


# Ambivalent Attachment Style, Death Awareness, and Love Styles in Adults

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## Abstract

The current research study aims to discover how ambivalent attachment style, death awareness, and love style in people with different demographic characteristics are related to each other. The sample comprised 93 participants, of whom 27 were men and 66 were women ( $M = 35$ ,  $SD = 13.82$ ). The study suggested a gap between agape and mania love in individuals with highly ambivalent attachment styles when the manipulation of mortality salience, death reflection, and control group are considered. In addition, the researcher proposed that individuals with high and low ambivalent attachment styles might have different love styles from each other. Death awareness is most probably to mediate the association between ambivalent attachment style and love styles. The measurements used in this study were the Adult Attachment Questionnaire (AAQ) by Simpson et al. (1996), the Love Attitude Scale (LAS) by Hendrick and Hendrick (1986), and the Death Awareness scenarios. The data revealed that highly ambivalent individuals did not differ in their love styles from the control and mortality salience groups. However, highly ambivalent people displayed lower love after-death reflection than individuals from the control group. A higher ambivalent attachment style in the control group increases the probability of mania and agape love. The main conclusion of the study demonstrated that a higher level of ambivalent attachment style was related to a lower level of agape love when individuals experienced death reflection and mortality salience.

**Keywords:** Death awareness, Anxious/ambivalent attachment, Love styles

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Background - The Complexities and Contradictions in Theoretical Views

Psychologist John Bowlby came up with the theory of attachment, which is now called Attachment

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theory. This theory is based on the idea that the quality of the primary caregiver's responses and availability affects a child's core security (Carone et al., [2020](#); Zeanah et al., [2011](#)). Mary Ainsworth, a Psychologist in collaboration with Bowlby, extended the theory by focusing on the functional significance of developing an individual's personality by considering the dimensions of attachment and love. The enlarged description asserts that children with secure attachment to their parents in infancy have higher self-esteem in adulthood (Fitton, [2013](#); Shen et al., [2021](#)).

The three styles are ambivalent/anxious, secure, and avoidant attachment. Secure attachment establishes and maintains a safe and loving connection with another person. Unlike those who have eager attachment disorder, they think that their partners will leave them in later life (Riggs, [2019](#); Skourтели and Lennie, [2010](#)). Furthermore, Westen et al. ([2006](#)) mentioned that avoidant attachment is a difficult psychosomatic stage because it considers anxiety when linked to close relations, and this may make being in a relationship seem like a prison.

The Alternative Theory of Kagan proposed that avoidant attachment regulates negative responses (Schäfer, [2020](#)). The misconception of love and attachment is why sometimes an infinite amount of love can destroy attachment styles (Atis, [2022](#); Wilde, [2004](#)). According to psychologist Erich Fromm, love results from an act of will, judgment, intention, and promise.

Considering death awareness or its concept, which is called mortality salience, the love under agape and mania style is directly related to the vengeance and behaviour of the person. People who are dependent on their desires don't think that something is beyond them, and they show manic or obsessive love. They undergo intense emotional swings. They would sometimes act passionate and affectionate while cold or distant at others. They can be abusive, possessive, and controlling (Engel, [2023](#); Howse, [2003](#)). An opposite case is that agape love is the greatest happiness for the happiest people. This kind of love can both give and receive. These lovers are also obsessed with their partner's needs and demands. They are ready to care for each other and themselves and give their love without reservations (Massey and Ravizza, [2015](#)).

However, after stating three components, Lee incorporated the reward theory of attraction with the idea of love. It becomes apparent that the awareness of death or the existence of mortality salience strengthens the positive bond of love and attachment. People who believe that the denial of death is not only inevitable but also necessary as a coping strategy say that facing the death of someone is the only way to develop a more empathetic society (Ahuvia et al., [2014](#); Zhang et al., [2020](#)).

Nevertheless, the death reminders with a relatively modest death impact, Quirin et al. ([2019](#)) pointed out that those reminders mainly stand out for their ability to be effective when they are available but not focused on awareness and failed to experience the conscious negative emotional responses. The viewpoint seems to follow the Dual Existential Model, which extends the terror management theory. Under radical psychoanalysis, the defence mechanisms are processed at a level below conscious awareness, and as a result, the affective reactions do not happen.

Further studies suggest that unselfish or joyful love (agape) is associated with the controlling mechanism, even in the situation when the loved one dies, or the certainty of knowing the loved one will ultimately die. On the contrary, the maniac-loving style brings with it fixation, which is comparable to the agape love emotional stage; however, the increased negative consequences are likely to trigger aggression and mental health obsession concerns in ambivalent individuals (Gyimes & Valentini, [2023](#); Quirin et al., [2019](#)). Thus, the aim is to research the fundamental stages of an emotional and anxious degree of mortality salience and death reflection, which connect mania and agape love phases. Moreover, the paper also seeks to investigate the reaction of highly anxious-ambivalent people to death contemplation and mortality salience.

## 1.2 Aim and Objectives

The objectives of the study aim:

- To investigate the effect of ambivalent attachment style on love styles.
- To examine the impact of death awareness (death reflection and mortality salience) on love styles.
- To define the gap between the lower and higher ambivalent attachment styles

### 1.3 Research Hypothesis

This research is based on the following hypothesis:

- Agape and mania love among participants will likely differ with highly ambivalent attachment styles in the case of a control group and mortality salience
- There is likely to be a difference between death reflection and control in agape and mania love in highly ambivalent participants.
- Participants with high and lower ambivalent attachment styles will likely differ in their mania and agape love expressions.
- Death awareness is likely to moderate the relationship between love styles and ambivalent attachment styles.

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Research Evidences

Mortality salience is the awareness of death, and it is terror feelings that people have when they are not sure of their relationships. Lately, studies and research such as (Menzies et al., [2019](#)) suggest that solid bonds could perform as a shield against anxiety of death. Death anxiety is a cultural function around the world that enables people to go beyond the considerations of their mortality, and it acknowledges that people will not be afraid of death and would focus on either the cognitive or behavioural efforts in accepting the culture of a worldview. It is the mortality salience, the very first stage of humans' realisation that they or their loved ones could be dead, and the level of anxious ambivalence could be associated with this stage (Caspi-Berkowitz et al., [2019](#)).

Theorists of attachment studies prove the attachment system to have developed to provide corporeal intimacy, and the feeling of safety occurs when individuals are upset, helpless, or vulnerable (Plusnin, [2019](#); Smith & Massey, [2012](#)). It is not that this system is either activated or remains constant. Only in difficult situations are the best emotional and behavioural structures seen. Previous research has found that secure people (Simpson et al., [1996](#)) are known to use more integrated strategies than those who are anxious-ambivalent. Another study confirmed that an ambivalent attachment style may generate a fixated and deep love for significant others, and death reflection and mortality salience may influence their attitudes to relationships and love (Alleva et al., [2020](#)).

This literature review aims to look at how people cope with feelings of helplessness and insignificance when faced with death in different ways. Death salience may elicit opposing responses in persons; some may become more attached to those around them, as Quirin et al. ([2019](#)) predicted, while others may become less so. Researchers investigate these hypothetical individual differences by focusing on two fundamental interpersonal orientations: agency and communion (Richardson et al., [2021](#)). One definition of an agentic person is someone who values autonomy, self-confidence, and uniqueness above everything else. On the other hand, communal people are defined by their emphasis on close, caring relationships.

It is reasonable to assume that innate tendencies like agency and communion are more pronounced in life-or-death circumstances; as a result, the attachment patterns associated with each

interpersonal orientation should become most pronounced in such circumstances (Juhl & Routledge, 2016). It seems to reason that if people are manipulated into developing an unhealthy fear of death as a kind of threat, their attachment preferences will closely resemble the preexisting pattern of their interpersonal orientation. Quirin et al. (2019) found that, in four out of five experiments, those with an argentic interpersonal orientation were more likely to resort to hostile behaviour when threatened. Additionally, independent thinkers are less likely to seek medical attention for the onset of severe sickness, although they seem to cope well with potentially fatal conditions (Weitkamp et al., 2021). The study hypothesised that when confronted with the certainty of death, proactive persons would choose the avoidant romantic attachment style over those of the secure and anxious-ambivalent attachment types (Kadi, 2021; Smith & Massey, 2012). In addition, it is postulated that high-sociability people would be more likely to express support for secure and anxious-ambivalent attachment styles and see the avoidant type as unattractive if they were reminded of their death.

Many researchers believe that attachment style is a persistent, early-on-in-life trait that influences how a person relates to others throughout their lives (Linick, 2022). Evidence suggests that people can adopt several different attachment styles and that this preference is only temporary (Myong & Bissenbakker, 2021). Since death was brought into focus, it was plausible to think that this may have a momentary impact on people's otherwise consistent ideals about the kind of connection that should exist between love partners. The primary research uses the romantic belief scale to link the effects of attachment types and transience salience on cultural elements of intimate relationships, and this shows that the only insecure attachments had been more romantic after mortality salience. There have been gaps, however, in the replication of impacts and demonstrations that the difference had not been merely due to lower levels of self-esteem in the insecure attachment.

## 2.2 Terror Management Theory

Over the past few years, the theory of terror management has been regarded as the most suitable explanation that justifies individuals' behaviours considering their self-protective motivations linked with death awareness (Wang, 2020). The theory suggests that the fear of death, which results from the intrinsic need for survival and the knowledge of one's fragility and death, might be a great source of discomfort (Arena, 2020; Arrowood & Cox, 2020). The belief that an individual's cultural view and moral self-esteem are the protectors against the fear and paralysis that might be evident from the absence of either. Thus, the worldviews of cultures, which are socially constructed, are the world's perspectives, including predictability, purpose, and harmony. According to Smith and Massey (2012), the theory of terror management claims that these universal views are popular because they deliver the answers to the essential existential queries, including "Where did we come from?" and "What happens when we die?" The analysis of TMT as an ideology also says that some people are afraid of their death, and hence, they try to find meaning in the world to feel better about themselves. It is why people can now deal with death better; it gives them a sense of self-worth (Juhl & Routledge, 2016).

## 3 Methodology

### 3.1 Research Design

The study used a cross-sectional research design on the quantitative data to test the assumptions derived from the literature.

### 3.2 Sample and Sampling strategy

The study used convenient sampling to approach the participants on social media platforms. The sample for the current research includes women and men with an age range of 18 to 73 years ( $M = 35.61$ ,  $S.D = 13.82$ ). The respondents were assigned randomly to different groups of conditions of death reflection. Ninety-three participants were included in the study, while a few statistical

analyses involved fewer participants, depending on their ambivalent scores. The participants were recruited for the study based on the following criteria.

### 3.3 Inclusion Criteria

- Both single and participants in a relationship were recruited
- Participants who showed willingness after acknowledging death awareness questions
- Participants with scores above 5.5 (rounding off 6) on the attachment scale are grouped into highly ambivalent attachment styles. The below scores will be grouped into lower ambivalent attachment styles.

### 3.4 Exclusion Criteria

- Participants with a marital status other than single and in a relationship were excluded due to different perspectives on love styles.
- Participants with medical, psychological, or emotional conditions were also excluded from the study.

### 3.5 Assessment Measures

#### *Adult Attachment Questionnaire (AAQ)*

This scale was used to identify attachment styles in adults, and it was developed and validated by Simpson et al. (1996). The scale is made up of a 7-point Likert scale rating (5=strongly agree to disagree 1=strongly) and consists of 17 items. Some items were keyed reversely, including 1, 3, 4, 12, and 17. The reliability of the scale is good overall, and the higher scores were associated with ambivalent attachment or a higher anxiety style.

#### *Love Attitude Scale (LAS)*

Hendrick and Hendrick (1986) developed a scale to measure the attitude toward love. It is a 42-item that can determine six kinds of love: Ludus, Eros, Mania, Pragma, Storge, and Agape. The present research utilised the items of this scale that are only concerned with agape and mania love. Moreover, this scale is also a 5-point Likert rating scale, which goes from 5=strongly disagree to agree 1=strongly. This measure also had good reliability, and the higher scores indicated that the person had a higher attitude or intensity of agape and mania love style.

#### *Death Awareness*

The death awareness instrument was designed on two primary conditions: mortality salience and death reflection. Mortality salience condition involved two open-ended questions that were supposed to make one think about what they would do if they died and what would happen after death. After that, the members of both groups were given a chance to locate a few words from the puzzle, and their concentration was checked to see if they affected their thinking or thoughts. In the control group, the participants were asked questions about their dentist experience and had to finish the puzzle.

#### *Data Collection Procedure*

The initial step was the approval of the ethics form from the committee and the signing of the permission letters by the concerned authorities before data collection. The respondents were split into three groups, each taking one of the conditions. The study included three conditions of death awareness: death reflection, mortality salience, and the control group. The respondents of the survey first accomplished the attachment measure, followed by the death awareness measure, and last, the questions related to love styles. The questionnaire lasted from 20 to 25 minutes and was

filled out, and the participants were informed about the purpose of death awareness situations. They were referred to a psychologist if they wanted to talk to someone.

### **Data Analysis**

The present study employed the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) data analysis tool that IBM created. This tool is the most used software by medical researchers, survey firms, research scientists, market analysts, and many more (Ong & Puteh, 2017).

### **Ethical Considerations**

The research was conducted according to ethical principles that include safeguarding participant confidentiality, acquiring informed consent from subjects even before their involvement by clarifying the background and objectives of the study, preserving participant anonymity, informing participants of possible danger, and revealing research results at the conclusion. In addition, the collection of respondent data for the research is maintained on a password-protected device in a locked area on the university's campus, and all recorded data is removed and deleted upon the conclusion of the research to ensure the confidentiality of research participants. As agreed upon in the informed consent, any research results generated following the end of this study will be forwarded to the participants.

## **4 Results**

The results section of the paper contains descriptive statistical analysis, psychometric analysis, and test of normality, which are the first steps of the assessment. Besides, current research findings are also based on Independent sample T-tests and Product Moment Correlations.

### **4.1 Descriptive statistical analysis**

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics to Analyse the Demographic Features of Respondents (N=93).**

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>f(%)</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>Age</b>		35.61	13.82
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	27(29.0)		
Female	66(71.0)		
<b>Relationship Status</b>			
Single	25(26.9)		
In relationship	67(72.0)		
<b>Relationship Length</b>		110.05	109.67
<b>Ethnic</b>			
Chinese	02(2.2)		
White British	81(87.1)		
White European	8(8.6)		
Other	2(2.2)		

*Note.* *f* = Frequency, *M* = Mean, *SD* = Standard deviation, % = Percentage,

Table 1 shows the means summed, their frequency distribution, and standard deviation. At the end of the analysis, I realised that most participants were female, whereas the latter had some significant others in their relationships. The data showed that the vast majority were living in Britain, some White Europeans, but the Chinese and other ethnicities were featured in only a tiny number.

### **4.2 Reliability Analysis**

**Table 2: Reliability Analysis of Scales of Current Study (N = 93)**

	Range
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Variables	M	SD	$\alpha$	Actual	Potential	SK <sup>a</sup>
Anxious Ambivalent	5.06	1.06	.79	18-61	9-63	-.45
Agape Love	2.47	.83	.86	7-28	7-49	-.21
Manic Love	3.40	.71	.70	13-34	7-49	-.19

Note:  $n=57$  A standard error of skewness = .31; b Standard error of kurtosis = .62.

Table 2 displays the internal consistency index (alpha coefficient) for all the scales applied in the current research. The findings proved that all scales are reliable and show good reliability as the alpha coefficients of all scales are above 0.7.

### 4.3 Independent Sample T-test

The cases were selected according to a cut-off score to separate the highly ambivalent individuals from lower-scored ambivalent participants, and a t-test was run on highly ambivalent individuals.

**Table 3:** Independent Sample T-test on between Mortality salience and control group on Agape and Mania love in highly ambivalent participants (N = 28)

Variables	Morality Salience		Control group		P	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD		
Agape	15.00	6.50	17.68	4.96	-1.24	.22
Mania	24.66	4.07	27.31	4.65	-1.56	.12

Note: M = mean; SD = Standard deviation; t = mean difference, p = significance value, and Cohen's d = effect size

The findings revealed that no significant mean difference was found between participants under these conditions considering their reaction and expression of love style. It interprets that highly ambivalent people show similar aspects of agape and mania love, whether they encounter morality salience or not. Both groups did not differ in their mean and standard deviations. Hence, the results rejected the first hypothesis.

**Table 5:** Independent Sample T-test between Death Reflection and control group on Agape and Mania love in highly ambivalent participants (N = 34)

Variables	Death reflection		Control group		P	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD		
Agape	16.44	5.79	24.27	5.87	-.66	.50
Mania	17.68	4.96	27.31	4.65	-1.65	.10

Note: M = mean; SD = Standard deviation; t = mean difference, p = significance value, and Cohen's d = effect size

The results revealed no significant mean difference between the groups considering the agape love. At the same time, a considerable difference between death reflection and the control group was found in the expression of mania love. The findings interpret that participants with high ambivalent scores tend to express less mania love when coming across death reflection, while participants in control groups indicated more mania love. The value of Cohen's d showed a small effect size but a significant mean difference between these groups.

**Table 6:** Independent Sample T-test between anxious and non-anxious participants in Agape and Mania love (N = 93)

Variables	Highly Anxious		Less Anxious		P	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD		

Agape	16.50	5.68	17.57	5.12	-1.07	.34	0.19
Mania	25.43	5.12	22.00	5.54	3.43	.00	0.64

Note: *M* = mean; *SD* = Standard deviation; *t* = mean difference, *p* = significance value, and *Cohen's d* = effect size

The t-test results showed that neither group of participants significantly differed in mean difference regarding the expression of agape love. On the other hand, the test showed a significant mean difference in Mania love, where people with highly ambivalent attachment styles showed more expression of mania love than respondents with scores low on ambivalent attachment styles. Cohen revealed medium effect size in mania love, which shows the significant impact of ambivalent attachment style on a love of expression.

**4.4 Moderation Analysis**

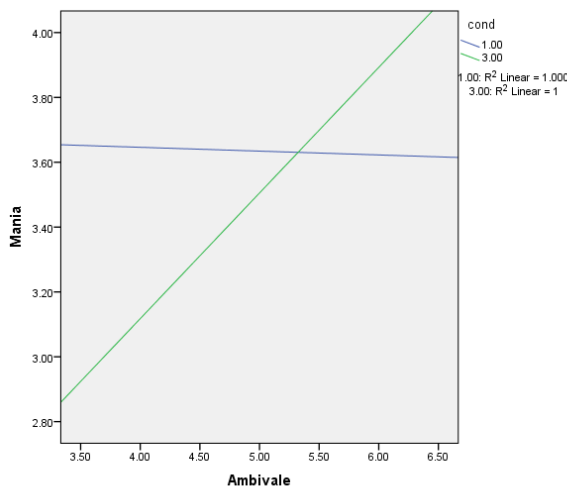
The first moderation analysis checked the interaction between ambivalent attachment and conditions applied (mortality salience and control group) to check the effect on Mania love.

**Table 7:** Mortality salience and control group as the moderators between ambivalent attachment and Mania love (N = 93)

Predictors	Mania Love Style			
	Coeff	SE	P	95% CI
Anxious Ambivalent Condition	-.21	.21	.33	{-.65, -.22}
Ambivalent X Condition	-1.06	.42	.01	{-1.91, -.21}
R <sup>2</sup>	.27			
F(3, 57)	7.06*			

Note: *SE* = standard error, *p* = significance value, *CI* = Confidence Intervals

The above table showed the non-significant effect of ambivalent attachment style on mania love while conditions also predicted mania love significantly, as presented. The interaction between ambivalence and condition indicates a difference in their role in predicting mania love. This moderation model has explained 27 per cent of the variance in mania love.



The graphs represent individuals with lower ambivalent attachment scores who reported lower mania love in the control group. Highly ambivalent scores indicated higher mania scores in the



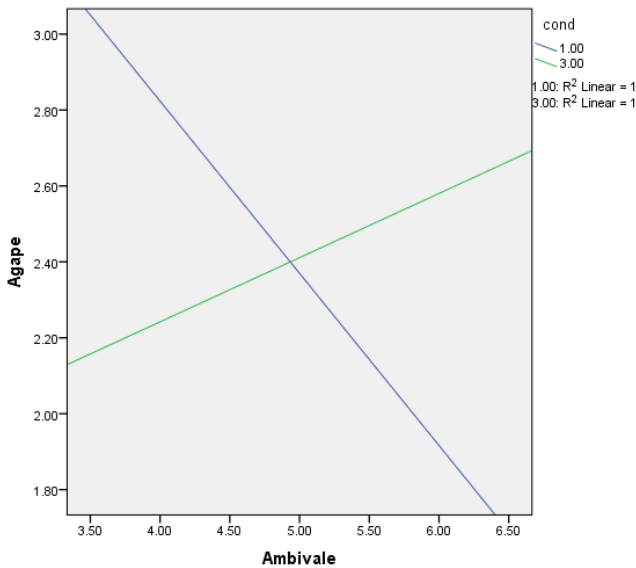
control group. Considering the participants who went through mortality salience, the graph line was almost linear and showed no significant difference in people with higher and lower ambivalent attachment styles.

**Table 8:** Mortality salience and control group as the moderators between ambivalent attachment and Agape love (N = 93)

Predictors	Agape Love Style			
	Coeff	SE	P	95% CI
Anxious Ambivalent	-.76	.23	.00	{-1.24, -.28}
Condition	-1.53	.45	.00	{-2.45, -.61}
Anxious Ambivalent X Condition	.31	.09	.00	{.12, .49}
R <sup>2</sup>	.17			
F(3, 57)	3.91***			

Note: SE = standard error, p = significance value, CI = Confidence Intervals

The second moderation analysis checked the interaction between ambivalent attachment and conditions applied (mortality salience and control group) to check the effect on Agape love. The above table showed the significant value of anxious ambivalent conditions and the interaction between anxious ambivalent attachment and condition, indicating that these variables are strong predictors of agape love. Overall, the model explained 17 per cent of the variance in agape love.



The graph showed an interaction between the control group and mortality salience. It indicates that participants with lower ambivalent attachment scores displayed low scores on agape love in the control group. The participants in mortality salience showed lower agape love is predicted by higher ambivalent scores, and lower ambivalent attachment style is predicted by higher agape love.

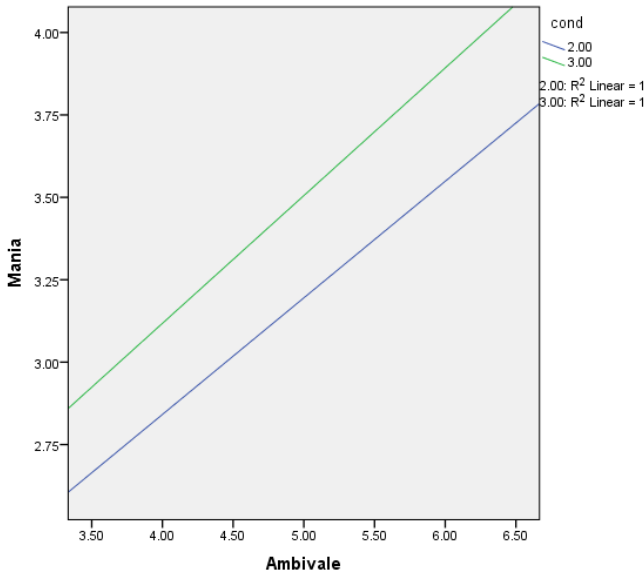
**Table 9:** Death Reflection and control group as the moderators between ambivalent attachment and Mania love (N = 93)

Predictors	Mania Love Style			
	Coeff	SE	P	95% CI
Anxious Ambivalent	.28	.33	.85	{-.38, .95}

Condition			.14	.65	.21	{-1.16, 1.45}
Anxious	Ambivalent	X	.03	.12	.26	{-.22, .28}
Condition						
R <sup>2</sup>			.36			
F(3, 57)			12.21			

Note: SE = standard error, p = significance value, CI = Confidence Intervals

The third moderation analysis checked the interaction between ambivalent attachment and conditions applied (death reflection and control group) to check the effect on Mania love. Death reflection did not moderate the role of ambivalent attachment style in predicting mania love. No difference was found in death reflection and control group predicting mania love.



The graph also indicated no interaction between death reflection and the control group, which rejects the hypothesis regarding these variables.

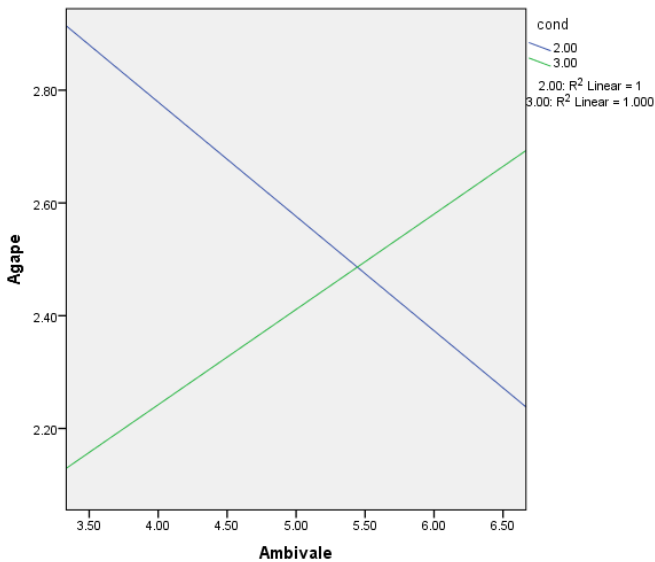
**Table 10:** Death Reflection and control group as the moderators between ambivalent attachment and Agape love (N = 93)

Predictors	Agape Love Style			
	Coeff	SE	P	95% CI
Anxious Ambivalent	-.94	.38	.01	{-.38, .95}
Condition	-2.02	.75	.00	{-1.16, 1.45}
Anxious Ambivalent X	.37	.14	.01	{-.22, .28}
Condition				
R <sup>2</sup>	.10			
F(3, 57)	2.46*			

Note: SE = standard error, p = significance value, CI = Confidence Intervals

The fourth moderation analysis checked the interaction between ambivalent attachment and conditions applied (death reflection and control group) to check the effect on Agape love. The results showed that the ambivalent attachment style significantly predicted agape love, and conditions of death reflection also predicted agape love. The interaction between ambivalent attachment style and conditions significantly predicted agape love, and the model showed a 10 per

cent variance explained.



The graph revealed that participants with lower ambivalent attachment styles showed low scores on agape love in the control group and vice versa. In contrast, higher ambivalent attachment predicted low intensity of agape love when individuals were asked for death reflection. Hence, participants with higher ambivalent attachment styles decreased their agape love expression when they became aware of death reflection. Therefore, considering all four moderation analyses, the moderation hypothesis was partially rejected.

## 5 Discussion

The current study investigates the variation in the manifestation of affection in individuals with ambivalent/anxious attachment styles while considering three primary conditions: mortality salience, death reflection, and a control group. The study's first hypothesis postulated that there would be a noticeable variation in the affection experienced by participants with highly ambivalent attachment styles due to death salience, as compared to the control group. The experiment carried out the independent sample t-test to verify this assumption. The findings did not reveal any significant difference in the mean between the groups in the expression of mania and agape love. The previous literature suggested that in the anxious ambivalent attachment style when people think or realise that they are going to lose their loved ones because of death, people tend to act differently (Mikulincer, 2019; Sekowski & Prigerson, 2022). The fear of death can induce anxiety, and the various forms of love become much more critical when people have to face the fact that their loved ones could be separated by death. According to (Schimmenti et al., 2020), this death awareness may then cause people to think about terror and the strong desire to protect their loved ones. This finding does not follow the previous literature due to the study's limitations.

Another hypothesis of the current study anticipated that there is likely to be a difference between death reflection and control in agape and mania love in highly ambivalent participants. The results revealed that when highly anxious people came across the death reflection condition, they tended to express less mania love than those in the control group. The previous literature showed that there are many ways of expressing love when a person is anxious, exposed, or they were faced with the death of their loved one. The theories of attachment also supported the concept of mania

love, which means attachment with obsession and constant feelings of dependency on significant others (Johnson, [2019](#)). According to Bynum IV et al. ([2019](#)), the reflection of death triggers behavioural and emotional changes in the person, which can lead to the development of disturbing situations. Research shows that death reflection is a tool for the person to be ready for future situations and makes them emotionally strong and stable (Yuan et al., [2019](#)).

The third hypothesis assumed that there was a difference between participants with high ambivalent attachment and lower ambivalent attachment styles in their expression of mania and agape love. The statistical analysis revealed no significant difference between the two groups of participants, considering their agape love style. On the other hand, highly anxious ambivalent participants scored higher in mania love than less anxious participants. The literature suggested that people with an anxious attachment style are likelier to put extra effort into relationships and go beyond limits to have their loved ones closer (Karandashev, [2022](#)). Other studies also claimed that anxious attachment style may interact with mania love as both types of expression are associated with over-possessive, deep, and compulsive relationships with their significant others (Kaufman et al., [2019](#)).

The hypothesis of moderation expected that death awareness is likely to moderate the association between love styles and ambivalent attachment styles. The variable of death awareness comprises three settings: death reflection, mortality salience, and control group. Both mortality salience and death reflection were compared with the control group individually to check their interaction while moderating the predicting role of ambivalent attachment style. The findings of the moderation analyses are summarised as the ambivalent attachment style generally predicts mania and agape love positively when no conditions are applied, such as in the control group. However, mortality salience did not moderate the prediction of ambivalent attachment to mania love, although mortality salience moderated the pessimistic prediction of ambivalent attachment to agape love.

It was revealed that participants with high ambivalent attachment styles tend to show more mania and agape love without going through death awareness. However, their mania love did not change when they went through mortality salience, but their agape love significantly decreased. Additionally, the awareness of death reflection also indicated a significant decrease in agape love in participants with highly ambivalent attachment styles. It interprets that mortality salience and death reflection are proven to reverse the prediction of ambivalent attachment to agape love.

Research indicates that attachment types are the most accurate predictor of individuals' love styles. Individuals with ambivalent attachment tend to exhibit jealousy and over-protectiveness towards their loved ones or significant others. They are also more prone to developing the mania or agape love types (Karyadeva, [2020](#)). The moody love style of mania is characterised by the emotional dependence on the partner, where the individuals show a strong need for reassurance. Also, being with others and getting attached to them, those with an anxious attachment style fixate on their significant partners and need security and fulfilment (Harris et al., [2021](#)). In the opinion of Carvalho and Mulla ([2020](#)), agape love is expressed through giving someone all that is possible and means deep concern. Thus, this sort of love may result in uncertainty about whether their care and desires are being met. Anxious attachments represent the kind of love distinguishable for its lack of selfishness and unconditional affection. It is sometimes called agape love (Kansky, [2018](#)).

Research carried out by Aumer and Kumar ([2022](#)) focused on the effect of death reminders on people with an insecure attachment style and their feelings towards romance or intimacy. The research findings were that for people who have insecure or anxious attachment styles when they are aware of their death, fear is related to the concept of death. They, therefore, develop a fear of making emotional connections. The study also proved that people who have insecure attachments have less self-esteem, which makes them emotionally vulnerable and causes them to tend to avoid romantic emotions. A different study carried out by Luo ([2019](#)) indicates that people who know

mortality salience, that is, the knowledge that death is unavoidable, experience fear, and therefore, they may avoid forming deep emotional connections or investing time and affection in others because they may realise that nothing is permanent.

The research of Caspi-Berkowitz et al. (2019) indicates that the awareness of mortality strongly impacted the romantic emotions of the anxious attachment types. The study produced contrasting results and revealed that death salience could stimulate increasing affection and romantic involvement in people's relationships. The results of this study differed from the traditional research. They showed the obstruction that a good number of the participants with insecure attachment styles had been single for a long time. This circumstance might be one of the reasons why they gave higher scores to romantic feelings, which in turn shows their optimism in finding a partner (Taubman-Ben-Ari & Findler, 2022).

The literature also provides more studies that clarify how love style changes after mortality salience in different ways. The survey by Cherniak et al. (2021) found that love style does not adhere to extreme positions but evolves and adapts to the circumstances and time. It has been found that certain people tend to become more loving and compassionate towards others by following a reminder of the transience of their lives. In this regard, they demonstrate more unconditional love and selflessness because they try to bring their partner everything available in our short lifespan. On the flip side, (Captari et al., 2019) proved in their research that people may avail introspection and seek inner peace after the experience of mortality salience or the loss of a loved one. It is where they find ways to restore their hope and indulge in wishful thinking. They get consolation from recollecting their friends/relatives with a happy face and wish to be with them forever.

The present study also found that the death thought facilitates the forecast of agape love in people with higher levels of ambivalence. The literature study encompasses a range of research findings that establish agape as a form of sacrificial love when individuals willingly offer up anything to provide solace and affection to their loved ones. Rajabi and Nikpoor (2018) conducted a study that found that contemplating death leads individuals to alter their perspectives and convictions toward life, as well as fostering acceptance of mortality. Individuals exhibit varied responses following contemplation of mortality, with many developing feelings of thankfulness and recognition for the finite nature of life and its resources. Conversely, a significant number of individuals tend to exhibit a lack of emotional response, indifference, and a lack of concern after contemplating mortality. Ala-Honkola (2020) conducted a research study which found that individuals with ambivalent attachment styles commonly experience a significant apprehension of being rejected or abandoned, typically before entering into a relationship. As a result of contemplating mortality, individuals may exhibit reduced displays of unconditional love due to the belief that they have lost their significant others. Velez (2023) conducted a study that explored the methods of attaining inner peace through contemplation of death. The study indicated that love serves as a treatment for both worry and anxious attachment. Individuals commonly encounter a shortage of affectionate emotions following contemplation of death, which induces fear.

Conversely, Bowlby's attachment theory suggests that ambivalent attachment makes individuals more affectionate and dependent on their spouse, increasing their agape love (Carvalho & Mulla, 2020). The current study revealed that individuals with anxious attachment styles exhibited elevated levels of agape and mania love in the control group, confirming previous findings. However, the conditions of mortality salience and death contemplation had distinct outcomes. Nevertheless, a majority of the literature has indicated conflicting findings regarding the impact of contemplating mortality on individuals with anxious attachment styles, suggesting that it may lead to heightened feelings of both agape and mania love (Imose, 2020). Nevertheless, previous studies that yielded comparable results to the present study have shown that contemplating mortality

induces anxiety and fosters distrust in individuals with ambivalent attachment styles, leading them to distance themselves from experiences of unconditional love and selflessness (Weigert, [1991](#)).

### 5.1 Conclusions

The study showed that ambivalent attachment and love styles significantly influence mortality awareness. In the study, the researchers employed three conditions of death awareness on participants. Each condition included mortality salience, death contemplation, and a control group. The latest research in the field has shown that those with low ambivalence tend to have less feelings of love while reflecting on mortality, in comparison to individuals with intense ambivalence. However, existing data primarily indicates that those with ambivalent attitudes may experience more anxiety when confronted with the consciousness of mortality.

Additionally, they may exhibit heightened affection towards their spouses under normal circumstances. Regardless of the circumstances, those with higher and lower ambivalence attachment types do not show a difference in the intensity of agape love. However, those with higher ambivalence tend to exhibit more manic love than those with lower ambivalence forms. This outcome can be elucidated by the literature, which suggests that individuals with anxious attachment tend to foster profound, excessively possessive, and obsessive connections with their significant others, hence intensifying their feelings of love.

The mediation study revealed that individuals with ambivalent solid attachment exhibit increased levels of mania and agape love when death awareness is absent. However, the manipulation of mortality salience and reflection on death was found to change the relationship with the control group on an individual level. It was achieved by reducing the level of unconditional love in persons who had high levels of ambivalence. Prior research has shown conflicting results about the effects of contemplating death, as it has been found to both enhance manic behaviour and foster selfless and unconditional love characterised by nervous attachment. On the contrary, death awareness is a factor that will reshape an individual's thoughts and emotions, leading them to anticipate a reunion with their loved ones in the afterlife.

### 5.2 Limitations

This study employed random sampling to divide participants into three groups. However, no comparisons were made between the samples. The complexity of data analysis was impeded by the study's inclusion of three groups and the subsequent comparison of their responses. The data was gathered within a brief timeframe via online surveys, which may raise concerns about the reliability of the findings. Individuals with a lower ambivalent attachment style may have shown a connection between love styles and other attachment styles that were not the main focus of the investigation.

### 5.3 Recommendations and Implications of the study

The researcher should conduct a thorough analysis of the study's results in collaboration with a research partner to ensure the impartiality of the findings. In addition, the researcher made alterations by solely focusing on the ambivalent attachment style and exclusively considering mania and agape love. Furthermore, forthcoming research endeavours should investigate alternative attachment patterns and love styles to understand individuals with diverse styles comprehensively.

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