

Ostracism Mediates the Relationship Between Attachment Insecurities and Borderline Personality

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Background

- **Attachment Insecurities**

Early relationships with caregivers shape two main adult attachment styles: anxious (characterized by hyperactivation of the attachment system) and avoidant (characterized by deactivation of the system) (Bowlby, 1969).

- **Borderline Personality**

Borderline personality disorder involves instability in emotions, identity, and impulses, develops through a combination of biological vulnerability and adverse early relational experiences, and is strongly predicted by the simultaneous presence of high attachment anxiety and avoidance, which leads individuals with BPD to deeply desire closeness while also struggling in their relationships (APA, 2013).

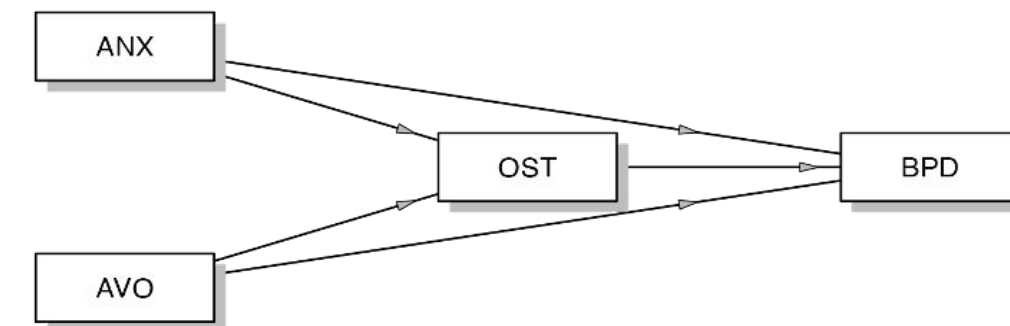
Background

- **Ostracism as a Mediator**

Individuals with insecure attachment often feel neglected, ignored, or excluded based on their early experiences with caregivers, and people with BPD likewise tend to perceive themselves as rejected within their close relationships.

Hypothesis

- Attachment insecurities will be related to BPD.
- Ostracism will mediate this relationship.



Methodology

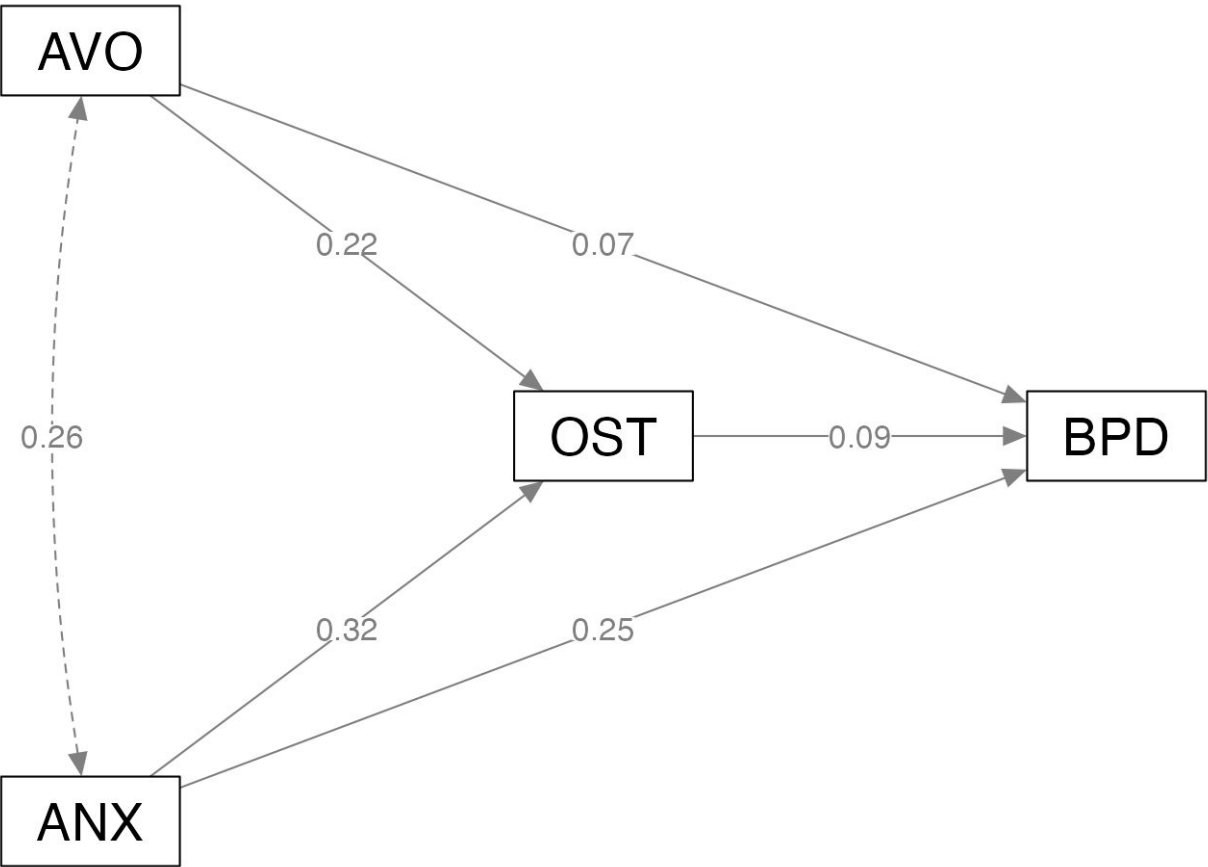


- $N = 284$ Turkish participants (194 women, 90 men; age median = 39 years, $M = 30.80$, $SD = 7.95$).
- **Independent Variables:** **Attachment anxiety** (*"I'm afraid that this person may abandon me"*) and **attachment avoidance** (*"I don't feel comfortable opening up to this person"*), measured using the short version of the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale (9 items; Fraley et al., 2000; Antalyalı & Özkul, 2016).
- **Dependent Variable:** **Maladaptive personality traits** (*"Unpleasant feelings will escalate and get out of control"*), measured using the Personality Belief Questionnaire – Borderline Personality Items (7 items; Beck & Beck, 1996; Türkçapar & Köse, 2003).
- **Mediator:** Ostracism from a romantic partner (*"My partner excludes me from conversations"*) over the past 2 months, measured with the Ostracism Short Scale (4 items; Rudert et al., 2020).

Results

As we expected Ostracism mediated the relationship between attachment insecurities and BPD.

Type		b	95% C.I. (a)		p
			Lower	Upper	
Indirect	ANX ⇒ OST ⇒ BPD	0.0291	0.00982	0.0483	0.003
	AVO ⇒ OST ⇒ BPD	0.0204	0.00222	0.0387	0.028



Discussion

- Our study shows that attachment anxiety and avoidance are linked to greater BPD.
- This relationship mediated by ostracism.
- People with attachment insecurities who feel ignored and excluded by their partner are positively linked to BPD.
- We propose that people with attachment insecurities who perceive ostracism by their partner might be vulnerable to BPD.

Limitations

- **Self-report design** may be biased → partner reports or behavioral data would strengthen the findings.
- **Cross-sectional data** prevent causal conclusions → longitudinal or diary studies are needed.
- **Single-culture sample** (Turkey) limits generalizability → cultural comparisons are recommended.
- **Brief BPD measure** captures beliefs, not full clinical symptoms → future work should include comprehensive assessments.
- Future studies should explore this mechanism in **clinical sample**.

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