao & Javaloy, 2008).

Also, when the abandoned person perceives that his ex-partner ended the relationship directly, expressing real concern for what he/she might feel, the person may believe that there are possibilities for reconciliation, even if it is not so. Thus, it seems that in the thinking of the abandoned, an impasse remains that provides a good memory of the relationship that can no longer continue, but at the same time, this courtesy and care can be interpreted as an "open door to a return". This is consistent with the reports by Sprecher et al. (2010), who found that when this strategy is used, people have less negative post-event impact but there is no decisive sensation of breakup.

In the case of those who perceived that the relationship was terminated by their ex-partner with indirect communication in which excuses and evasives were used to get out of the relationship, this was associated with believing that in the event of mourning there should be resentment, devaluation, feeling terrible, thoughts about the reasons for the breakup and fatality. This makes it difficult to overcome, despite believing that one has to be strong. This agrees with the findings by Metts et al. (1989) and Sprecher et al. (2010) who say that this way is associated with more negative results after the breakup. It also has to do with these people thinking that they have to feel very negative things towards their ex-partners. And if this is accompanied by an avoidant attachment style, this contributes to reactions of greater hostility towards feeling abandoned when they had already lowered their barriers for the other to enter their life (Dutton, Starzomski, & Van Ginkel, 1995).

In addition to this, Merino Ramírez (2014) claims that little trust in the possibility of overcoming a breakup, coupled with the belief that one possesses strength and optimism represents a first approach to the acceptance of the loss of the partner. However, sometimes the individual does not have the necessary strength to rediscover oneself and recognize that life is much more than everything that seems to be lost, which opens the possibility to a pseudo-acceptance (Sánchez Aragón & Martínez Cruz, 2014).

In contrast, when the abandoned person believes that in the face of a love breakup, one must think that there are alternatives and be optimistic, then he/she perceived that the breakup was done by means of justification (sincere and open explanation of the reasons why he/she wanted to end the relationship). This shows a different scenario where the person assimilated the event in a less negative way thanks to their beliefs and possibly other elements characteristic of the relationship such as emotional involvement or the duration of the relationship -among other factors- (Sánchez Aragón & Martínez Cruz, 2014).

Finally, in the latter case, when the participant believes that in the event of the grief he should be fatalistic and not overcome the situation, and assumes that he should experience devaluation and resentment, and not show strength, in addition to having an avoidant attachment style, then the participant perceives that when the relationship ended their ex-partner tried to convince him/her that this was the best decision and rather open the possibility to develop a friendship. This supports what was mentioned by Merino-Ramírez (2014) who indicate that this breakup strategy allows the person with the passive role to accept and appreciate the experience lived (however painful it may have been), put it in the proper perspective, emerge

strengthened from the crisis, take advantage of the lessons learned, and be prepared for future challenges.

However, in this scenario, the person's beliefs are negative regarding what they feel and think which reflects their dissatisfaction with the event. Furthermore, this can be linked to having an avoidant attachment style, since this emphasizes a continuous doubt about love and about the importance of relating positively with another person. That is, the very attachment style is reinforced with negative and discouraging beliefs in the event of the breakup, which removes any positive value from the lost love bond (Bartholomew, 1990, Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991, Collins & Read, 1994, Feeney, Noller, & Callan, 1994).

Now, in the case of having lived a love story which was evaluated with negative overtones, the results have a clear differentiation from those evaluated in a positive way. Thus, in the first place, when it is perceived that the strategy used to end the relationship was disinterest and apathy, or rather a withdrawal, the person with the passive role has beliefs that reinforce the experience of feeling very bad, devalued, sad, with feelings of hatred and contempt towards the ex-partner (Metts et al., 1989; Perilloux & Buss, 2008).

Given these feelings, the person wonders what did he do that might have caused the breakup, but they realize that they cannot do anything to solve what happened. And if this is combined with an anxious attachment style in which the person has doubts and insecurity, a feeling of permanent restlessness will be generated, later manifesting in anger and protest behaviors (Tzeng, 1992). Likewise, Sbarra (2006) reports that those participants with an anxious attachment style find it more difficult to overcome the sadness of the loss and accept that the relationship was over.

On the other hand, when courtesy and care for the feelings of the person with the passive role are used, there is agreement with what was reported by Sprecher et al. (2010) in the sense that when more positive strategies are used there will be less impact and anguish in the other person and this is reflected in the fact that people consider that after the breakup they should leave things the way they are. In this regard, Merino Ramírez (2014) and Retana Franco, Silva Moctezuma and Sánchez Aragón (2018) indicate that, in the face of events such as this, attributes such as resilience, self-confidence, structure and strength play a very important role in the way of reacting. Thus, these participants also have an avoidant attachment style that allows them to "better resolve" the loss because they have a tendency to independence and interpersonal distance. This can result in the person reinforcing not focusing on the loss but on the gain of the breakup (Urta, 2010).

Taking into account what Sprecher et al. (2010) affirm that negative strategies will bring greater suffering, in this case it was found that when excuses and justifications were used to get out of the relationship, the abandoned person considers that it is necessary to think that everything will be bad in their life and it will stay that way, in addition to wondering why it happened. Furthermore, having an anxious attachment style favors the experience of dissatisfaction, hopelessness and tension with respect to the breakup, since they express the presence of the ex-partner is necessary for them to feel complete (Melero & Cantero, 2008).

Finally, when the person with the passive role perceives that the ex-partner clearly stated the inconveniences of continuing the relationship, that is, convinces him/her of the reasons for the breakup, this situation was related to believing that they must feel terrible, feel very bad about themselves, and experience grudge towards the ex-partner. In this regard, other studies have found that the type of perceived strategy contributes to attenuate the emotional impact on the person (Metts et al., 1989; Sprecher et al., 2010) despite living a devastating situation (Caruso, 2003, Sánchez Aragón & Retana Franco, 2013). This strategy is perceived this way because, although they recognize the difficulty of the situation in emotional terms, they also see that something better will come later and they will find another person soon (Larraburu, 2010). This belief is increased if they have an anxious or avoidant attachment style, since it will generate a permanent restlessness, where anger and very negative feelings arise, but at the same time, the person feels relieved that this will end at some point (Tzeng, 1992).

In conclusion, both the culture and the attachment style are impacting the breakup strategies perceived. A constant pattern is not observed, but it can be said that –according to the findings– the fact that a participant with a positive romantic history perceives that he or she has been left by their partner because of pretexts, is because their socio-cultural beliefs are those of devaluation, resentment, fatalism and their attachment style is avoidant or anxious. On the other hand, abandoned people with a negative romantic history perceive having been left because of pretexts and by disinterest –mainly– when they have beliefs of devaluation, melancholy, of feeling terrible, with resentment and fatalism. Here, the anxious style showed a sustained effect that makes them perceive that the breakup occurred due to negative strategies.

It is worth mentioning that correlations exist in almost all cases, although of a low magnitude, so it is recommendable to continue working on this subject, in pursuit of knowing the impact that the breakup has, not only on the person who has the passive role, but also on the person regarded as the

agent, and also evaluate the ways of thinking, feeling and acting upon this, depending on the breakup strategy used by the other person.

In addition to this, generally, the data found in previous investigations were confirmed by this study, but there are new data that may only appear in the Mexican culture, so far as this can be claimed. To verify this hypothesis, transcultural research is needed in order to know how the phenomenon occurs in other cultures. There is still a lot to be done, but the present research intends to show an additional vision of this complex phenomenon since most studies analyze the different stages of love, but leave aside what happens once the relationship is over, as well as the impact that this breakup has on both members of the couple.

References

- Agnew, C. R. (2000). Cognitive interdependence and the experience of relationship loss. In J. H. Harvey & E.D. Miller (eds.), *Loss and trauma: General and close relationship perspectives*, vol. 3 (pp.163-188). London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Ainsworth, M. D. S. (1969). Objects relations, dependency and attachment: A theoretical reviews of the infant-mother relationship. *Child Development*, 40, 969-1025.
- Banks, S. P., Altendorf, D. M., Greene, J. O., & Cody, M. J. (1987). An examination of relationship disengagement: Perceptions, breakup strategies, and outcomes. *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 51, 19-41.
- Bartholomew, K. (1990) Avoidance of intimacy: An attachment perspective. *Journal of Social and Personal relationships*, 7, 147-178.
- Bartholomew, K. y Horowitz, L.M. (1991) Attachment styles among young adults: A test of a four-category model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 61, 226-244.
- Becerril, D. (2001). Relaciones de pareja. *Revista de Educación*, 325, 49-56.
- Bowlby, J. (1973). *Attachment and loss: attachment*. Nueva York: Basic Books
- Caruso, I. (2003). *La separación de los amantes: Una fenomenología de la muerte*. México: Siglo XXI.
- Collins, N.R. & Read, S.J. (1994). Cognitive representations of attachment: The structure and function of working models. En K. Bartholomew y D. Perlman (Eds.). *Advances in personal relationships* (pp. 53-90). London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Collins, T. J. & Gillath, O. (2012). Attachment, breakup strategies, and associated outcomes: The effects of security enhancement on the selection of breakup strategies. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 46(1), 210-222. doi: 10.1016/j.jrp.2012.01.008

- Davis, D., Shaver, P. R., & Vernon, M. L. (2003). Physical, emotional, and behavioral reactions to breaking up: The roles of gender, age, emotional involvement, and attachment style. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 29, 871-884.
- Díaz Loving, R. y Sánchez Aragón, R. (1998). Premisas y Normatividad en las Parejas Mexicanas. *La Psicología Social en México*, VII, 129-136.
- Díaz-Guerrero, R. (2003). *Psicología del mexicano: Descubrimiento de la etnopsicología*. México: Trillas.
- Dutton, D.G., Starzomski, A. & Van Ginkel, C. (1995). The role of shame and guilt in the intergeneracional transmisión de abusiveness. *Violence and Victims*, 10(2), 121-131.
- Dutton, L. B., & Winstead, B. (2006). Predicting unwanted pursuit: Attachment, relationship satisfaction, relationship alternatives, and break-up distress. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 23, 565-586.
- Feeney, J. A., & Noller, P. (1992). Attachment style and romantic love: Relationship dissolution. *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 44, 69-74.
- Feeney, J.A., Noller, P. & Callan, V.J. (1994). Attachment style, communication and satisfaction in the early years of marriage. En D. Perlman y K. Bartholomew (Eds.): *Advances in personal relationships* (pp. 269-308). Londres: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Feldberg, R. & Kohen, J. A. (1980). Family life in an anti-family setting: A critique of marriage and divorce. En J. M. Henslin (Ed.), *Marriage and family in a changing society* (pp. 415-427). Nueva York: The Free Press.
- Fisher, H. (2005). *Por qué amamos*. México: Santillana.
- Fuller, T. L. & Finchman, F. D. (1995). Attachment style in married couples: Relation to current marital functioning, stability over time, and method of assessment. *Personal Relationship*, 2, 17-34.
- Guttmann, J. (1993). *Divorce in Psychosocial Perspective: Theory and Research*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., Publishers.
- Hazan, C. & Shaver, P. (1987). Conceptualizing romantic love as an attachment process. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 52, 511-524.
- Jaramillo Bustamante, M. E. (2015). *Estrategias de afrontamiento tras una ruptura de relaciones afectivas en jóvenes adultos de la carrera de ciencias de la comunicación social del área de la educación, arte y comunicación, de la Universidad Nacional de Loja*. (Tesis de licenciatura no publicada). Universidad Nacional De Loja. Ecuador
- Jiménez Rodríguez, B. y Sánchez Aragón, R. (2017, noviembre). Identificando las Estrategias de Rompimiento Amoroso en Agentes y Pasivos. Enviado a evaluación a la *Revista Costarricense de Psicología*.
- Kerlinger, F. N. & Lee, H. B. (2002). *Investigación del comportamiento. Métodos de investigación en ciencias sociales* (4ª ed.). México: McGraw-Hill.
- Larraburu, I. (2010). Superar el desamor. *La vanguardia*. Disponible de <http://www.isabel-larraburu.com/articulos/pareja/121-superar-el-desamor-pdf>
- Le, B., Dove, L. N., Agnew, C., Korn, M. S., & Mutso, A. A. (2010). Predicting non-marital romantic relationship dissolution: A meta-analytic synthesis. *Personal Relationships*, 17(3), 377-390. doi:10.1111/j.1475-6911.2010.01285.x
- Lewandowski, G.W. Jr, & Bizzoco, N. (2007). Addition through subtraction: Positive outcomes following the loss of a dating relationship. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 2, 40-54.
- Locker, L.J., McIntosh, W.D., Hackney, A.A., Wilson, J.H. & Wiegand, K.E. (2010). The breakup of Romantic Relationships: Situational Predictors of Perception of Recovery. *North American Journal of Psychology*, 12(3), 565-578.
- Márquez Domínguez, F., Rivera Aragón, S. & Reyes Lagunes, I. (2009). Desarrollo de una escala de estilos de apego adulto para la población mexicana. *Revista Interamericana de Psicología*, 28(2), 9-30.
- Melero, R. & Cantero, M. J. (2008). Los estilos afectivos en la población española: un cuestionario de evaluación del apego adulto. *Clínica y Salud*, 19, 83-100.
- Merino Ramírez, P. (2014). *Duelo por abandono de pareja*. (Tesis no publica de maestría). Asociación Mexicana de Tanatología A.C. México
- Metts, S., Cupach, W. R., & Bejlovec, R. A. (1989). "I love you too much to ever start liking you": Redefining romantic relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 6, 259-274.
- Mikulincer, M. & Shaver, P. (2003). The attachment behavioral system in adulthood: activation, psychodynamics, and interpersonal processes. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 35, 53-152.
- Páez, D. Bilbao, M. A. & Javaloy, F. (2008). Del trauma a la felicidad. Hechos vitales y procesos socio cognitivos de crecimiento personal e interpersonal. En M. M. Casullo (Ed.). *Prácticas de Psicología Positiva* (pp. 139-202) Argentina: Si libro.
- Perilloux, C. & Buss, D. M. (2008) Breaking up romantic relationships. Costs experienced, and coping strategies deployed. *Evolutionary Psychology*, 6(1), 164-181.
- Rage, E. (2002). *La pareja: elección, problemática y desarrollo*. México: Plaza y Valdés.
- Remshard, R. (1998). *Adult Attachment Styles, Love styles, sexual Attitudes and sexual Behaviors of college students*. A dissertation submitted to the Temple University Graduate Board.
- Retana Franco, B. E., Silva Moctezuma, D. y Sánchez Aragón, R. (2018). Resiliencia y Consecuencias del Rompimiento Amoroso: Medición y Relación en Pasivos. En R. Díaz Loving, L. I. Reyes Lagunes y F. López Rosales (Eds.). *La Psicología Social en México*, Vol. XVII (pp. 167-183). Monterrey: Asociación Mexicana de Psicología Social.

- Rosales Sarabia, R. M., Rivera Aragón, S. y García Méndez, M. (2015). Perdón, Resentimiento y estilos de apego en la relación de pareja: un estudio correlacional. *Memorias de XLII Congreso Nacional de Psicología*. Disponible en https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317056846_Perdon_Resentimiento_y_Estilos_de_Apego_en_la_Relacion_de_Pareja_Un_Estudio_Correlacional
- Sánchez Aragón, R. (2018). La socio-cultura del duelo romántico: medición de sus premisas. *Revista Científica da Universidade do Mindelo*, 5(1), 75-91.
- Sánchez Aragón, R. & Martínez Cruz, R. (2014). Causas y Caracterización de las Etapas del Duelo Romántico. *Acta de Investigación Psicológica*, 10(1), 1329-1343.
- Sánchez Aragón, R. y Retana Franco, B. E. (2013). Evaluación Tridimensional del Duelo Amoroso en México. *Revista Iberoamericana de Diagnóstico y Evaluación Psicológica*, 36(2), 49-69.
- Sbarra, D.A. (2006). Predicting the onset of emotional recovery following non-marital relationship dissolution: Survival analyses of sadness and anger. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 32, 298-312.
- Schachner, D. A., & Shaver, P. R. (2002). Attachment style and human mate poaching. *New Review of Social Psychology*, 1, 122-129.
- Schucany, W.R. & Ng, H.K.T. (2006). Preliminary goodness-of-fit tests for normality do not validate the one-sample Student t. *Communications in Statistics, Theory and Methods*, 35, 2275-2286.
- Simpson, J. A. (1990). Influence of attachment styles on romantic relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 59, 971-980.
- Sprecher, S., Zimmerman, C., & Abrahams, E. M. (2010). Choosing compassionate strategies to end a relationship: Effects of compassionate love for partner and the reason for the breakup. *Social Psychology*, 41, 66-75.
- Tashiro, T. & Frazier, P. (2003). "I'll never be in a relationship like that again": Personal growth following romantic relationship breakups. *Personal Relationships*, 10, 113-128.
- Tzeng, O. (1992). *Theories of Love Development, Maintenance, and Dissolution: Octagonal Cycle and Differential Perspectives*. Nueva York: Praeger.
- Urta, J. (2010). Estudio sobre fortalezas para afrontar las adversidades de la vida. Recuperado de <http://www.javierurra.com/files/FortalezasParaAfrontarLasAdversidadesDeLaVida.pdf>
- Waller, K. L. (2008). Trait self-esteem moderates the effect of initiator status on emotional and cognitive responses to romantic relationship dissolution. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 69, 19-77.