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## Enhancing Psychological Well-Being: Examining the Influence of Attachment Styles, Mediated by Post-conventional Religious Reasoning

### Abstract

This study investigates the intricate relationship between attachment styles, post-conventional religious reasoning, and psychological well-being. With a sample of 650 participants, established measurement tools such as the Psychological Well-Being Scale, the Adult Attachment Styles Scale, the God Attachment Styles Scale and the Modified Belief Scale are used. Utilizing Smart PLS 4.0.4.9 for analysis, the partial least squares (PLS) algorithm with bootstrapping was employed due to its suitability for complex models and small sample sizes. Through Sobel tests, the mediating role of post-conventional religious reasoning is explored. Results reveal significant positive associations between Attachment Styles in Adults and both Post-conventional Religious Reasoning and Psychological Well-being. Similarly, Attachment Styles to God exhibit significant positive relationships with Psychological Well-being and post-conventional religious reasoning. Furthermore, post-conventional religious reasoning demonstrates a significant positive relationship with Psychological Well-being. The findings indicate that it mediates the relationship between Attachment Styles in Adults and Psychological Well-being, as well as between Attachment Styles to God and Psychological Well-being. This study contributes to the understanding of how attachment styles and religious reasoning influence psychological well-being. The findings underscore the importance of considering both attachment to significant others and attachment to a higher power in understanding individuals' well-being. By highlighting the mediating role of post-conventional religious reasoning, this research sheds light on the mechanisms through which these factors interact to influence psychological well-being.

**Keywords:** Psychological well-being, Attachment styles, Post-conventional religious reasoning.

## Psikolojik İyi Oluşun Artırılması: Gelenek Sonrası Dinî Muhakeme Aracılığıyla Bağlanma Stillerinin Etkisinin İncelenmesi

### Öz

Bu çalışmada bağlanma stilleri, gelenek sonrası dini muhakeme ve psikolojik iyi oluş arasındaki karmaşık ilişki incelenmektedir. 650 katılımcıdan oluşan bir örnekleme Psikolojik İyi Oluş Ölçeği, Yetişkinlerde Bağlanma Stilleri Ölçeği, Tanrı'ya Bağlanma Stilleri Ölçeği ve Değiştirilmiş İnanç Ölçeği gibi yerleşik ölçüm araçları kullanılmaktadır. Analiz için Smart PLS 4.0.4.9' programı kullanılmıştır. Karmaşık modellere ve küçük örnek boyutlarına uygunluğu nedeniyle önyüklemeli kısmi en küçük kareler (PLS) algoritmasıyla projekte edilmiştir. Ayrıca Sobel testleri aracılığıyla gelenek sonrası dinî muhakemenin aracılık rolü incelenmiştir. Sonuçlar, yetişkinlerde bağlanma stilleri ile gelenek sonrası dinî muhakeme ve psikolojik iyi oluş arasında önemli pozitif ilişkinin olduğunu ortaya konulmuştur. Benzer şekilde Tanrı'ya bağlanma stilleri, psikolojik iyi oluş ve gelenek sonrası dinî muhakeme ile anlamlı pozitif ilişkilerin olduğu görülmektedir. Dahası gelenek sonrası dinî muhakemenin psikolojik iyi oluş ile anlamlı ve olumlu bir ilişkisi olduğu kanıtlanmıştır.

Bulgular; yetişkinlerde bağlanma stilleri ile psikolojik iyi oluş arasındaki ilişki, Tanrı'ya bağlanma stilleri ile psikolojik iyi oluş arasındaki ilişkiye aracılık ettiğini göstermektedir. Bu çalışmada bağlanma stillerinin ve dinî muhakemenin psikolojik iyi oluşu nasıl etkilediğinin anlaşılmasına ve aracılık rolünü ortaya koymasında katkıda bulunmaktadır. Bulgularda bireylerin rehabilite durumunu anlamada hem başkalarına bağlanmanın hem de daha yüksek bir güce bağlanmanın dikkate alınmasının önemi vurgulanmaktadır. Gelenek sonrası dinî muhakemenin aracılık rolünü vurgulayan bu araştırma; bu faktörlerin psikolojik iyi oluşunu etkilemekte, etkileşime girdiği mekanizmalara ışık tutmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Psikolojik iyi oluş, Bağlanma stilleri, Gelenek sonrası dini muhakeme.

## Introduction

Mental health is a state of well-being that encompasses the ability to realize one's potential, cope with life's stresses, work productively, and contribute positively to society. Health, as defined by the World Health Organization, is a holistic state of physical, mental, and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (Galderisi et al., 2015). Among the most significant indicators of health is the sense of well-being it provides. Given the advances in medicine, technology, and economic resources, one of the greatest scientific challenges now lies in understanding and improving psychological well-being, which is composed of various psychosocial variables (Granero-Jiménez et al., 2022).

Attachment is a key indicator of psychological well-being (Sagone et al., 2023). While attachment styles influence adults' intimate relationships, they also significantly impact an individual's health, mental well-being, interest, and vitality (Platts et al., 2023). Rowatt and Kirkpatrick (2002) found that attachment to God is associated with higher life satisfaction and lower levels of anxiety and negative affect (Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002). The notion of becoming divine or connecting deeply with a higher power through attachment is present in many religious traditions, where such attachment fosters feelings of safety, comfort, and trust akin to those found in human relationships.

In Iran, research by Nemati and Mehdipour Maralani (2016) indicates a positive correlation between mental health and secure attachment to God, and a negative correlation with anxious attachment. Additionally, Nazemi (2017) reports that increased attachment to God correlates with a decrease in mental health issues such as physical symptoms, anxiety, insomnia, social dysfunction, and depression. Despite these findings, there remains a significant gap in the literature regarding the intersection of religiosity, relationships with God, and mental health.

One construct that explores advanced spiritual development is post-conventional religious reasoning, which involves the critical assessment of religious concepts and emphasizes independence over reliance on authority (Bauer, 2011). This aspect of spiritual growth has been linked to improved mental health, higher IQ, and lower levels of hostility and anxiety (Harris & Leak, 2013). While much research has explored the relationship between religiosity and well-being, some studies suggest a negative relationship between religiosity and depression (Njoku, 2020; Taheri-Kharameh et al., 2016), while others find a positive relationship between religiosity and mental health (Lucchetti et al., 2021; Moreira-Almeida et al., 2006).

Despite substantial research on the connections between attachment and well-being, and between attachment to God and well-being, the specific role of post-conventional religious reasoning—particularly within the framework of James Fowler's theory—remains understudied in Iran. The relationship between this variable and well-being is still ambiguous. Given the hypothesized predictive role of attachment to God on post-conventional religious reasoning, it is plausible that this reasoning may mediate the relationship between attachment and psychological well-being. However, there is a significant gap in the literature regarding the effects of these variables within the Iranian context. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the relationship between adult attachment styles, attachment to God, and psychological well-being, with post-conventional religious reasoning serving as a potential mediator. By examining whether attachment to God predicts post-conventional religious reasoning and exploring the mediation effect on psychological well-being, this research seeks to fill the existing gap and contribute to a deeper understanding of the intricate interplay between attachment, religious reasoning, and psychological well-being.

## Method

### Measurement tools

**Psychological well-being scale:** This study examines six dimensions of psychological well-being, including "self-acceptance," "pleasant relationships with others," "autonomy or independence," "mastery over the environment," "purposeful life," and "personal growth," using the 18-item version of Riff's psychological well-being questionnaire (Bradshaw et al., 2010).

**Adult attachment styles scale:** In this study, "adult attachment styles" refer to the results of the 15-item Adult Attachment Scale (AAI). This measure was developed using the attachment test materials of Hazan and Shaver (1990) and was validated in Iranian general population and student samples (Besharat, 2011). The test consists of 15 questions that assess three different attachment styles: ambivalent, secure, and avoidant. The questions are rated on a 5-point Likert scale (very low = 1, low = 2, medium = 3, high = 4, very high = 5).

**Attachment Styles to God Scale:** The score that an individual receives on the multidimensional attachment to God scale is what defines their styles of attachment to God (Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002). All nine items on this scale rate a brief explanation of the relationship between an individual's attachment to God and themselves. A Likert scale, ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree), is used by the respondent to indicate how much each item agrees with their current state and experiences in relation to God. Three subscales—avoidance, anxiety, and safety—are included in this survey. The subscales by Rowatt and Kirkpatrick (2002) have reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.92, 0.80, and 0.85, respectively.

**Post-conventional religious reasoning:** The results of the 16-item Harris and Leak (2013) Modified Faith Scale are used to determine a person's post-conventional religious reasoning score. This 16-item measure, known as the Revised Faith Transformation Scale, is centered on post-conventional religious reasoning. This scale has an alpha coefficient of 0.78 (Harris & Leak, 2013).

### Statistical Analysis

We collected data from a sample of 650 participants using a survey questionnaire. In this study, we used SmartPLS 4.0.4.9 to analyze the relationships among latent variables. Each latent variable was measured by multiple indicators. We selected SmartPLS because it is a robust and flexible SEM software that is well-suited for complex models and small sample sizes. We used the partial least squares (PLS) algorithm to estimate the parameters of our model. PLS is a component-based approach that is particularly useful for modeling complex relationships and small sample sizes. We used bootstrapping with 1000 resamples to estimate the standard errors and construct the confidence intervals of the parameter estimates. An essential metric for assessing the model's overall fit is the goodness of fit index (GOF). A higher number on the GOF index denotes a better fit between the model and the observed data. The index evaluates how well the model matches the data. According to the findings, our model's GOF index was 0.567, indicating a decent match. Furthermore, our model's standardized root means square residual (SRMR) was 0.028, falling inside the permitted range. These outcomes offer more proof of the accuracy and dependability of our structural models and measuring methods. All things considered, the GOF index and SRMR show that our model matches the observed data rather well, corroborating the validity and applicability of our conclusions.

### Result

The 650 participants' demographic data is displayed in Table 1. According to the survey results, 40% of participants are women and 60% of respondents are men. Sixty-one percent of the

participants in the study are single. The majority of these individuals (40.5%) are between the ages of 37 and 46, and (44.3%) hold a master's degree.

### Ethics Committee Approval

It was reviewed and approved by the Gümüşhane University Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee in the meeting dated 27/03/2024 and numbered 2024/3.

**Table 1**

*Demographic Information of Respondents*

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Man	390	60.00
Female	260	40.00
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	400	61.50
Married	250	38.50
<b>Age</b>		
Between 26 and 36 years	18	2.80
Between 37 and 46 years	263	40.50
Between 47 and 56 years	234	36.00
More than 57 years	135	20.80
<b>Education</b>		
Bachelor's degree	193	29.70
Master's degree	288	44.30
PHD	169	26.00

### Construct Reliability and Validity

Construct reliability and validity results are presented in Table 3. We computed the composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) for each construct to evaluate its reliability; the results showed a high degree of internal consistency and reliability for the measures employed in our study, with CR values ranging from 0.948 to 0.970 and  $\alpha$  values from 0.942 to 0.965. Factor loadings show the degree of relationship between each item and its corresponding construct; we computed the factor loadings for each item in our study and evaluated their significance using the t-value.

All factor loadings were significant at  $p < 0.05$ , according to the results, demonstrating a strong correlation between the items and the corresponding constructs. The AVE shows how much of each construct's variance can be accounted for by its indicators. We determined each construct's AVE and evaluated its values. The findings demonstrated that the measures' convergent validity was sufficient, as evidenced by the AVE values' range of 0.504 to 0.782, which was higher than the suggested cutoff of 0.5. These findings imply that our constructs are measuring the relevant underlying variables with accuracy and offer additional evidence for the validity and reliability of our measures.

**Table 2**

*Construct Reliability and Validity*

Main Constructs	Items	Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	CR <sup>1</sup>	AVE <sup>2</sup>
<b>Attachment Styles in Adult</b>	Q1	0.865	0.950	0.956	0.590
	Q2	0.725			
	Q3	0.793			
	Q4	0.748			
	Q5	0.780			
	Q6	0.736			
	Q7	0.789			
	Q8	0.728			
	Q9	0.728			
	Q10	0.748			
	Q11	0.783			
	Q12	0.761			
	Q13	0.797			
	Q14	0.759			
	Q15	0.766			
<b>Psychological Well-being</b>	Q16	0.650	0.942	0.948	0.504
	Q17	0.739			
	Q18	0.719			
	Q19	0.718			
	Q20	0.658			
	Q21	0.733			
	Q22	0.712			
	Q23	0.739			
	Q24	0.745			
	Q25	0.717			
	Q26	0.683			
	Q27	0.741			
	Q28	0.707			
	Q29	0.707			
	Q30	0.677			
	Q31	0.709			
	Q32	0.726			
	Q33	0.688			

<sup>1</sup> Composite Reliability

<sup>2</sup> Average Variance Extracted

	Q34	0.886			
	Q35	0.889			
	Q36	0.897			
	Q37	0.869			
<b>Attachment Styles to God</b>	Q38	0.897	0.965	0.970	0.782
	Q39	0.882			
	Q40	0.890			
	Q41	0.871			
	Q42	0.876			
	Q43	0.740			
	Q44	0.736			
	Q45	0.753			
	Q46	0.722			
	Q47	0.748			
	Q48	0.758			
	Q49	0.799			
<b>Post conventional religious reasoning</b>	Q50	0.743	0.945	0.951	0.548
	Q51	0.724			
	Q52	0.719			
	Q53	0.758			
	Q54	0.715			
	Q55	0.751			
	Q56	0.747			
	Q57	0.735			
	Q58	0.692			

### *Discriminant Validity*

Utilizing Fornell and Larcker's criterion is a popular technique to evaluate discriminant validity. This criterion contrasts the correlations between each construct and the other constructs in the study with the square root of the AVE for each construct. Discriminant validity is supported if a construct's square root of the AVE is greater than its correlations with other constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Table 4 demonstrates that the reflective constructs' square root of AVE is greater than the correlation between the corresponding latent variables. Consequently, the discriminant validity of the constructs is met.

**Table 3**

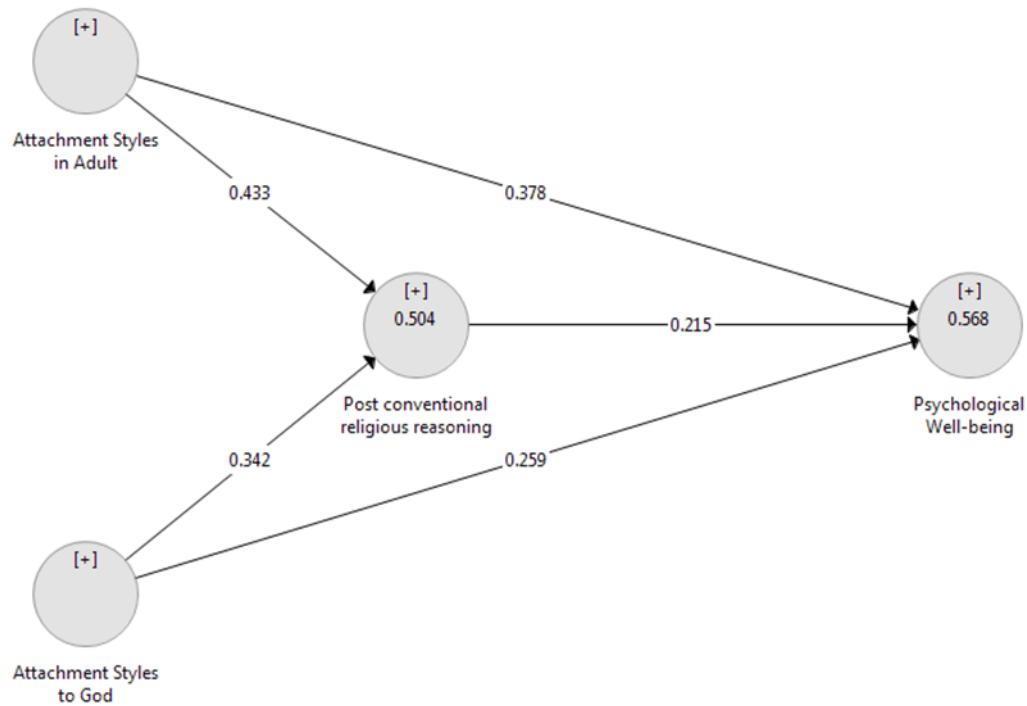
### *Discriminant Validity*

		1	2	3	4
Attachment Styles in Adult	(1)	<b>0.768</b>			
Attachment Styles to God	(2)	0.674	<b>0.884</b>		
Post conventional religious reasoning	(3)	0.663	0.634	<b>0.740</b>	
Psychological Well-being	(4)	0.696	0.651	0.630	<b>0.710</b>

**The Structural Model's Testing** Figure 1 and Table 5 show the structural model's outcome. The path coefficients ( $\beta$ ) and their significance values are displayed in Table 5.

**Figure 1**

*Graphical Representation of the Path Coefficient*



**Table 4**

*Path Coefficients (Bootstrapping results with 1000 resampling)*

	$\beta$	<i>SD</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>P Values</i>
Attachment Styles in Adult -> Post conventional religious reasoning	0.433	0.045	9.566	p<0.001
Attachment Styles in Adult -> Psychological Well-being	0.378	0.052	7.308	p<0.001
Attachment Styles to God -> Post conventional religious reasoning	0.342	0.047	7.342	p<0.001
Attachment Styles to God -> Psychological Well-being	0.259	0.052	4.942	p<0.001
Post conventional religious reasoning -> Psychological Well-being	0.215	0.055	3.945	p<0.001

Our results indicated Attachment Styles in Adult with Post conventional religious reasoning ( $\beta=0.433$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), and Psychological Well-being ( $\beta=0.378$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) had a significant positive relationship. Attachment Styles to God with Psychological Well-being ( $\beta=0.259$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and post-conventional religious reasoning ( $\beta=0.342$ ,  $p=0.009$ ) had a significant positive relationship. Post conventional religious reasoning had a significant positive relationship with Psychological Well-being ( $\beta=0.215$ ,  $p<0.001$ ).

Using the Sobel test, the mediating role of Post conventional religious reasoning in relation to Attachment Styles in Adult and Attachment Styles to God with Psychological Well-being was investigated, the results of which are shown in the table below.

**Table 5**

*Path Coefficients (Bootstrapping results with 1000 resampling)*

	$\beta$	SD	T	P
Attachment Styles in Adult -> Post conventional religious reasoning -> Psychological Well-being	0.093	0.026	3.531	0.009
Attachment Styles to God -> Post conventional religious reasoning -> Psychological Well-being	0.074	0.021	3.543	p<0.001

The results show that Post conventional religious reasoning plays a mediating role in the relationship between Attachment Styles in Adult and Psychological Well-being, and it also plays a mediating role in the relationship between Attachment Styles to God and Psychological Well-being.

### Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the intricate interplay between attachment styles, post-conventional religious reasoning, and psychological well-being among adults. The investigation into these constructs' sheds light on the nuanced mechanisms through which individuals navigate their relationships, both with significant others and with their religious beliefs, ultimately influencing their psychological well-being.

The study findings indicate a noteworthy correlation between adults' attachment styles and psychological well-being. This finding is consistent with earlier research that has demonstrated the critical role that secure attachment plays in promoting emotional resilience and general well-being (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2010). This shows that people with secure attachment styles—which are defined by closeness, trust, and comfort—have a higher chance of experiencing psychological well-being.

In Marrero-Quevedo et al. (2019) research, Positive correlations were found between secure attachment and psychological well-being dimensions, while avoidant and anxious attachment were negatively associated with psychological well-being.

Furthermore, the relationship that has been found between attachment styles to God and psychological well-being is positive, highlighting the significance of spiritual ties in influencing the psychological well-being of outcomes. This result is consistent with research highlighting the positive impacts of religious practices and beliefs on psychological functioning, including stress management, meaning-finding, and social support (Koenig et al., 2012).

A sophisticated and nuanced understanding of religious beliefs is crucial for fostering mental flourishing, as evidenced by the correlation found between psychological well-being and post-conventional religious reasoning. In order to arrive at a more abstract and introspective understanding of spirituality, post-conventional religious reasoning entails transcending conventional religious beliefs (Fowler, 1982). According to Bradshaw et al. (2010), there is an inverse relationship between distress and a stable attachment to God. This implies that there is a greater likelihood of improved psychological well-being among those who critically and in-depth reflect on their religious beliefs.

The results of the Sobel test reveal the mediating role of post-conventional religious reasoning in the relationship between attachment styles and psychological well-being. Specifically, post-conventional religious reasoning acts as a mediator between both attachment styles in adults and attachment styles to God with psychological well-being. This implies that the influence of



attachment styles on psychological well-being is partially explained by individuals' level of post-conventional religious reasoning.

These findings have significant implications for interventions aimed at enhancing psychological well-being. Interventions targeting attachment styles could incorporate elements focused on promoting secure attachment patterns, fostering emotional regulation skills, and facilitating healthier interpersonal relationships. Additionally, interventions that encourage individuals to engage in reflective practices regarding their religious beliefs may help cultivate a more profound understanding of spirituality, leading to improved psychological well-being.

However, it is essential to acknowledge several limitations of this study. Firstly, the cross-sectional nature of the data limits our ability to establish causal relationships between the variables. Longitudinal studies are needed to elucidate the temporal dynamics and causal pathways underlying the observed associations. Secondly, the sample primarily consisted of a specific demographic, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings to broader populations. Future research should strive to include more diverse samples to ensure the robustness and applicability of the results across various cultural and demographic contexts.

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the complex interplay between attachment styles, post-conventional religious reasoning, and psychological well-being among adults. By elucidating the mediating role of post-conventional religious reasoning, this research contributes to our understanding of the mechanisms through which attachment patterns and religious beliefs influence individuals' mental health outcomes.

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