

Attachment anxiety and selective spatial attention: a behavioral and ERP investigation

Friday, September 12, 2025 12:30 PM (1h 45m)

The potential role of attachment quality in emotion regulation and attention has been frequently discussed. Anxious attachment is associated with hypervigilance toward emotional stimuli while avoidant attachment is characterized by attentional withdrawal. However, there might be a selective attention deficit affecting either the engagement or disengagement components of attentional processing. The present study combines behavioral and electrophysiological measures to investigate the influence of attachment quality on early and late stages of attentional deployment. Participants performed an emotional dot-probe task while EEG activity was recorded to derive event-related potentials (ERPs) associated with attentional resource allocation. Both behavioral and neural responses appeared to be modulated by attachment-related anxiety, assessed using the Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised (ECR-R) questionnaire. At shorter probe duration participants exhibited an altered pattern of attentional orienting towards negative stimuli, with longer reaction times for targets appearing at the same location of negative compared to positive facial expressions. At longer probe duration, we observed reduced inhibition of return (IOR) for negative but not positive stimuli, indicating hypervigilance towards information with negative emotional valence. EEG data revealed greater N2pc deflections elicited by targets following negative emotional cues at shorter probe duration, putatively suggesting increased processing time of negative stimuli. Current preliminary findings suggest that attachment-related anxiety interferes with early and late attentional allocation, advancing our understanding of how attachment quality shapes emotional and cognitive vulnerabilities.

If you're submitting a symposium talk, what's the symposium title?

If you're submitting a symposium, or a talk that is part of a symposium, is this a junior symposium?

Primary author: Dr MASTROCESARE, Arianna (Università degli Studi Roma Tre)

Co-authors: Dr DEL GIUDICE, Fabio (Università degli Studi di Trento); Dr BILANCIA, Isotta (Università degli Studi di Trento); Dr BARBARESI, Marco (Università degli Studi Roma Tre); Prof. NARDO, Davide (Università degli Studi Roma Tre); Prof. MONACO, Simona (Università degli Studi di Trento); Prof. FAGIOLI, Sabrina (Università degli Studi Roma Tre)

Presenter: Dr MASTROCESARE, Arianna (Università degli Studi Roma Tre)

Session Classification: Lunch and poster 2

Track Classification: Attention, perception and consciousness