

Experiences and Impact of Attachment among Women with Insecure Attachment in Cohabitation: Implications for Therapeutic Practice

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Abstract : Cohabitation among couples has been increasingly common in recent decades. Nonetheless, insufficient attention was given to the impact of attachment on cohabitation. This study discussed the experience of cohabitation among women with insecure attachments by collecting qualitative data through semi-structured interviews. Through thematic analysis, the study explored the characteristics of the women, the formation of cohabitation, struggles, coping mechanisms, and the impacts of cohabitation on the women. Moreover, the influences of the family-of-origin on cohabitation and the needs of the women were explored. The findings indicated that insecure attachment and the family-of-origin had significant effects on cohabitation and the interaction among the cohabitating couples. Women with insecure attachments were more likely to enter cohabitation unconsciously and without discussing what cohabitation means for their relationship with their partners. The findings also suggested that committing to marriage was not the only method for the women to feel secure in the relationship. Instead, long-lasting love and care, as well as reliability from their partners, could satisfy their emotional needs. More importantly, the findings revealed that repairing attachment problems and dealing with challenges in life stage transition is associated with positive impacts on the cohabitation experience. Additionally, to meet the needs of diverse family structures and to provide all-rounded support for enhancing the wellbeing of individuals, cohabitants, and couples, a comprehensive intervention model of relationship enrichment was discussed.

Keywords : cohabitation, family-of-origin, insecure attachment, relationship enrichment

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