

THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN ADULT ATTACHMENT STYLES AND RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION: DOES THE SATISFACTION OF BASIC PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS MEDIATE THIS ASSOCIATION?

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INTRODUCTION

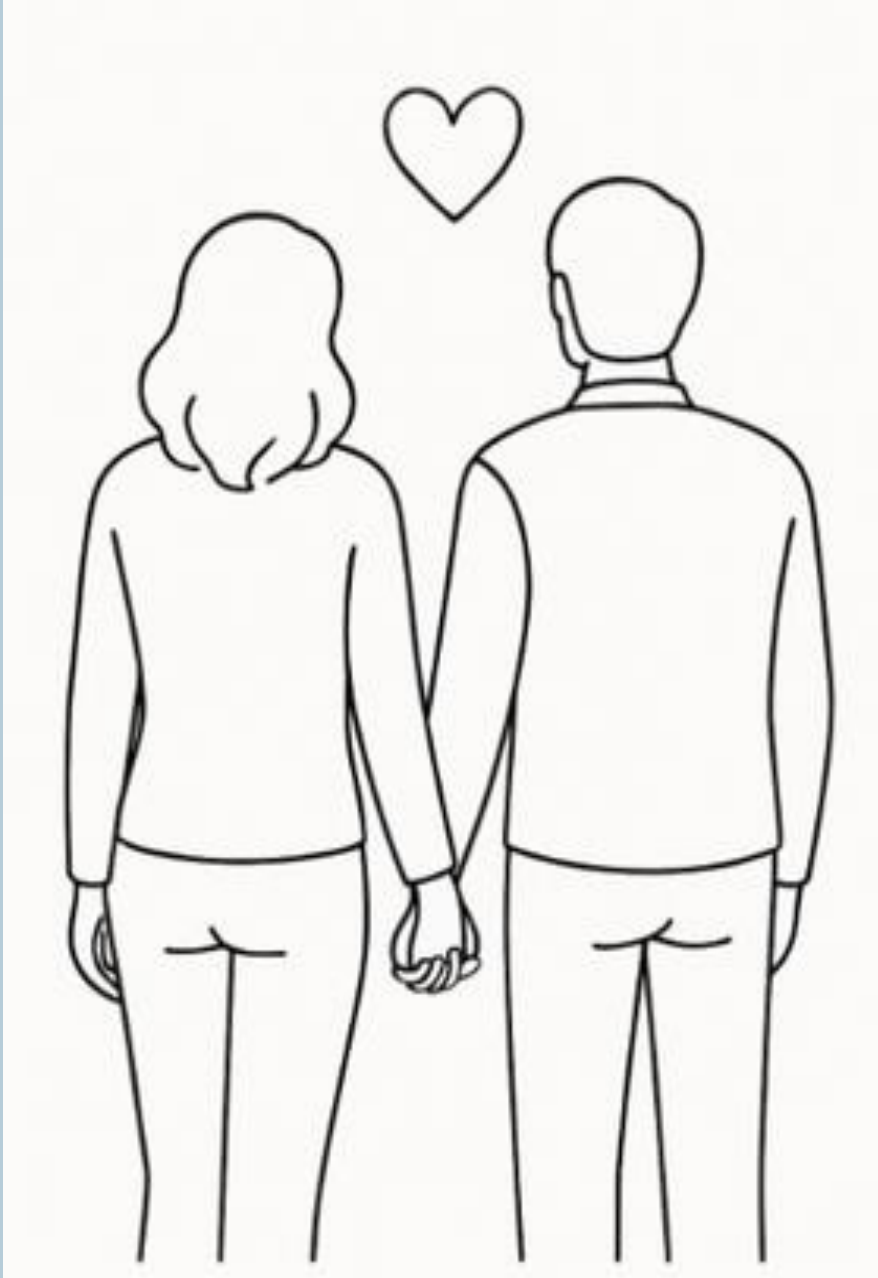
- Attachment style reflects how individuals experience intimacy, shaped by early interactions with caregivers, and continues to affect adult relationships (Reddy & Naila, 2024).
- Relationship satisfaction pertains to the subjective evaluation of happiness and contentment within a relationship.
- Higher levels of attachment anxiety or avoidance are linked to lower relationship satisfaction (Reddy & Naila, 2024).
- Self-Determination Theory (SDT) proposes that autonomy, competence, and relatedness are essential psychological needs for optimal well-being (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013).
- Research indicates a connection between attachment styles and the fulfillment of basic psychological needs (Bureau et al., 2025).
- Fulfilling these psychological needs is vital for mental health and supports functioning and satisfaction in close relationships (Weinstein & DeHaan, 2014).

THE CURRENT STUDY

Based on previous research linking adult attachment styles to relationship quality, the current study examined whether this association is mediated by the satisfaction of basic psychological needs- autonomy, competence, and relatedness, within the romantic relationship.

Hypothesis

The negative association between attachment style (anxious or avoidant) and relationship satisfaction is mediated by the satisfaction of basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness).



METHOD

Participants

- 220 individuals in romantic relationships (110 women, 110 men). Average age: women- 25.2 ($SD = 1.92$), men- 26.1 ($SD = 2.11$).

Measures

Attachment Style

- Assessed using ECR-RS ($\alpha = .80$ for anxiety; $\alpha = .77$ for avoidance). Avoidance: items 1-6; Anxiety: items 7-9.
- Women: Avoidance- 1.58 ($SD = 0.71$), Anxiety- 1.77 ($SD = 0.98$). Men: Avoidance- 2.01 ($SD = 0.83$), Anxiety- 1.71 ($SD = 0.94$).

Basic Psychological Needs

- Assessed using 6-item BNSR ($\alpha = .77$ for pride; $\alpha = .76$ for shame), covering autonomy, competence, and relatedness.
- Completed twice: after a pride-related and a shame-related event.
- Women: 6.37 ($SD = 0.58$); Men: 6.22 ($SD = 0.65$)

Relationship Satisfaction

- Assessed using CSI-16 ($\alpha = .91$). Higher scores reflect greater satisfaction.
- Women: 74.2 ($SD = 7.65$); Men: 73.1 ($SD = 8.39$).

RESULTS

Table 1
Bayesian mediation analysis for avoidant attachment style

Effect	Estimate	Lower 97.5% CI	Upper 97.5% CI
Indirect Effect (ACME)	-0.07	-0.14	-0.02
Direct Effect (ADE)	-0.30	-0.44	-0.17
Total Effect	-0.38	-0.51	-0.25
Proportion Mediated	0.20	0.06	0.41

Note. Estimate represent standardized posterior medians with 97.5% Bayesian credible intervals

Figure 1
Mediation Model for Avoidant Attachment

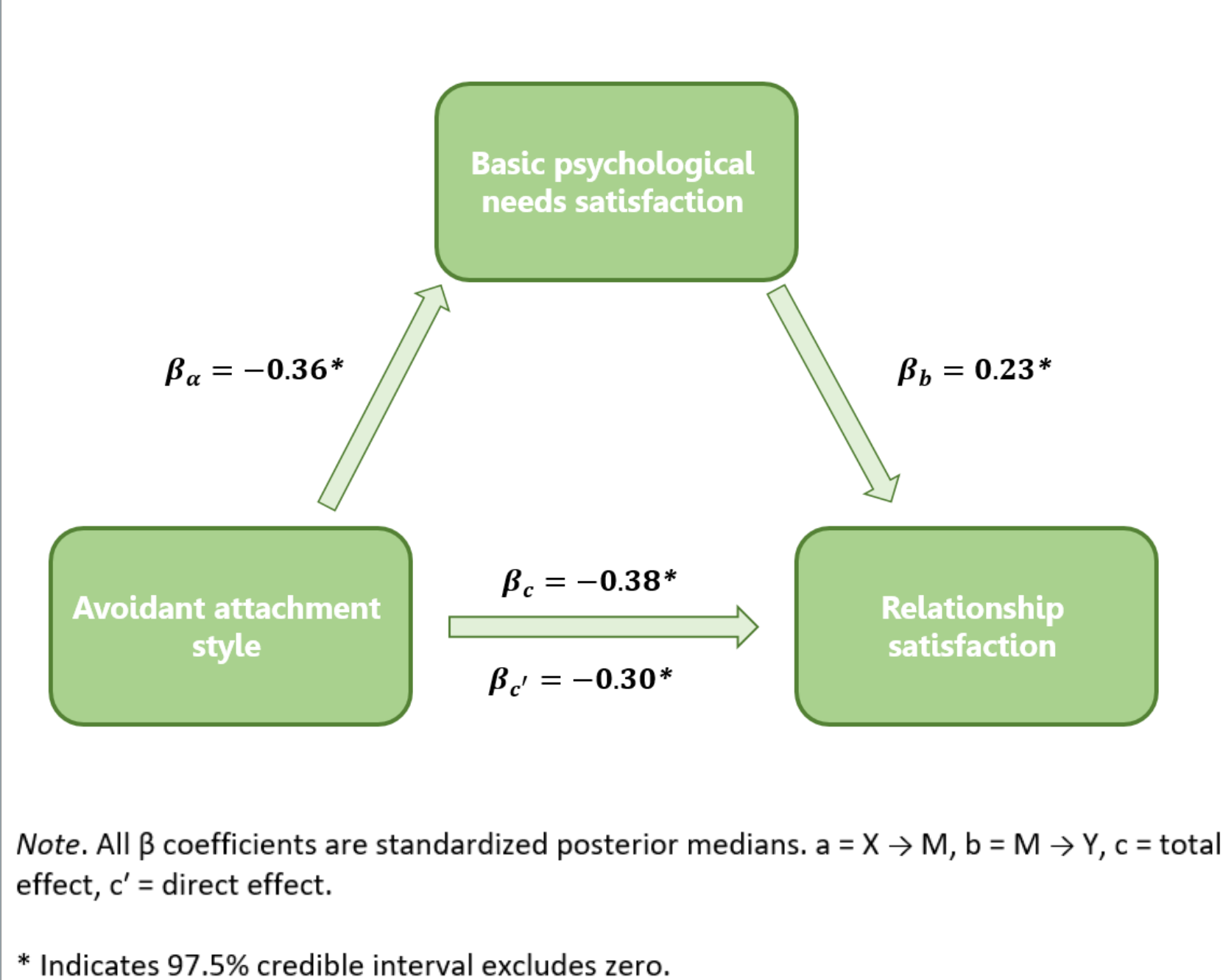
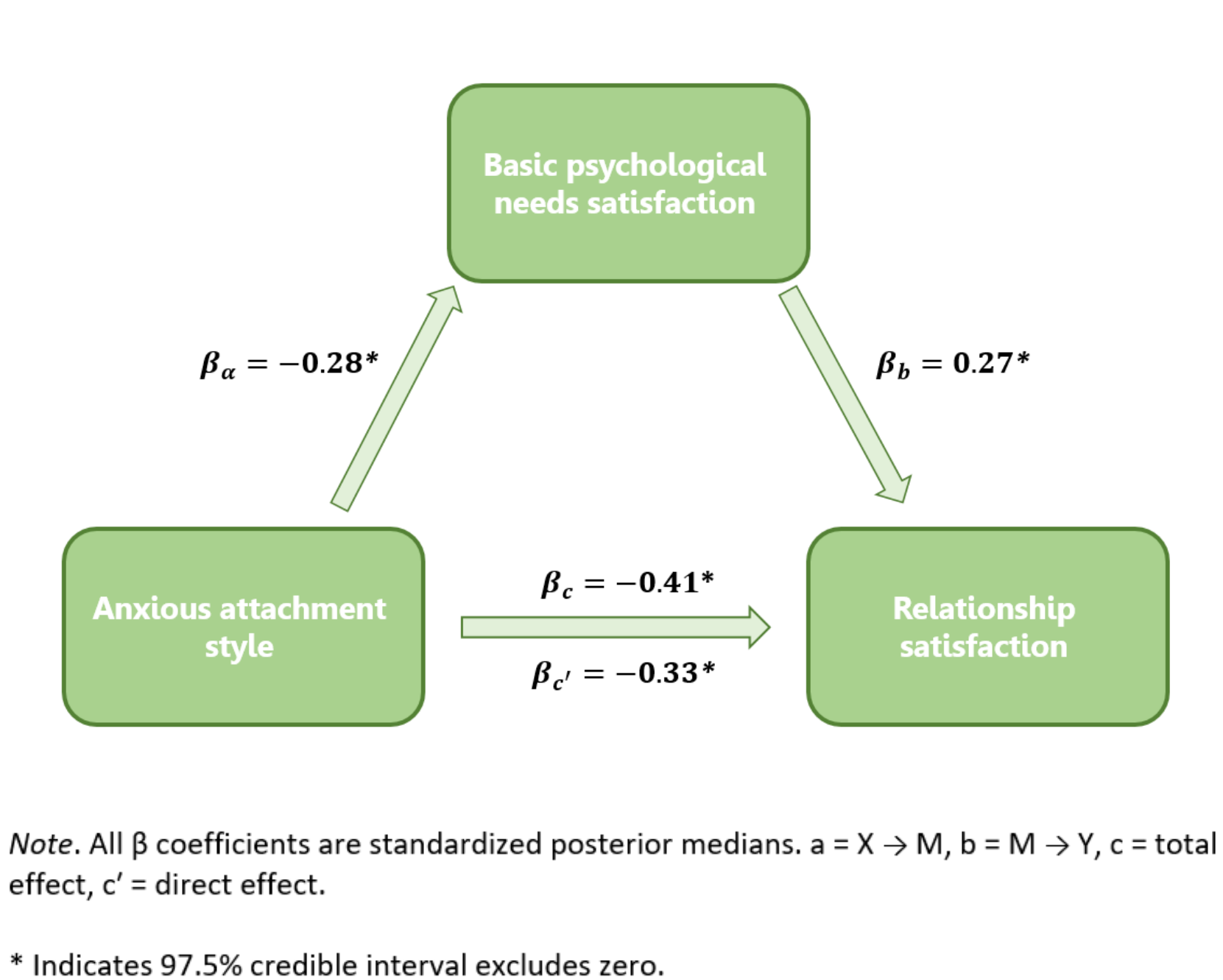


Table 2
Bayesian mediation analysis for anxious attachment style

Effect	Estimate	Lower 97.5% CI	Upper 97.5% CI
Indirect Effect (ACME)	-0.07	-0.13	-0.02
Direct Effect (ADE)	-0.33	-0.48	-0.18
Total Effect	-0.41	-0.55	-0.25
Proportion Mediated	0.18	0.06	0.34

Note. Estimate represent standardized posterior medians with 97.5% Bayesian credible intervals

Figure 2
Mediation Model for Anxious Attachment



DISCUSSION

Results

- The findings supported the initial hypothesis. A negative association between attachment style (anxious or avoidant) and relationship satisfaction was found to be **partially mediated** by the satisfaction of basic psychological needs.
- This mediation pattern was observed for both anxious and avoidant attachment styles.
- These results emphasize the important role of need fulfillment in explaining how attachment affects romantic relationship quality.

Limitations

- The sample included participants with high relationship satisfaction, high psychological need fulfillment, and low attachment insecurity, which may limit the generalizability of the findings.
- The cross-sectional design prevents drawing causal conclusions about the mediation.

Future research

- Future research could Use longitudinal designs, starting in childhood, to assess how early attachment patterns impact adult romantic relationships through basic need satisfaction.
- Another research could Examine how pride and shame contexts (where needs were assessed) influence these associations.

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