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### What's Your Biggest Secret?

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# What's Your Biggest Secret?



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## Introduction

Regret is defined as a cognitive-determined emotion, for it requires thought and an inspection of one's feelings (Gilovich & Medvec, 1995). An old controversial topic in regret literature is that whether regret is more likely to follow (failed) actions or (failed) inactions. Initial findings suggest that actions result in more regret than inactions (Kahneman & Tversky, 1982; Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2007; Zeelenberg, Van Dijk, & Manstead, 1998). Whereas subsequent work challenged these findings positing that more regret experienced from inactions (Connolly & Reb, 2003; Gilovich & Medvec, 1995; Koehler & Prentice, 2003).

According to a recent meta analysis, romantic and close relationships is the third most frequent topic that people regret about (Roese & Summerville, 2005). Despite the extensive research on regret, little is known about the underlying mechanism when it comes to relationships. Therefore, current research will focus on close relationships and explore the robust finding of action effect reported in other domains of regret.

Furthermore, current study will be utilizing Attachment Theory as a theoretical framework. Attachment Theory suggests that based on the support and response received from caregivers, children form a sense of attachment early in life (Bowlby 1969; 1982). Ainsworth (1978) identified three types of attachment styles: secure, insecure anxious, insecure avoidant. Accordingly, responsive and sensitive caregiving leads to the sense of secure attachment whereas parenting that is inconsistent or intrusive result in anxious attachment style; and cold or rejecting parenting style will result in avoidant style. Further research suggests that those identified holding anxious attachment are more likely to feel the need of approval and tend to be preoccupied with being needed by others (Flett et al., 2021), whereas as those who are identified with avoidant attachments are more likely to be detached from relationships (An & Konchanska, 2021).

By combining these two lines of research, current study intends to explore whether regret stemming from failed actions and inactions in the domain of romantic relationships are moderated by the attachment styles, specifically focusing on anxious and avoidant (insecure) attachment styles.

## Hypothesis

Through this research, we will explore the role of attachment style on the amount of regret one may experience stemming from (failed) actions and (failed) inactions.

- What hurts people the most?: Regret stemming from actions or inactions? We expect to replicate the robust action effect. That is, participants will report experiencing regret more from their failed actions.
- Is there a difference in the amount of regret experienced based on attachment style? We hypothesize that ambivalent attachment will experience higher regret due to failed actions, and anxious attachment due to failed inactions.

## Method

### Participants

Sixty participants will be selected using convenience sampling in exchange for course credit

### Materials

Participants will complete the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale (ECR) to assess their attachment style (Brennan et al., 1998). The measure contains thirty-six items where participants will indicate how much they agree with each statement on a 7-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree). Additionally, all participants will be presented with two scenarios, in which they will imagine they have performed either an action or inaction resulting in a suboptimal outcome. Following the scenario, participants indicate the amount of regret, disappointment and personal responsibility they experience for the outcome on a 7-point scale (1 = None at all, 7 = Very much).

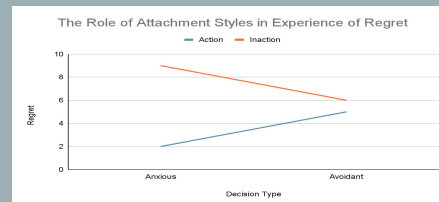
### Procedure

Data will be collected online. Participants will be randomly assigned either an action or inaction condition by having them imagine as if things were happening to them—a suboptimal outcome achieved either following an action or an inaction. Additionally, all the participants will be asked to complete the ECR scale.

## Design

A 2 (Attachment Style: Anxious vs. Avoidant) x 2 (Decision Type: Actions vs. Inactions) quasi-experimental design will be adopted.

## Results



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