



INSECURE ATTACHMENT AS A ROBUST PREDICTOR OF VULNERABLE NARCISSISM IN ADULT ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS IN THE POLOG REGION

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between adult attachment dimensions anxiety and avoidance, and vulnerable narcissism among adults in the Polog Region of North Macedonia. A quantitative, cross-sectional design was employed with a sample of 126 adults (75.4% female; 63.5% urban) aged 18–50. Correlation analyses revealed significant positive associations between vulnerable narcissism and both avoidant attachment ($r = .45, p < .01$) and anxious attachment ($r = .52, p < .01$). Hierarchical regression analysis demonstrated that while demographic factors were not significant predictors, the addition of attachment dimensions explained 37.4% of the total variance in vulnerable narcissism ($R^2 = .374, p < .001$). Both avoidant ($\beta = .360$) and anxious attachment ($\beta = .326$) emerged as robust positive predictors. The findings suggest that insecure attachment strategies, both hyper-activating and deactivating, are central to the development of narcissistic vulnerability in non-clinical populations. This underscores the necessity for therapeutic interventions in the Balkan region to focus on attachment repair and emotional regulation to mitigate personality pathology in intimate bonds.

Keywords: vulnerable narcissism, adult attachment, attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance, romantic relationships.

1. INTRODUCTION

Understanding how individuals form and maintain a sense of self within interpersonal relationships is a central focus of personality and developmental psychology. A growing body of research suggests that early relational experiences with caregivers' shape enduring patterns of emotional regulation and interpersonal functioning.

Beyond primary attachment figures, adolescents' internal working models significantly shape how they navigate and perceive the broader social environment. In the

specific socio-cultural landscape of the Polog region, these relational dynamics manifest not only in peer or parental spheres but also in broader societal attitudes.

In adulthood, attachment insecurity is typically conceptualized along two main dimensions: attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance (Brennan et al., 1998). Individuals high in attachment anxiety tend to exhibit heightened fear of rejection, excessive need for reassurance, and strong emotional dependence on significant others. In contrast, individuals high in attachment avoidance tend to suppress emotional needs, maintain psychological distance in relationships, and emphasize self-reliance over intimacy. Although these strategies differ in expression, both are considered adaptive responses to inconsistent or emotionally unavailable caregiving environments during early development (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

Alongside attachment processes, personality research has increasingly focused on narcissism as a multidimensional construct. While narcissism is often associated with grandiosity, dominance, and entitlement, contemporary models distinguish between grandiose and vulnerable forms. Vulnerable narcissism is characterized by fragile internal structures, hypersensitivity to evaluation, emotional instability, and a strong need for external validation (Pincus & Lukowitsky, 2010). Unlike grandiose narcissism, which is outwardly assertive, vulnerable narcissism is marked by internal insecurity, shame-proneness, and interpersonal sensitivity.

Given the theoretical overlap between attachment insecurity and vulnerable narcissism, it is important to examine how these constructs are interconnected. Both attachment anxiety and vulnerable narcissism involve heightened sensitivity to rejection and a strong dependence on external validation, suggesting a potentially strong association. Attachment avoidance, although conceptually different, may also relate to narcissistic vulnerability through defensive emotional suppression and underlying unmet relational needs.

This research addresses a gap in the literature by focusing on adults aged 18-50 involved in committed romantic relationships in the Polog Region. The primary aim of this study is to examine the relationships among vulnerable narcissism and the insecure attachment styles of anxiety and avoidance, and to test the predictive role of attachment styles on vulnerable narcissism. Additionally, the study explores whether levels of vulnerable narcissism differ according to selected demographic characteristics, such as gender, socioeconomic status, relationship duration, marital status, education level, and residence. For instance, Zulqufliu et al. (2026) examined intergenerational interactions among adolescents in Tetovo and Gostivar, demonstrating that an intrinsic desire for social contact acts as a vital psychological buffer against discriminatory attitudes. Crucially, their study revealed that structural proximity alone such as cohabitation with grandparents was insufficient to mitigate negative stereotypes; instead, the quality and intentionality of the relationship were the true drivers of attitudinal change. This closely mirrors the core tenets of attachment theory, which posits that the psychological safety and emotional quality of a bond are far more definitive for development than mere physical presence. Consequently, an adolescent's underlying attachment style likely serves as a foundational framework for these high-quality social engagements, ultimately influencing their self-esteem and overall life satisfaction within this transitioning society. These patterns are commonly conceptualized

through attachment theory, which posits that internal working models formed in early childhood continue to influence behaviour, cognition, and affect in adulthood (Bowlby, 1969, 1982). Within this framework, individual differences in attachment security versus insecurity are particularly important for explaining variability in emotional stability and personality functioning.

The findings of this research offer substantial benefits to multiple stakeholders. For clinical psychologists and mental health professionals, understanding the robust link between attachment insecurity and vulnerable narcissism can inform more effective early intervention and therapeutic strategies for individuals struggling with hypersensitivity and emotion dysregulation. For couples and relationship counselors, this data clarifies how "hyper-activating" and "deactivating" strategies can undermine relationship stability by fostering defensive isolation. Academically, this study clarifies how insecure attachment dimensions significantly predict vulnerable narcissism a relationship that remains robust after controlling for demographic factors.

Despite the clinical relevance of these constructs, there is a lack of research focusing on how these relationships manifest in non-clinical populations in the Balkan region. This study is particularly significant given the socio-cultural context of North Macedonia, where traditional relationship values may interact with personality pathology in unique ways. While ethnocentrism and cultural relativism are often discussed in the context of Balkan political elites using them as populism tools, the psychological impact of such environments on individual personality development remains underexplored. By focusing on adults aged 18-50 in committed relationships, this research seeks to determine if the relationship between attachment dimensions and vulnerable narcissism remains robust across the adult lifespan.

Attachment Theory and Internal Working Models

The theoretical foundation of this study is rooted in the integration of Attachment Theory and Personality Psychology, which emphasizes the developmental origins of narcissism within interpersonal contexts. According to Bowlby (1969, 1973), early interactions with primary caregiving figures are instrumental in shaping internal working models mental representations of the self and others that serve as lifelong prototypes for relationships. These cognitive representations dictate how individuals regulate emotions and perceive security in adult romantic bonds. When parental care is inconsistent, rejecting, or fails to provide a secure base, the individual remains prone to adopting defensive personality strategies to manage profound interpersonal insecurities (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

Research on the etiology of narcissism suggests that childhood experiences, such as parental overvaluation or coldness, serve as critical antecedents to its development (Ewing, 2020). Furthermore, a recent three-level meta-analysis by Zhang et al. (2024) confirms a consistent, positive relationship between insecure attachment and pathological narcissism across various populations. Consequently, these early bonds serve as the primary pillar for understanding how adult personality traits emerge as maladaptive responses to perceived relational threats.

Anxious Attachment

Anxious attachment is characterized by the employment of hyper-activating strategies, which function as a psychological alarm system that is hypersensitive to any signs

of potential abandonment or rejection. Individuals exhibiting high levels of attachment anxiety often possess contingent self-esteem, where their sense of self-worth depends entirely on continuous validation and reassurance from their romantic partner (Saladino et al., 2024). This dynamic often results in a state of self-absorption that does not originate from genuine self-love, but rather from a desperate attempt to monitor and protect an ego structure that feels perpetually threatened.

In the context of romantic bonds, this anxiety can act as a moderator for relationship satisfaction, where the constant need for proximity and the fear of abandonment create a cycle of interpersonal tension (Besser & Priel, 2009).

Avoidant Attachment

In contrast, the avoidant attachment style operates through deactivating strategies, where the individual habitually minimizes the importance of intimacy and emotional closeness to avoid the potential for emotional pain. According to Cassidy and Shaver (2016), avoidant individuals build a facade of compulsive self-reliance, viewing others as inherently unreliable or intrusive. This orientation provides the psychological framework where narcissistic traits are adopted, as the individual relies on an artificial sense of superiority to compensate for the emotional isolation they have created for themselves (Calderon, 2021).

Vulnerable Narcissism

Vulnerable narcissism represents the introverted, hypersensitive, and thin-skinned side of the narcissistic construct, distinguishing it from the more overt grandiose narcissism. This trait is characterized by high levels of emotion dysregulation and intense, painful fluctuations in self-esteem (Saladino et al., 2024). According to Hendin and Cheek (1997), vulnerable narcissists suffer from deep-seated feelings of worthlessness, which they often attempt to conceal behind secret, internal fantasies of grand importance and recognition. They possess a hypervigilant nature, constantly scanning their social environments for even the slightest signs of belittlement, criticism, or social slight, which drives them toward defensive isolation.

Recent findings suggest that identity disturbance acts as the main contributor to the interpersonal problems seen in pathological narcissism (Biberdzic et al., 2023). This fragility is closely tied to experiences of shame; when individuals with vulnerable narcissistic traits experience social failure, their lack of a stable self-identity leads to profound emotional collapse (van Schie et al., 2021).

The development of vulnerable narcissism has been widely discussed in relation to early relational experiences. Psychodynamic theories propose that narcissistic vulnerability originates from disruptions in early caregiver responsiveness, particularly a lack of consistent empathy, mirroring, and validation (Kernberg, 1975; Kohut, 1971).

2. OBJECTIVE AND HYPOTHESES

The primary aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between adult attachment dimensions specifically anxious and avoidant styles and vulnerable narcissism among adults engaged in committed romantic relationships. Furthermore, the study seeks to determine the extent to which these attachment styles predict vulnerable narcissism,

controlling for demographic variables including gender, age, socioeconomic status, relationship duration, and place of residence.

2.1. OBJECTIVE

To assess the relationships among anxious attachment, avoidant attachment, and vulnerable narcissism.

To determine whether anxious and avoidant attachment significantly predict vulnerable narcissism.

To examine whether levels of vulnerable narcissism differ significantly across demographic groups (e.g., gender, relationship duration, socioeconomic status, age, residence).

Problem statement:

How do the anxious and avoidance attachment styles relate to vulnerable narcissism in adults who are in romantic relationships, and do these relationships remain significant after controlling for gender, age, relationship duration, socioeconomic status, and place of residence?

Research questions:

RQ1: Is there a statistically significant relationship between anxious attachment, avoidant attachment, and vulnerable narcissism in adults residing in the Polog Region?

RQ2: Do anxious and avoidant attachment styles significantly predict vulnerable narcissism after controlling for demographic factors (gender, age, socioeconomic status, relationship duration, and place of residence)?

RQ3: Do levels of vulnerable narcissism differ significantly based on demographic characteristics, including gender, relationship duration, socioeconomic status, age, and place of residence?

2.2. HYPOTHESES

The following research hypotheses were formulated:

H1: There is a statistically significant, positive correlation between both anxious and avoidant attachment styles and vulnerable narcissism in adults involved in committed relationships.

H2: Both anxious and avoidant attachment styles will function as significant, positive predictors of vulnerable narcissism when controlling for demographic variables.

H3: There will be statistically significant differences in vulnerable narcissism across demographic groups (e.g., by gender, relationship duration, and socioeconomic status).

3. METHOD

This study employs a quantitative, cross-sectional, and correlational research design. The primary focus is to examine the predictive relationship between attachment dimensions

(Anxiety and Avoidance) and Vulnerable Narcissism, focusing on individuals aged 18–50 involved in committed romantic relationships in the Polog Region, North Macedonia.

Participants

Table 1. Characteristics of Participants (N = 126)

Variable	Category	N	%
Gender	Male	31	24.6
	Female	95	75.4
Residence	Rural	46	36.5
	Urban	80	63.5
Education Level	Secondary Education	32	25.4
	Bachelor	60	47.6
	Master	34	27.0
Income	Low	2	1.6
	Medium	83	65.9
	High	41	32.5
Marital Status	In a Relationship	43	34.1
	Engaged	20	15.9
	Married	63	50.0
Relationship Duration	Less than 1 Year	17	13.5
	1–3 Years	37	29.4
	3–5 Years	18	14.3
	Above 5 Years	54	42.8

The final sample of the study consisted of 126 participants (N = 126) from the Polog Region. As shown in Table 1, the gender distribution was predominantly female, representing 75.4% (n = 95) of the sample, while males accounted for 24.6% (N = 31). In terms of residential background, the majority of the respondents lived in urban areas (63.5%, N = 80), compared to 36.5% (n = 46) residing in rural settings.

Regarding educational attainment, nearly half of the participants held a Bachelor's degree (47.6%), followed by those with a Master's degree (27.0%) and secondary education (25.4%). The socioeconomic status of the sample was primarily concentrated in the medium-income bracket (65.9%), with 32.5% reporting high income and a small minority (1.6%) reporting low income.

In relation to their romantic involvement, half of the participants were married (50.0%), while 34.1% were in a relationship and 15.9% were engaged. Furthermore, the duration of these relationships varied, with the largest group reporting a commitment of above five years (42.8%), while 13.5% were in relationships of less than one year. The participant sample consisted of adults with ages ranging from 18 to 50 years (M = 26.34, SD = 6.35). The age distribution was relatively broad, though concentrated toward younger adulthood, with the most frequent participants being 20 years old (10.3%) and 21 years old (9.5%).

Procedure

The data collection process was conducted over a four-month period, specifically from November 2025 to January 2026. The study utilized an online survey design, developed via Google Forms, which was distributed through academic networks and social media

platforms to reach young adults residing in the Polog Region. Potential participants received a digital invitation containing a brief description of the study's focus on romantic relationships and personality traits.

Upon accessing the survey link, individuals were required to read and accept an Informed Consent form. This document explicitly stated that participation was entirely voluntary, all responses would remain anonymous and protected under strict confidentiality protocols, and participants had the right to withdraw at any time without providing a reason. The survey was structured into three distinct sections to ensure clarity: a socio-demographic module, the Adult Attachment Scale (AAS), and the Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale (HSNS). On average, participants completed the questionnaire in approximately 7 minutes. No incentives or rewards were provided for participation to minimize response bias. After the data collection phase concluded in January 2026, the data were exported and prepared for statistical analysis using SPSS.

Instruments

Attachment dimensions were assessed using the Anxious and Avoidant subscales of the Adult Attachment Scale (AAS; Collins & Read, 1990). The Anxious subscale comprised 6 items measuring fear of rejection and need for reassurance, and the Avoidant subscale comprised 6 items measuring discomfort with closeness and desire for independence. Participants rated items on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not at all characteristic to 5 = very characteristic).

Vulnerable narcissism was measured using the Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale (HSNS; Hendin & Cheek, 1997). This 10-item instrument assesses the thin-skinned aspect of narcissism, including hypersensitivity to judgment, social avoidance, and a fluctuating sense of self-worth.

Reliability and Validity of the Instruments

The internal consistency of the scales used in the current study was assessed using Cronbach's alpha (α) coefficients. According to the criteria suggested by George & Mallery (2003) and Nunnally (1978), a Cronbach's alpha value above .70 is considered acceptable and indicates good internal consistency for research purposes. As shown in Table 2, all scales demonstrated reliable measurement properties.

Table 2. Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients for the Measured Variables

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items	Remarks
AAS Anxious	0.718	6	Good Reliability
AAS Avoidant	0.705	6	Good Reliability
HSNS (Narcissism)	0.731	10	Good Reliability

4. RESULTS

Prior to the main analyses, the data were screened for normality and outliers. The distributional properties of the study variables were assessed using skewness and kurtosis. For avoidant attachment, anxious attachment, and vulnerable narcissism, skewness values

ranged from -0.08 to 0.51, and kurtosis values ranged from -0.53 to 0.36. Since all values fell well within the acceptable range of ± 1.96 (Field, 2018), the assumption of normality was met, justifying the use of parametric statistical procedures. Additionally, a visual inspection of the Normal P-P Plots and histograms confirmed that the residuals were normally distributed.

Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation coefficients are presented in Table 3. The mean score for vulnerable narcissism was 3.05 (SD = 0.74). Regarding attachment dimensions, avoidant attachment reported a mean of 2.81 (SD = 0.78), while anxious attachment reported a mean of 2.33 (SD = 0.82).

The correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships between all study variables. Specifically, a strong positive correlation was found between anxious attachment and vulnerable narcissism ($r = .52, p < .01$), suggesting that individuals with higher levels of anxiety tend to exhibit higher levels of vulnerable narcissism. Similarly, avoidant attachment was significantly and positively correlated with vulnerable narcissism ($r = .45, p < .01$). Finally, a moderate positive correlation was observed between the two attachment dimensions, avoidant and anxious attachment ($r = .44, p < .01$).

Table 3. Means, Standard Deviations, and Inter-Correlations Among Study Variables

Variable	N	M	SD	1	2	3
1. Narcissism	126	3.05	0.74	—		
2. Avoidant	126	2.81	0.78	.45**	—	
3. Anxious	126	2.33	0.82	.52**	.44**	—

Note. N = 126. M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation. ** $p < .01$.

To determine whether vulnerable narcissism levels varied as a function of sociodemographic background, a series of exploratory statistical analyses were conducted. Independent-samples t-tests were employed to examine mean differences between binary demographic groups, while one-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were used to assess differences across categorical variables with multiple levels (marital status, education level, and relationship duration).

The results indicated that vulnerable narcissism scores were not significantly associated with gender, $t(124) = 0.38, p = .703$, nor were they influenced by place of residence (urban vs. rural), $t(124) = -1.30, p = .197$. Furthermore, one-way ANOVAs revealed no statistically significant differences in narcissistic vulnerability across marital status, $F(2, 123) = 0.35, p = .708$; education level, $F(2, 123) = 0.61, p = .546$; or the duration of romantic relationships, $F(3, 122) = 0.43, p = .730$.

The absence of significant variation indicates that the core features of vulnerable narcissism specifically hypersensitivity to evaluation, emotional dysregulation, and internal feelings of worthlessness are not differentially distributed based on gender, educational attainment, or the maturity of the romantic bond. Consequently, these results reinforce the understanding of vulnerable narcissism as a generalized personality feature in this population rather than one delimited by specific demographic markers. Consequently, the data do not support H3.

The demographic analyses indicated that vulnerable narcissism scores were not significantly influenced by participants' sociodemographic background. Specifically, no significant differences were observed across gender, place of residence, marital status, educational attainment, or the duration of romantic relationships (all $p > .05$).

The computed effect sizes Cohen's d (ranging from 0.08 to 0.23) for binary comparisons and Partial Eta Squared ($\eta^2_p \approx .010$) for multi-group ANOVA analyses consistently yielded negligible to small values. These results suggest that the core characteristics of vulnerable narcissism, within the studied sample from the Polog region, operate independently of external demographic markers. Consequently, these findings reinforce the theoretical focus of this study on internal relational processes namely, attachment insecurity as the primary psychological drivers of narcissistic vulnerability, rather than socio-environmental or demographic factors.

Table 4. Differences in Vulnerable Narcissism Based on Demographic Characteristics

Variable	Category	n	M	SD	t/F	df	p	Effect Size
Gender	Male	31	3.09	0.64	0.38	124	.703	$d = 0.09$
	Female	95	3.03	0.77				
Residence	Urban	80	2.98	0.75	-	124	.197	$d = 0.26$
	Rural	46	3.16	0.72				
Marital Status	In relationship	43	3.10	0.76	0.35	2, 123	.708	$\eta^2_p = 0.006$
	Engaged	20	2.93	0.66				
	Married	63	3.05	0.75				
Education Level	High School	32	3.17	0.75	0.61	2, 123	.546	$\eta^2_p = 0.010$
	Bachelor	60	3.02	0.73				
	Master	34	2.98	0.75				
Relationship Duration	< 1 year	17	2.91	0.83	0.43	3, 122	.730	$\eta^2_p = 0.006$
	1–3 years	37	3.14	0.69				
	3–5 years	18	2.98	0.75				
	> 5 years	54	3.05	0.76				

A hierarchical multiple regression was conducted to determine the predictive power of demographic characteristics and attachment dimensions on Vulnerable Narcissism. The results of the regression are summarized in Table 5. In the first step of the model, general characteristics including gender, age, residence, education level, and relationship status were entered. This initial model was not statistically significant, $F(5, 120) = 0.636$, $p > .05$, and accounted for only 5.8% of the variance ($R^2 = .058$). None of the individual demographic predictors reached statistical significance (all $p > .05$).

In the second step, the addition of attachment dimensions resulted in a statistically significant increase in the explained variance, $\Delta R^2 = .316$, $F(2, 118) = 28.222$, $p < .001$. The final model accounted for a total of 37.4% of the variance ($R^2 = .374$). Within this model, both avoidant attachment ($\beta = .360$, $p < .001$) and anxious attachment ($\beta = .326$, $p < .001$) emerged as significant positive predictors.

Table 5. Hierarchical Regression Analysis Predicting Vulnerable Narcissism

Predictor	Model 1 (β)	Model 2 (β)
Step 1: General Characteristics		
Gender (1 = Female)	-.041	-.015
Age	.093	.052
Residence (1 = Urban)	.111	.084
Education Level	-.062	-.031
Relationship Status	.055	.028
Step 2: Attachment Dimensions		
Avoidant Attachment		.360*
Anxious Attachment		.326*
R ²	.058	.374
ΔR^2	.058	.316*
F for change in R ²	0.636	28.222*

Note. N = 126. Beta (β) values are standardized coefficients. * $p < .001$.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study confirm that attachment insecurity, manifested through anxiety and avoidance, is a robust predictor of vulnerable narcissism among adults in the Polog region, explaining 37.4% of the total variance ($R^2 = .374$) (Zhang et al., 2024). The strong positive associations between these dimensions suggest that individuals with a constant need for reassurance or those who habitually avoid intimacy develop high sensitivity to evaluation and emotional instability, as described by Hendin and Cheek (1997). This model confirms that vulnerable narcissism serves as a defensive mechanism against insecure relational models, demonstrating that both hyper-activating and deactivating strategies are central to the development of this personality pathology.

Furthermore, demographic analyses indicated that vulnerable narcissism does not vary significantly by gender, socioeconomic status, or relationship duration, as the observed effect sizes *Cohen's d* (0.08 - 0.23) and *Partial Eta Squared* ($\eta^2_p \approx .010$) were negligible to small. This lack of significant variation, supported by the minimal effect sizes, reinforces vulnerable narcissism as a generalized personality construct in this cultural context, independent of external demographic markers. These findings underscore that therapeutic interventions in the Balkans should prioritize attachment repair and emotional regulation to mitigate personality pathology, while future research should further examine mediators such as shame-proneness and identity disturbance (Biberdzic et al., 2023; Saladino et al., 2024; van Schie et al., 2021).

6. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this study provides empirical evidence that attachment insecurity is a powerful predictor of vulnerable narcissism in adults involved in committed romantic relationships in the Polog Region. The findings indicate that both anxious and avoidant attachment dimensions are significant positive predictors of narcissistic vulnerability, collectively explaining over a third of its variance. Notably, these psychological factors

remained robust while demographic characteristics showed no significant influence on narcissism scores.

The demographic analysis demonstrated that factors such as gender, residence, education, and relationship duration do not statistically moderate the manifestation of these traits. The negligible effect sizes ($d < 0.25$ and $\eta^2_p \approx .01$) observed across these variables suggest that vulnerable narcissism in this cultural context functions as a generalized personality construct rather than one tied to specific socioeconomic markers.

The significance of this research lies in its identification of the developmental antecedents of personality traits within the modern romantic landscape of North Macedonia. By focusing on a non-clinical sample, the study demonstrates that these dynamics are relevant to the general population, not just those in psychiatric care. Future interventions in the Balkan region should prioritize attachment repair and emotional regulation to mitigate personality pathology in intimate bonds.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, this study contributes to the nomological network of narcissism by clarifying how insecure attachment dimensions serve as robust predictors of vulnerable traits in a non-clinical, regional context. Practically, these results offer guidance for mental health professionals in North Macedonia. Clinicians should prioritize addressing attachment-related hyper-activating and deactivating strategies to help clients manage hypersensitivity and emotion dysregulation. For couples' therapists, the data clarifies how defensive isolation driven by attachment insecurity can undermine relationship stability.

Limitations and Future Directions

Several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design precludes any definitive conclusions regarding causality. Second, the sample was predominantly female (75.4%) and recruited via convenience sampling, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to the broader population of the Polog Region. Finally, the reliance on self-report measures may introduce response bias, although the high internal consistency of the scales used suggests reliable measurement. This study utilized the Anxious and Avoidant subscales of the Adult Attachment Scale. While these dimensions capture the core mechanisms of attachment insecurity (hyper-activation and deactivation), they do not capture the full range of attachment classifications (such as secure attachment).

Future research should consider longitudinal designs to better understand the temporal stability of these links and explore potential mediators such as identity disturbance or shame-proneness. Additionally, expanding the sample to include a more balanced gender distribution and comparing clinical and non-clinical groups would further refine therapeutic strategies and enhance the cross-cultural understanding of narcissistic vulnerability.

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