Attachment styles and burnout: The mediating role of basic psychological needs satisfaction

Soyeon Kim and Boyoung Kim

The Catholic University of Korea

Author Note

Soyeon Kim, Department of Psychology, The Catholic University of Korea.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Soyeon Kim, Department of Psychology, The Catholic University of Korea, Contact: soyeonkim2552@gmail.com

Boyoung Kim, Department of Psychology, The Catholic University of Korea.

Boyoung Kim is now at Department of Psychology, The Catholic University of Korea.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Boyoung Kim, Department of Psychology, The Catholic University of Korea, Contact: herena.kim@catholic.ac.kr

Abstract

This study evaluated the relationships among adult attachment, basic psychological needs satisfaction, and burnout based on attachment theory and the JD-R model (Job Demands-Resources Model; Bakker & Demerouti; 2007). Using structural equation modeling, we examined the mediating effects of the three subcategories of basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, relatedness) in the relationship between attachment and burnout. Results indicated good fit for both the measurement model and the structural model. Autonomy and competence needs satisfaction partially mediated the relationship between insecure attachment and burnout. More specifically, attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance negatively predicted autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs satisfaction, and autonomy and competence needs satisfaction negatively predicted burnout. Relatedness needs satisfaction did not predict burnout. Unexpectedly, we discovered that attachment avoidance had a suppressor effect on burnout. We discuss the implications and limitations of this study and outline directions for future research.

Keywords: Burnout, Adult attachment, Basic psychological needs, Autonomy, Competence, Relatedness, Suppressor effect

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Burnout is a psychological syndrome that occurs in the face of excessive job demands, according to the JD-R Model (Job Demands-Resources Model; Bakker & Demerouti; 2007). Although early research focused primarily on human service sector employees, burnout is now known to be pervasive among workers in many professions and countries (Leiter & Schaufeli, 1996; Golembiewsk et al., 1998). Burnout has been related to negative outcomes such as low work performance (Vîrgă et al., 2019), health problems (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), depression (Hakanen & Schaufeli, 2012), and low life satisfaction (Reizer, 2015). Conceptually, burnout often is confused with stress reactions; however, it is distinguished from them insofar as burnout accompanies chronic and severe functional damage seen only in work contexts (Maslach et al., 2001). Thus, burnout recently has captured the attention of many researchers and policymakers seeking healthier workplace conditions. Furthermore, aside from environmental factors, researchers have started to focus on individual differences (e.g., Big 5 personality traits, attachment styles) as primary determinants of burnout (Zellars et al., 2000; Littman-Ovadia et al., 2013).

The Big 5 personality traits have been the most extensively explored dispositional factors in occupational literature (Harm, 2011). However, there is also growing interest in attachment styles at work (Harms, 2011; Yip et al., 2018), as they can explain relational aspects of individuals (Noftle & Shaver, 2006; Roisman et al., 2007). Attachment theory is the most influential and well-established theory used to explain people's relationships (Finkel & Simpson, 2015). According to the theory, infants who develop secure attachments with responsive and sensitive attachment figures go on to develop positive images of themselves and others, while their counterparts who fail to do so end up developing distrust of others' intentions and fragile self-worth (Fraley & Shaver, 2000). These internal mechanisms remain

relatively stable throughout the life span (Hazan & Shaver, 1987), generating different outcomes in many domains, including occupational contexts (Fraley & Shaver, 2000; Yip et al., 2018). For example, insecurely attached people demonstrate lower task functioning by perceiving group interactions negatively (Rom & Mikulincer, 2003), and they tend to experience higher burnout, less career commitment, and lower work engagement (Littman-Ovadia et al., 2013).

Hazan and Shaver (1987) posited three attachment styles (secure, anxious, avoidant), whereas Bartholomew (1990) suggested four types (secure, preoccupied, dismissing, fearful) based on the intersecting models of the self and others. As the dimensional view gained support (Fraley & Waller, 1998), the two orthogonal dimensions of anxiety and avoidance (i.e., insecure attachment types) became popular among attachment researchers (Brennan et al.,1998; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005; Harms, 2011). Attachment anxiety is characterized by preoccupation with others' approval or rejection, whereas attachment avoidance is characterized by maintenance of emotional distance and dismissal of the importance of relationships (Ronen & Mikulincer, 2009; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). In contrast, secure attachments are characterized by both low anxiety and low avoidance (Ronen & Mikulincer, 2009).

We derived the present study's theoretical framework from the JD-R model to explain the pathway from attachment to burnout. The model posits that any job-related characteristics can be categorized into two categories: job demands and job resources (Demerouti et al., 2001). Job demands include physical, psychological, social, and structural aspects of the work environment that require excessive physical and psychological costs on the individual's part, whereas job resources include the aspects that help to achieve work-related goals and reduce the costs imposed by job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). The model also posits dual processes: from job demands to burnout and from job resources to engagement (Bakker &

Demerouti, 2007). We focused on the path from job demands to burnout (i.e., health impairment process), where excessive job demands deplete individuals' energy resources and render them susceptible to chronic occupational illness.

Later, the model was expanded to include personal demands (e.g., workaholism; Guglielmi et al., 2012) and personal resources (e.g., emotional competence; Prieto et al., 2008) as predictors of burnout and engagement, respectively (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Personal demands are the individual characteristics that cause people to make excessive work-related efforts, resulting in additional psychological and physical costs (Barbier et al., 2013). Individuals' attachment insecurity may act as a personal demand in that they waste their energy either with concern about others' approval (attachment anxiety) or with trying to keep emotional distance from others (attachment avoidance) (Ronen & Baldwin, 2010; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007; Richards & Shat, 2011). Indeed, this type of energy depletion has manifested in previous research on burnout. For example, Ronen and Baldwin (2010) showed that attachment anxiety predicts future burnout due to individuals' hypersensitivity to rejection, and Pines (2004) has suggested that insecurely attached people are more likely to experience burnout due to their negative coping strategies. Given the individual's rigid framework of self, others, and environment (and the resulting negative cognitions and behaviors), insecure attachment may hinder effective energy management in the workplace and, in turn, contribute to burnout (Ronen & Mikulincer, 2009).

The health impairment process posited by the JD-R model has received much empirical support (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007; Guglielmi et al., 2012). While the model does not clarify the psychological mechanism underlying the process between demands and burnout (Van den Broeck et al., 2008; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), some occupational psychologists have attempted to explain it using several frameworks, including self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 2000). The most important construct in SDT is basic psychological

needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—which are innate and universal among humans (Ryan & Deci, 2000). SDT argues that basic psychological needs satisfaction enables goal-oriented behaviors, effective performance, and well-being in the workplace by fostering autonomous motivation (Gagne & Deci, 2005). SDT defines the need for autonomy as the sense of volition and self-directedness achieved when one's decisions and emotions are secure. The need for competence is the sense of mastery and creativity acquired when one succeeds at optimally challenging tasks. The need for relatedness is the sense of closeness and acceptance acquired in mutually respectful relationships (Deci et al., 2001; Ryan & Deci, 2000). It is considered less immediately essential for some outcomes than are the other two needs (Van den Broeck et al., 2016). According to SDT, if any one of these three needs is not satisfied, it could cause psychological distress and thwart optimal human development (Deci et al., 2001).

Individuals' experiences with attachment figures, especially with their primary caregivers, play an important role in lifelong psychological needs satisfaction (Bowlby, 1988). Responsive caregivers provide infants with feelings of security from which they can explore the world to meet their full potential; their basic psychological needs may be satisfied during this exploration (Feeney, 2007; La Guardia et al., 2000). The relationship between attachment and basic psychological needs satisfaction continues into adulthood insofar as secure attachments predict adults' basic psychological needs satisfaction and well-being (La Guardia et al., 2000), while insecure attachments predict the frustration of basic psychological needs and psychological distress occurring therefrom (Wei et al., 2005).

Basic psychological needs have been explored extensively in work contexts (see Van den Broeck et al., 2016 for review). Research by Van den Broeck et al. (2008) identified basic psychological needs as predictors of burnout and engagement. As frustration of basic psychological needs likely underlies individuals' maladjustment (Deci & Ryan, 2000), these needs may be a linking mechanism between demands and burnout in the health impairment

process of the JD-R model. Furthermore, with respect to practical interventions for employees with insecure attachments, focusing on their basic psychological needs may be more effective than addressing ostensible behaviors that might stem from psychological dissatisfaction (Wei et al., 2005). Therefore, we propose basic psychological needs as a mediator between insecure attachment and burnout.

The purpose of this study was to determine the role of insecure attachment styles as personal demands in the JD-R model and to determine whether basic psychological needs satisfaction has a mediating role in the health impairment process. Furthermore, we sought to examine the mediating role of satisfaction of each basic psychological need in the relationship between insecure attachment and burnout. The workplace is a context in which different types of individuals interact with each other. Attachment styles—due to their relational focus on perceptions, motivations, and behaviors—may be a strong predictor of work-related outcomes. As such, we hypothesized that attachment insecurity would predict burnout through satisfaction of each of the three basic psychological needs, and we tested the pathway using structural equation modeling (SEM). We made the following specific predictions:

Hypothesis 1a: Attachment anxiety will be positively related to burnout.

Hypothesis 1b: Attachment avoidance will be positively related to burnout.

Hypothesis 2a: Attachment anxiety will be negatively related to autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2b: Attachment avoidance will be negatively related to autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3: Autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs satisfaction will be negatively related to burnout.

Hypothesis 4a: Autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs satisfaction will mediate the relationship between attachment anxiety and burnout.

Hypothesis 4b: Autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs satisfaction will mediate the relationship between attachment avoidance and burnout.

Method

Participants and Procedure

The present research was approved by Catholic University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and conducted in accordance with IRB guidelines. Of the responses from the 360 individuals who participated voluntarily in the survey, we excluded 14 outliers, leaving 346 responses for our analysis. The sample included 159 men (46.0%) and 189 women (54.0%). The average age was 32.60 years (*SD* = 6.13), ranging from 18 to 65 years. All were full-time workers; 82.0% had been working for less than 10 years, and 18.0% had been working longer than 10 years. One hundred ninety-three participants (55.8%) reported being married. Most of the participants (95.4%) had earned a college or university degree.

We used a social network platform exclusive to working adults to recruit participants from February 8, 2020, to March 16, 2020. The recruitment notice page informed participants about the nature and the objective of the research, and they provided informed consent before beginning the survey. The survey consisted of 69 items including 11 demographic questions and it took approximately 10 minutes to complete.

Measurement

Attachment Styles

Attachment styles were assessed with the Korean version of the Experiences in Close Relationships Questionnaire-Revised (ECR-R; Fraley et al., 2010). The measure contains two subscales (anxiety and avoidance), each consisting of 18 items. Items were scored on 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Several items were reverse-coded so that higher scores on each subscale would indicate higher levels of attachment anxiety and avoidance. Sample items include "I find that other people don't want

to get as close as I would like" (anxiety) and "I don't feel comfortable opening up to other people" (avoidance). In Kim (2004)'s validation study with a Korean university student sample, Cronbach's alphas for anxiety and avoidance were .89 and .85, respectively; in this study, these coefficients were .92 and .90, respectively, demonstrating strong evidence of the scale's internal consistency.

Basic Psychological Needs

Basic psychological needs satisfaction was assessed with the Korean version of the Basic Psychological Needs Satisfaction Scale-General Version (BPNS; Deci & Ryan, 2000). The BPNS consists of 18 total items (six items each for autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs). Items were scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Some items were reverse-coded so that the higher scores on each subscale would indicate higher levels of autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs satisfaction, respectively. Sample items include "I feel controlled and oppressed by others" (autonomy), "I consider myself being effective" (competence), and "I get along with others" (relatedness). In Lee and Kim (2008)'s validation study, Cronbach's alphas for autonomy, competence, and relatedness were .70, .75, and .79, respectively; in the current study, these were .82, .85, and .84, respectively, demonstrating strong evidence of the scale's internal consistency.

Burnout

Burnout was assessed with the Korean version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey (MBS-GS; Schaufeli et al., 1996). The MBI-GS consists of 15 total items, with five items assessing exhaustion, four items assessing cynicism, and six items assessing reduced self-efficacy. We measured only exhaustion and cynicism in the present study, following previous researchers' arguments that reduced self-efficacy contributes less to burnout (Lee & Ashforth, 1996; Shirom, 2003). We also considered potential

multicollinearity issues due to reduced self-efficacy's high correlation with the competence subscale of the BPNS ($r > .70$). Items were scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), with higher scores representing greater burnout. Exhaustion refers to the state in which emotional and physical energy are depleted due to work duties (e.g., "I feel emotionally drained from my work"). Cynicism is the process or state of psychological and emotional disengagement from work or work-related people (e.g., "I've become more callous toward people since I took this job"). Cronbach's alphas in Shin (2003)'s validation study were .90 for exhaustion and .81 for cynicism, and in the current study they were .89 for exhaustion and .80 for cynicism, demonstrating strong evidence of these subscales' internal consistency.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

We used SPSS 21 to conduct all preliminary analyses. Table 1 presents descriptive statistics and correlations among the latent and measured variables. For the anxiety and avoidance dimensions of the ECR-R, we created three measured variables using item parceling. To measure latent variables, item parceling creates measured variables by adding or averaging the values of two or more items instead of using all items for measurement (Kishton & Widaman, 1994). By using measured variables generated from item parceling, we can improve the normality and reliability of the data (MacCallum et al.,1999). We generated three parcels each for the anxiety (anxiety1, anxiety2, anxiety3) and avoidance (avoidance1, avoidance2, avoidance3) dimensions by employing Cattel and Burdsal (1975)'s random-parceling approach. To evaluate the normality of the variables' distributions, we followed the criteria suggested by Curran et al. (1996) in which kurtosis values exceeding 2 and skewness values exceeding 7 are considered as violating normality. As no kurtosis or skewness value for any variable exceeded those critical points, the normality assumption was satisfied.

Attachment anxiety was negatively associated with autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs satisfaction (r = -.51, p < .001; r = -.44, p < .001; r = -.47 p < .001) and positively associated with total burnout and the exhaustion and cynicism subscales (r = .50, p < .001; r = .42, p < .001; r = .47, p < .001). Attachment avoidance was negatively related to autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs satisfaction (r = -.36, p < .001; r = -.41, p < .001; r = -.66, p < .001) but positively associated with total burnout, exhaustion, and cynicism (r = .23, p < .001; r = .18, p < .001; r = .25, p < .001). Autonomy, competence and relatedness needs satisfaction all were negatively associated with total burnout, exhaustion, and cynicism (r = -.56, p < .001; r = -.46, p < .001; r = -.30, p < .001).

Measurement Model

To test the simultaneous paths outlined in our hypotheses, we used SEM methods in AMOS 22. Prior to testing the structural model, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis to examine whether the measurement model provided acceptable fit to the data. Model fit was tested using chi-square statistics, CFI, TLI, and RMSEA. TLI and CFI values exceeding .90 indicate good fit (Bentler, 1990). RMSEA values between .08 and .06 indicate moderate fit, while values below .06 indicate good fit (Brown & Cudeck, 1993). The test of the measurement model indicated good model fit, x^2 (31, N = 346) = 65.64 , p < .001 and CFI = .98, TLI = .97, RMSEA = .057. All factor loadings of the measured variables on the latent variables were statistically significant at the .001 level. Table 2 presents the standard and unstandardized factor loadings for the measurement model.

Structural Model

As the measurement model was acceptable, we proceeded to structural model analysis. To obtain more reliable results, we constrained the errors of some variables with high correlations (Figure 1). The test of the structural model indicated good model fit, x^2 (32, N = 346) = 66.67, p < .001 and CFI = .98, TLI = .97, RMSEA = .056.

Table 3 presents the standardized and unstandardized path coefficients of the structural model. The path coefficients from attachment anxiety to autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs satisfaction all were negative and statistically significant (β = -.45, p < .001; β = -.25, p < .001 β = -.13, p < .05; Hypothesis 2a supported). The direct path from attachment anxiety to burnout also was statistically significant (β = .44, p < .001; Hypothesis 1a supported).

Attachment avoidance was negatively related to autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs satisfaction (β = -.19, p < .01; β = -.39, p < .001; β = -.70, p < .001; Hypothesis 2b supported). Particularly, the path coefficient from attachment avoidance to relatedness needs satisfaction was significantly large (β = -.70, p < .001), indicating that people with avoidant attachment style suffer from significant frustration of their relatedness needs. The direct path from attachment avoidance to burnout also was statistically significant (β = -.25, p < .05); however, the path coefficient and the correlation between the two variables had opposite signs, which implies a potential suppressor effect (MacKinnon et al., 2000; Hypothesis 1b rejected). We tested the suppressor effect of attachment avoidance on burnout separately.

Autonomy and competence needs satisfaction predicted burnout significantly (β = -.34, p < .001; β = -.23, p < .001), but relatedness needs satisfaction failed to do so. Thus, Hypothesis 3 was partially supported.

Testing the Indirect Effect

To test the indirect effect of basic psychological needs in the relationship between insecure attachment and burnout, we employed the bootstrapping method suggested by Shrout and Bolger (2002). Bootstrapping evaluates the significance of statistical estimates in a new sample distribution created by repeated random sampling (5,000 samples) from the

original data set (N = 346). The indirect effect is considered statistically significant if the 95% CI does not include zero.

Table 4 presents the bootstrapping analysis results. When there are more than two mediators, AMOS provides only the total mediating effect. Thus, we created phantom variables that did not significantly change model fit or other parameters (Macho & Ledermann, 2011), and we examined these three mediators' respective indirect effects in the relationship between insecure attachment and burnout.

Four pathways were included in the final indirect effect model (relatedness needs satisfaction was not included). In the relationship between attachment anxiety and burnout, there were statistically significant indirect effects of autonomy needs satisfaction (B= .128, 95% CI[.075~.196]) and competence needs satisfaction (B= .047, 95% CI[.017~.097]), indicating that people with high levels of attachment anxiety and avoidance are less likely to have satisfied their autonomy and competence needs, which in turn leads to higher levels of burnout. In the relationship between attachment avoidance and burnout, there were statistically significant indirect effects of autonomy needs satisfaction (B= .071, 95% CI[.025~.123]) and competence needs satisfaction (B= .071, 95% CI[.025~.123]), indicating that people with high levels of attachment avoidance are less likely to have satisfied their autonomy and competence needs, which in turn leads to higher levels of burnout.

Suppressor Effect

The suppressor effect between attachment avoidance and burnout was suggested by the negative relationship (β = -.25, p < .05) in the structural model despite the positive correlation (r = .23, p < .001) between the two variables. When a suppressor effect exists, suppressor variables increase the predictive validity of a predictor by their inclusion in the regression equation path (Tzelgov & Henik, 1991). The suppressor effect reveals a hidden relationship between two variables by removing the error variance of the dependent variable

that is explained by another predictors (Gaylord-Harden et al., 2010). We followed MacKinnon et al. (2000)'s recommendations for examining the suppressor effect. First, we examined the direct effect of attachment avoidance on burnout. Next, we tested the amount of change in the coefficients by successively including other predictors in the model. When attachment avoidance was the only predictor of burnout, the coefficient was positive and statistically significant (β = .35, p < .001). When one to three of the basic psychological needs were included, the coefficient was negative but not statistically significant (β = -.20 ~ -.12). Finally, when attachment anxiety was added along with all basic psychological needs, the coefficient was negative and statistically significant (β = -.25, p < .05). This confirmed the suppressor effect of attachment avoidance on burnout.

Discussion

The present study examined the path between insecure attachment and burnout through basic psychological needs satisfaction to better understand what leads to maladjustment in the workplace. Unlike previous studies, we examined mediating paths through each of the three components of basic psychological needs satisfaction to investigate each insecure attachment style's psychological features. The results revealed that autonomy and competence needs satisfaction mediated the relationships between insecure attachments and burnout, indicating that individuals with higher attachment anxiety or attachment avoidance are less likely to have satisfied basic psychological needs, leading eventually to greater burnout.

The results showed that attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance negatively predicted the three components of basic psychological needs satisfaction. This replicates the findings of previous studies that revealed negative associations between insecure attachment styles and basic psychological needs satisfaction in a Greek university student sample (Kormas et al., 2014), in a British athlete sample (Felton & Jowett, 2013), and in a US

university student sample (Wei et al., 2005). Our similar findings suggest the generalizability of these constructs to different cultures (South Korea) and contexts (work). Active exploration fosters the satisfaction of infants' basic psychological needs (La Guardia et al., 2000); infants who do not receive responsive and sensitive caregiving from their attachment figures are more likely to have difficulty in satisfying their innate psychological needs, as they lack a secure base to rely on for exploration (Feeney & Thrush, 2010). As insecurely attached adults, they devote more attention to fulfilling their unmet attachment needs rather than to healthy exploration, such as work (Hazan & Shaver, 1990); despite this focus on fulfilling attachment needs, they are still less likely to satisfy them.

The negative relationship between attachment avoidance and relatedness needs satisfaction was of considerably large magnitude. This relationship may reflect the attachment-avoidant individual's internal working model characterized by negative appraisal of others and overt self-reliance (Rom & Mikulincer, 2003). Furthermore, this strong tendency not to satisfy relatedness needs may reveal severe psychological damage that surface behaviors intend to conceal insofar as the emotional distancing and surface acting of avoidant attachment result from one's painful effort to adapt in the midst of constant rejection and absence of the primary caregiver (Cassidy, 1994). Though relatedness needs satisfaction might have the least importance in relation to burnout, per the null association observed between the two variables, this finding helps us to understand the hidden psychological mechanism of attachment avoidance as it relates to dysfunctional outcomes.

The indirect effect analysis confirmed the partial mediation effects of autonomy and competence needs satisfaction in the relationship between insecure attachment and burnout. The results revealed the potential threat of attachment style as a personal demand in the health impairment process, as suggested by previous research (Reizer, 2015; Ronen & Mikulincer, 2009). We also found that basic psychological needs may be an underlying

mechanism that promotes burnout. Contrary to our hypothesis, not all three basic psychological needs mediated the relationship between insecure attachment and burnout.

Though we have been unable to find any research that has specifically tested the mediating roles of all three types of basic psychological needs satisfaction in the relationship between dispositional factors and burnout, some previous studies provide clues for interpretating the null association between relatedness needs satisfaction and burnout. Fernet et al. (2013) tested the mediating roles of the three types of basic psychological needs satisfaction in a Canadian sample, where they found that (1) relatedness needs satisfaction predicted cynicism and reduced personal accomplishment, (2) autonomy needs satisfaction predicted exhaustion and cynicism, and (3) competence needs satisfaction predicted reduced personal accomplishment. That relatedness needs satisfaction did not predict exhaustion, which is a core component of burnout, suggests a relatively weak influence of relatedness needs satisfaction on burnout. Further, a study with rugby athletes, which compared a high-burnout group and a low-burnout group on the three types of basic psychological needs satisfaction, found no statistically significant difference in relatedness needs satisfaction but did find significant differences for autonomy and competence needs satisfaction (Hodge et al., 2008). This, too, suggests that relatedness needs satisfaction may not be a key variable influencing burnout. Considering that relatedness is related to the sense of intimacy and bonding with others, simply reinforcing employees' perceptions that they are "getting along" with coworkers might not be sufficient to prevent burnout in the workplace. While replication studies are needed, this result provides insight into each psychological need's relevance to workplace well-being.

We found an unexpected suppressor effect of attachment avoidance on burnout. This unexpected suppressor effect of attachment avoidance should be interpreted in light of the mixed results of previous studies that examined attachment in the workplace. Although much

research has indicated a significant association between attachment avoidance and burnout, the recent study of Vîrgă et al. (2019) revealed a null association between attachment avoidance and burnout while attachment anxiety was significantly associated with burnout. Likewise, Leiter et al. (2015) found that attachment avoidance was related only to reduced personal accomplishment (i.e., the least important burnout dimension) while attachment anxiety predicted all three burnout subscales. It is probable that attachment-avoidant individuals' tendencies to proactively avoid negative emotional experience cause some disengagement from work but not necessarily burnout. Moreover, Wu and Parker (2014) found that high levels of attachment avoidance predicted higher autonomous motivation when leaders provided secure-base support. Thus, attachment avoidance may not always promote burnout and actually may be adaptive under certain conditions.

The complex nature of attachment avoidance in the workplace implied by the suppressor effect may be due to broad psychological variance within the attachment dimension. Bartholomew (1990) suggested two types of avoidant attachment based on the positive (fearful type) or negative (dismissing type) perception of oneself. Individuals with a fearful attachment style, like those with attachment anxiety, desire relationships but fear rejection. They cope with this frustrated need through emotional suppression and distancing, resulting in low self-esteem and loneliness. On the other hand, individuals with a dismissing attachment style, similar to the avoidant attachment group described by Hazan and Shaver (1987), are overtly independent and deny the importance of relationships.

While both fearful and dismissing styles manifest ostensible attitudes—avoiding and dismissing—their inner psychological mechanisms are very different. Perhaps the inconsistent associations between attachment avoidance and burnout shown in previous studies reflect this difference. Although individuals with high scores on the avoidance dimension may share similar social strategies, they may differ in terms of their desires for

relationships, views toward self and others, and psychological vulnerability (Bartholomew, 1990). This study's discovery of a positive association between attachment avoidance and burnout after controlling for basic psychological needs satisfaction and attachment anxiety suggests that some aspects of attachment avoidance unrelated to fulfilling psychological needs might be associated with positive adaptation in the workplace.

The current study contributes to organizational health literature by broadening our understanding of the psychological mechanisms promoting burnout. The results showed that the vulnerability of insecure attachment influences burnout by excessive consumption of the individual's energy, as posited by the JD-R model's health impairment process. It is possible that individuals with higher levels of attachment avoidance and attachment anxiety focus their energy too much on satisfying basic psychological needs, thus not effectively dedicating their resources to working. Also, not satisfying psychological needs may make insecurely attached individuals maintain low levels of motivation, thus accelerating energy depletion. As such, to prevent employee burnout, it is necessary to understand individual's attachment types and their satisfaction of psychological needs. Specifically, interventions to increase autonomy and competence needs satisfaction will be more effective than interventions to increase relatedness needs satisfaction.

This study has several limitations. First, the use of cross-sectional data limit our ability to detect causal relationships among variables. For example, it is uncertain whether unsatisfied basic psychological needs caused insecure attachment styles or vice versa. Future research should utilize longitudinal designs to replicate and generalize this study's findings. Second, although attachment style tends to be a relatively stable personality trait, it may be the case that people demonstrate different attachment patterns depending on the relationship or the context (Baldwin et al., 1996). As we used the general version of an attachment scale applicable to all relationships, we might not have accurately measured people's attachment

styles in workplace relationships. To generalize our findings, it will be necessary to assess the same variables with work-specific measures. Third, the unexpected suppressor effect of attachment avoidance implies the complex nature of attachment avoidance; however, it is unclear what specific aspects of attachment avoidance would cause adaptive outcomes. There may be some functional aspect of those individuals' attachment style unrelated to psychological needs satisfaction. For example, their tendency to avoid stressors might work well in certain work contexts by minimizing additional energy consumption. Future studies could enhance our understanding by assessing variables reflecting potentially functional aspects of attachment avoidance.

This study may provide an empirical foundation for counselors' therapeutic work with employees. In counseling employees with high attachment anxiety and avoidance, they can understand frustrated psychological needs and help to increase clients' autonomous motivation and, in turn, prevent burnout. Further, organizations may prevent employee burnout by providing leaders' support to insecurely attached subordinates, increasing their basic psychological needs satisfaction. In conclusion, these results highlight the importance of attachment style and basic psychological needs satisfaction for employees at risk for burnout in the workplace.

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Table 1. *Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations among 14 Latent and Measured Variables (N=346)*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1.Attachment Anxiety	1													
2. Anxiety1	.94***	1												
3. Anxiety2	.88***	.75***	1											
4. Anxiety3	.78***	.62***	.55***	1										
5.Attachment Avoidance	.39***	.35***	.45***	.19***	1									
6.Avoidance1	.26***	.25***	.30***	.11*	.92***	1								
7.Avoidance2	.43***	.39***	.49***	.23***	.80***	.58***	1							
8.Avoidance3	.36***	.31***	.41***	.20***	.66***	.42***	.49***	1						
9.Autonomy	-.51***	-.43***	-.56***	-.34***	-.36***	-.24***	-.39***	-.37***	1					
10.Competence	-.44***	-.39***	-.47***	-.26***	-.41***	-.29***	-.50***	-.30***	.59***	1				
11.Relatedness	-.47***	-.44***	-.52***	-.23***	-.66***	-.54***	-.67***	-.43***	.36***	.53***	1			
12.Burnout	.50***	.38***	.56***	.38***	.23***	.14**	.24***	.27***	-.56***	-.46***	-.30***	1		
13.Exhaustion	.42***	.31***	.48***	.34***	.18**	.10	.18**	.22***	-.47***	-.34***	-.19***	.92***	1	
14.Cynicism	.47***	.38***	.53***	.34***	.25***	.16**	.27***	.27***	-.53***	-.49***	-.36***	.85***	.58***	1
M	2.99	2.68	2.83	3.87	3.60	3.76	3.48	3.25	3.72	3.68	3.91	2.67	2.92	2.35
SD	0.99	1.12	1.05	1.22	0.90	1.05	1.00	1.32	0.75	0.67	0.62	0.86	0.99	0.94
Kurtosis	-0.28	-0.19	-0.21	-0.56	-0.21	-0.26	-0.04	-0.70	-0.30	0.41	0.09	-0.50	-0.73	-0.44
Skewness	0.36	0.60	0.46	-0.14	0.04	0.06	0.34	0.24	-0.51	-0.28	-0.32	0.16	0.01	0.47

Note. $^{*}p< .05$, $^{**}p< .01$, $^{***}p< .001$; Anxiety 1, 2, 3 = Item parceled form anxiety dimension from Experiences of Close Relationship Scale; Avoidance 1, 2, 3 = Item parceled form avoidance dimension from Experiences of Close Relationship Scale

Table 2. *Factor Loadings for the Measurement Model (N=346)*

Measure and Variable		*B*	SE	C.R	*β*
Attachment Anxiety	→ Anxiety 1	1.00			.76
	→ Anxiety 2	.92	.06	15.48***	.99
	→ Anxiety 3	.39	.03	12.78***	.55
Attachment Avoidance	→ Avoidance 1	1.00			.66
	→ Avoidance 2	.62	.05	12.58***	.87
	→ Avoidance 3	.33	.03	9.46***	.58
Burnout	→ Exhaustion	1.00			.71
	→ Cynicism	1.10	.09	11.63***	.82

Note. ***p< .001; *B* = Unstandardized factor loading, SE = Standard Error, C.R = Critical Ratio, *β* = Standardized factor loading

Table 3. *Path Estimates of Latent Variables (N=346)*

Path of Latent Variables		*B*	SE	C.R	*β*
Attachment Anxiety	→ Autonomy	-.05	.01	-7.53***	-.45
	→ Competence	-.03	.01	-4.28***	-.25
	→ Relatedness	-.01	.00	-2.55*	-.13
	→ Burnout	.05	.01	6.03***	.44
Attachment Avoidance	→ Autonomy	-.03	.01	-2.99**	-.19
	→ Competence	-.06	.01	-5.87***	-.39
	→ Relatedness	-.10	.01	-10.79***	-.70
	→ Burnout	-.04	.02	-2.43*	-.25
Autonomy	→ Burnout	-.32	.06	-5.05***	-.34
Competence	→ Burnout	-.24	.07	-3.43***	-.23
Relatedness	→ Burnout	-.12	.10	-1.23	-.11

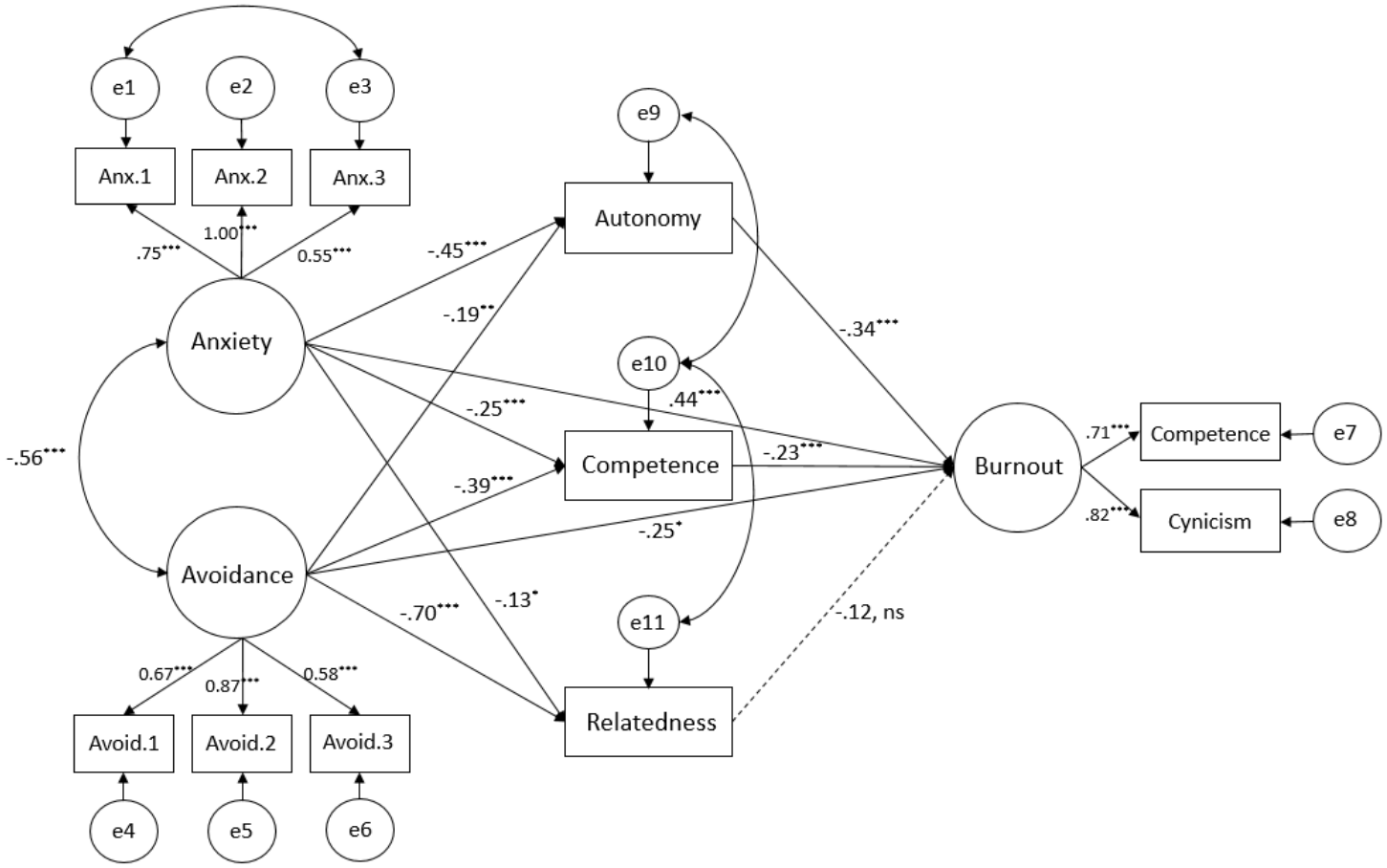
Note. *p< .05, **p< .01, ***p<.001; B = Unstandardized factor loading; β = Standardized factor loading

Table 4. *Bootstrap Analyses of the Magnitude and Statistical Significance of Indirect Effects (N=346)*

Independent variable	Mediator variable	Dependent variable	*B*	SE	95% Bias - Corrected CI	
					Lower	Upper
Attachment Anxiety	→ Autonomy	→ Burnout	.128**	.030	.075	.196
	→ Competence	→ Burnout	.047**	.019	.017	.097
Attachment Avoidance	→ Autonomy	→ Burnout	.052*	.026	.013	.119
	→ Competence	→ Burnout	.071**	.025	.025	.123

*p<.05. **p<.01; *B*=Unstandardized indirect effect, SE=Standard Error, CI=Confidence Interval

Figure 1. The structural model.



N=346, $^{*}p<.05$. $^{**}p<.01$. $^{***}p<.001$