

## Emotion Regulation as a Mediator of the Relationship between Attachment and Subjective Well-Being in Youth<sup>1\*</sup>

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### Abstract

This study examined the direct effects of attachment dimensions (anxiety and avoidance) on subjective well-being (life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect), and investigated the mediating roles of emotion regulation strategies (reappraisal and suppression), among young adults. It was hypothesized that attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance, and suppression would have negative effects on subjective well-being, while reappraisal would have a positive effect. Attachment avoidance was expected to be in a negative correlation with reappraisal but in a positive correlation with suppression, whereas attachment anxiety was hypothesized to be in a negative correlation with reappraisal. Additionally, reappraisal was proposed to mediate the relationships between attachment and well-being. The sample consisted of 204 young adults (56.9% female; mean age = 21.17), with data collected over one month through in-home and online assessments. Measures included the Experiences in Close Relationships (ECR-RD12), Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ), Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), and Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS). Results indicated that attachment anxiety was associated with lower life satisfaction and positive affect as well as higher negative affect. Reappraisal mediated the effects of attachment anxiety on well-being, partially for life satisfaction and fully for positive affect. Attachment avoidance negatively predicted life satisfaction but showed no significant relationships with emotion regulation or affect. Suppression had weak, nonsignificant effects. The results highlight reappraisal as a significant mechanism connecting attachment anxiety to subjective well-being, indicating that cognitive-based emotion regulation interventions could be particularly beneficial for those with high attachment anxiety.

*Keywords:* attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance, subjective well-being, emotion regulation

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## **Emotion Regulation as a Mediator of the Relationship between Attachment and Subjective Well-Being in Youth**

Young adulthood, typically spanning the late teens through the twenties, is a critical period of development characterized by substantial personal growth and transformation. During this period, individuals often engage in education and training that lay the foundation for their future careers, explore options in relationships, work, and personal values, and make significant life decisions with lasting consequences (Arnett, 2000). Understanding the key features of healthy psychosocial development is a central focus within human development research and is particularly important during the transition to adulthood. Personal and academic factors, such as emotional self-regulation and academic competence, are believed to significantly contribute to positive adaptation during this period. Although theorists and researchers offer varying definitions of positive development, it is generally understood to encompass functional aspects of human behavior, such as personal strengths or assets, as well as successful developmental outcomes, such as stable employment (O'Connor et al., 2011).

Park (2004) suggests that subjective well-being (SWB) plays a crucial role in healthy psychosocial development, especially during the transition to adulthood. It contributes to better mental health, supports adaptive functioning, and helps protect individuals by reducing the harmful effects of stress and negative life events, thereby lowering the risk of developing psychological disorders. Consequently, fostering and understanding subjective well-being could be the key to promoting mental health and supporting positive developmental outcomes during this crucial life stage.

Subjective well-being (SWB), as defined by Diener et al. (2009), refers to the personal experience of feeling and thinking that one's life is desirable, independent of others' views. This definition emphasizes two core dimensions of SWB: feeling, or the emotional/affective dimension, and thinking, or the evaluative/cognitive dimension (Das et al., 2020). Life satisfaction is a cognitive evaluation of one's entire life and forms the cognitive component of subjective well-being (Andrews & Withey, 1976; Pavot & Diener, 2008). Positive and negative emotions form the affective components of subjective well-being (Diener et al., 1999; Lucas et al., 1996). Although positive affect (PA), negative affect (NA), and life satisfaction (LS) represent three distinct dimensions of subjective well-being (SWB), numerous studies tend to emphasize a single aspect of subjective well-being (most commonly life satisfaction) resulting in a limited understanding of how the cognitive and affective components interrelate (Diener et al., 2003; Pavot & Diener, 2004).

High levels of subjective well-being are typically associated with experiencing life satisfaction, frequent positive emotions (such as joy and optimism), and infrequent negative emotions (such as sadness and anger). In contrast, low levels of SWB are characterized by dissatisfaction with life, a lack of positive emotions, and frequent negative emotions, like anger or anxiety (Diener et al., 1997; Lopez et al., 2018).

However, it is important to understand that subjective well-being is not synonymous with mental or psychological health and that the absence of mental illness does not necessarily mean a person has high levels of SWB. Hypothetically, a person could report high levels of SWB even while experiencing significant psychological issues or low levels despite having few or no symptoms of psychopathology (Greenspoon & Saklofske, 2001).

Moreover, some individuals maintain high levels of subjective well-being despite facing difficult life circumstances, while others report low levels even though they enjoy various advantages, for instance wealth or good health. Research on SWB indicates that it is only partially influenced by external conditions. Instead, certain personality traits or a resilient disposition may play a vital role in sustaining well-being in the face of adversity. One such contributing factor could be adult attachment, which has been linked to this form of resilience (Wei et al., 2011).

### **Attachment Dimensions: Anxiety and Avoidance**

Adult attachment is characterized by two main dimensions: attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance (Mikulincer et al., 2003). Attachment theory posits that humans are biologically predisposed to form bonds with their primary caregivers to seek proximity and enhance survival chances (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2012; Mikulincer et al., 2003). The quality of care provided by the primary caregiver (specifically their ability to meet the infant's needs and offer a secure base) influences the development of an internal working model of attachment. This model encompasses expectations regarding the caregiver's behavior and beliefs about the self. Responsive and sensitive caregivers foster secure attachment and positive self-views, while unresponsive care leads to insecure attachment and negative self-perceptions (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2012). These internal working models, formed early in life, play a crucial role throughout the lifespan by shaping how individuals form and maintain interpersonal relationships. Individuals who score low on both attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance are considered more securely attached. In contrast, people who score high in attachment anxiety tend to crave close relationships but simultaneously feel concerned about intimacy and fear rejection from others. Conversely, those with higher attachment avoidance typically prefer less closeness and emphasize self-reliance and independence due to a lack of trust in others (Chen et al., 2017; Karreman & Vingerhoets, 2012).

Multiple studies (e.g., Karreman & Vingerhoets, 2012; Lavy & Littman-Ovadia, 2011; Wei et al., 2011) suggest that early-formed attachment styles play a key role in shaping individual differences in subjective well-being by affecting emotional perception and regulation, which in turn affect overall life satisfaction. Secure attachment is generally associated with higher levels of subjective well-being, including higher life satisfaction and positive affect, as well as lower negative affect (Galinha et al., 2014; Yang et al., 2008). Alternatively, insecure attachment, including both anxious and avoidant dimension, is associated with lower levels of subjective well-being (Wei et al., 2011; Zhang et al., 2016).

Simpsons and Rholes (2017) differentiate between avoidant and anxious attachment by examining how individuals regulate closeness and emotions in relationships. Avoidant individuals prioritize independence and often see emotional intimacy as either unachievable or undesirable. To maintain distance, they suppress emotions and prioritize independence. Anxious individuals, however, cope with distress by amplifying their emotional responses, which keeps their attachment systems highly activated, often leading to less stable and less satisfying relationships. Specifically, people with higher attachment anxiety are less likely to use cognitive reappraisal, which is a technique that helps reinterpret situations more positively or less threateningly, whereas those with higher attachment avoidance commonly use emotional suppression to maintain emotional distance (Mikulincer et al., 2003).

## **Emotion Regulation Strategies: Reappraisal and Suppression**

Emotion regulation is recognized as a fundamental capacity that significantly influences the trajectory of development, contributing to either adaptive or maladaptive outcomes (Eisenberg et al., 2010). Young adults often exhibit difficulty regulating emotions such as anger and fear and demonstrate fewer effective strategies for regulating these emotions compared to middle-aged adults (Zimmerman & Iwanski, 2014).

Over the past decade, research has emphasized the significance of two key emotion regulation strategies: reappraisal and suppression (Gross, 2015). Reappraisal is viewed as an adaptive strategy and involves reinterpreting a negative emotional event in a way that makes it seem less distressing (Lieberman, 2007). Reappraisal is considered an antecedent-focused strategy, as it seeks to lessen emotional distress by modifying the interpretation or significance of emotion-eliciting stimuli. In contrast, suppression is viewed as a maladaptive, response-focused strategy, involving the inhibition of emotional expression after the emotional response has already been activated (Gross & John, 2003).

Extensive research has shown that attachment significantly influences how individuals regulate emotions. Attachment avoidance has been positively associated with suppression (Brenning & Braet, 2013; Karreman & Vingerhoets, 2012; Read et al., 2018; Troyer & Greitemeyer, 2018) and negatively associated with reappraisal (Karreman & Vingerhoets, 2012; Read et al., 2018). Contrarily, attachment anxiety has been negatively associated with reappraisal (Karreman & Vingerhoets, 2012; Read et al., 2018), while evidence suggests no significant relationship between attachment anxiety and suppression (Brenning & Braet, 2013).

Moreover, multiple studies have highlighted the importance of emotion regulation in contributing to subjective well-being (SWB); higher levels of subjective well-being are associated with higher levels of reappraisal and lower levels of suppression (Brewer et al., 2016; Gross & John, 2003; Haga et al., 2009). Research consistently highlights the critical role of emotion regulation in promoting subjective well-being, with many studies investigating its mediating effect when it comes to

various potential predictors of well-being (Ericson et al., 2024; Mandal et al., 2022; Sha et al., 2022).

## The Present Study

Research (e.g., Brewer et al., 2016; Gross & John, 2003; Haga et al., 2009; Wei et al., 2011) has shown that attachment and emotion regulation have a significant effect on individuals' subjective well-being. While it is evident that these factors play an important role, the processes by which they operate are not fully understood. This study aims to explore the role of emotion regulation as a mediator in the relationship between attachment and subjective well-being among young individuals.

Previous studies (e.g., Karreman & Vingerhoets, 2012; Monaco et al., 2021; O'Connell's, 2021; Peng et al., 2023; Wei et al., 2011) have investigated how emotion regulation mediates the relationship between attachment and subjective well-being. For instance, Peng et al. (2023) observed that although higher attachment anxiety and avoidance were linked to lower subjective well-being, decreased use of reappraisal partly explained this connection, whereas suppression showed no mediating effect. Karreman and Vingerhoets (2012) found that cognitive reappraisal mediated the effect of attachment on well-being, while suppression did not act as a mediator.

Understanding the relationships between attachment emotion regulation, and subjective well-being in young people can be important for psychological interventions and contribute to the development of targeted strategies that help youth better understand and manage their emotional experiences, improve the quality of their interpersonal relationships, and enhance their overall subjective well-being. Therefore, the objective of this study is to examine the direct effect of attachment on subjective well-being—specifically life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect—as well as to explore the role of emotion regulation as a mediator in the relationship between attachment and subjective well-being. Based on the literature reviewed above, it is hypothesized that attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance, and suppression will have a negative effect on subjective well-being, whereas reappraisal will have a positive effect. Attachment avoidance is expected to have a negative effect on reappraisal, while having a positive effect on suppression. Attachment anxiety is hypothesized to have a negative effect on reappraisal. Furthermore, reappraisal is expected to mediate the relationship between attachment and subjective well-being.

## Method

### Sample and Procedure

The sample consisted of 204 participants, of whom 116 (56.9%) were female and 88 (43.1%) were male. The average age was 21.17 years (range 18–25,  $SD = 1.97$ ). Data collection took place in May 2025 in the southeastern region of Serbia,

specifically in the cities of Niš, Leskovac, and Vranje. The data collection process lasted approximately one month. Testing was conducted either in participants' homes or via an online form. Participation was voluntary, and no compensation was provided. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their involvement. The study was conducted anonymously, with the completion of the test battery requiring approximately 30 minutes.

## Measures

**Experiences in Close Relationships (ECR-R; Fraley et al., 2000; for Serbian adaptation see Hanak & Dimitrijević, 2013).** This is a 36-item, two-dimensional questionnaire assessing attachment. Participants responded on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 - *strongly disagree* to 7 - *strongly agree*. The instrument measures two dimensions: *Attachment Anxiety* and *Attachment Avoidance*. *Attachment Anxiety* comprises 18 items (e.g., "I'm afraid that I will lose my partner's love"), while *Attachment Avoidance* also includes 18 items (e.g., "I prefer not to be too close to romantic partners"). In the current sample, the questionnaire demonstrated good psychometric properties, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .80 for *Attachment Anxiety* and .83 for *Attachment Avoidance*.

**Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ; Gross & John, 2003; for Serbian adaptation see Popov et al., 2015).** This instrument consists of 10 items assessing two dimensions of emotion regulation: *Reappraisal* and *Suppression*. Responses were given on a 7-point Likert scale (1 - *strongly disagree* to 7 - *strongly agree*). *Reappraisal* includes 6 items (e.g., "When I'm faced with a stressful situation, I make myself think about it in a way that helps me stay calm"), whereas *Suppression* includes 4 items (e.g., "I keep my emotions to myself"). The questionnaire exhibited good reliability in this sample, with Cronbach's alpha of .86 for *Reappraisal* and .73 for *Suppression*.

**Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985; for Serbian adaptation see Vukojević, 2016).** It is a 5-item unidimensional scale assessing global life satisfaction. Participants responded using a 7-point Likert scale (1 - *strongly disagree* to 7 - *strongly agree*). An example item is "In most ways my life is close to my ideal." The scale showed good internal consistency in the present sample (Cronbach's alpha = .88).

**Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson et al., 1988; for Serbian adaptation see Mihić et al., 2014).** It consists of 12 items divided into two dimensions: *Positive Affect* and *Negative Affect*. Participants rated how often they experienced each emotion on a 5-point Likert scale (1 - *never* to 5 - *most of the time*). *Positive Affect* includes 6 items (e.g., "energetic"), and *Negative Affect* includes 6 items (e.g., "upset"). Reliability analyses yielded Cronbach's alpha values of .91 for *Positive Affect* and .75 for *Negative Affect* in this sample.



## Data Analysis

The data collected was analyzed using the statistical software *SPSS* along with the *PROCESS* macro to assess mediation models. Pearson correlation was employed to explore the associations among the variables, while hierarchical regression analysis was used to examine predictive relationships and assess potential mediation effects. Additionally, multiple mediation analysis was conducted. According to the framework proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986), a variable can be identified as a mediator if the following conditions are met: (1) the predictor variables significantly predict the outcome variable; (2) the predictors significantly predict the mediators; and (3) the mediators significantly predict the outcome variable when controlling for the predictors. Based on these criteria, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine whether reappraisal and suppression mediate the relationships between the predictors—anxiety and avoidance—and the outcome variables: life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect. In the first step of the regression, attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance were entered as predictors. In the second step, reappraisal and suppression were added to assess their potential mediating roles while controlling for the initial predictors. Additionally, a separate multiple regression analysis was conducted to confirm that the predictors have a significant effect on the proposed mediators. Finally, the mediating effects of reappraisal and suppression were tested using the multiple mediation approach outlined by Preacher and Hayes (2008).

## Results

The results are presented by first displaying the basic descriptive indicators, followed by the results of the correlation, regression, and mediation analyses.

**Table 1**  
*Descriptive Measures of All Variables Used in the Study*

	<i>N</i>	min – max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Sk</i>	<i>Ku</i>
Attachment Anxiety	204	1 – 7	2.83	1.54	0.60	-0.44
Attachment Avoidance	204	1 – 7	5.24	1.33	-0.75	-0.08
Reappraisal	204	1 – 7	5.66	1.31	-0.82	-0.35
Suppression	204	1 – 7	2.51	1.41	1.23	1.02
Life Satisfaction	204	1 – 7	4.71	1.43	-0.22	-0.19
Negative Affect	204	1 – 4	2.27	0.55	0.22	-0.31
Positive Affect	204	1 – 5	4.02	1.12	-1.19	0.29

*Note.* *Sk* – Skewness; *Ku* – Kurtosis.

Descriptive statistics for all study variables were examined to assess normality (Table 1). Most variables demonstrated acceptable skewness and kurtosis values within the range of -2 to +2, indicating approximately normal distributions (Hair et al., 2022).

**Table 2**

*Correlation Between Attachment, Emotion Regulation, Subjective Well-Being, Positive Affect, and Negative Affect*

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1. Attachment Anxiety						
2. Attachment Avoidance	.01					
3. Reappraisal	-.47**	-.05				
4. Suppression	.46**	.04	.48*			
5. Life Satisfaction	-.29*	-.36**	.29**	-.21**		
6. Negative Affect	.21*	-.05	-.21**	.19**	-.12	
7. Positive Affect	-.26*	-.04	.28**	-.18**	.57**	-.10

*Note.* \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

A correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between attachment, emotion regulation, and subjective well-being indicators (Table 2). Attachment anxiety was significantly negatively correlated with reappraisal and life satisfaction, and positively correlated with suppression and negative affect. It was also negatively associated with positive affect. Attachment avoidance showed a significant negative correlation with life satisfaction, but did not significantly correlate with the emotion regulation strategies. Reappraisal was positively correlated with life satisfaction and positive affect, and negatively correlated with negative affect. Suppression was negatively associated with life satisfaction and positive affect, and positively correlated with negative affect. Life satisfaction was strongly positively related to positive affect.

Initially, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed to examine the predictive effects of attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance on life satisfaction and to test whether reappraisal and suppression could be mediating these effects. In Step 1, attachment anxiety and avoidance explained 21% of the variance in life satisfaction ( $R^2 = .21$ ,  $F(2, 201) = 27.68$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Both attachment anxiety ( $B = -.26$ ,  $SE = .05$ ,  $\beta = -.28$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and attachment avoidance ( $B = -.28$ ,  $SE = .04$ ,  $\beta = -.36$ ,  $p < .01$ ) were significant negative predictors. In Step 2, adding reappraisal and suppression increased the explained variance to 22% ( $R^2 = .22$ ,  $\Delta R^2 = .01$ ,  $F(4, 199) = 14.43$ ,  $p < .001$ ), with only reappraisal being a significant positive predictor ( $B = .20$ ,  $SE = .09$ ,  $\beta = .28$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Attachment avoidance remained a significant predictor ( $p < .01$ ), while attachment anxiety was marginally significant ( $p = .058$ ). This suggests partial mediation for attachment avoidance and possible partial or full mediation for attachment anxiety.



Since the presence of mediation also requires that the predictor variables significantly predict the mediator variables, multiple regression analysis was used to test this requirement. Attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance were entered simultaneously into the regression model to examine their unique predictive contributions to reappraisal and suppression. The regression model predicting reappraisal ( $R^2 = .31$ ,  $F(2, 201) = 27.12$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and the model predicting suppression ( $R^2 = .34$ ,  $F(2, 201) = 38.04$ ,  $p < .01$ ) were both significant. Attachment avoidance showed no significant link to reappraisal nor suppression. Attachment anxiety negatively predicted reappraisal ( $B = -.45$ ,  $SE = .03$ ,  $\beta = -.52$ ,  $p < .05$ ), indicating higher attachment anxiety is linked to less use of reappraisal, and positively predicted suppression ( $B = .49$ ,  $SE = .04$ ,  $\beta = .57$ ,  $p < .05$ ), indicating higher attachment anxiety is linked to more use of suppression.

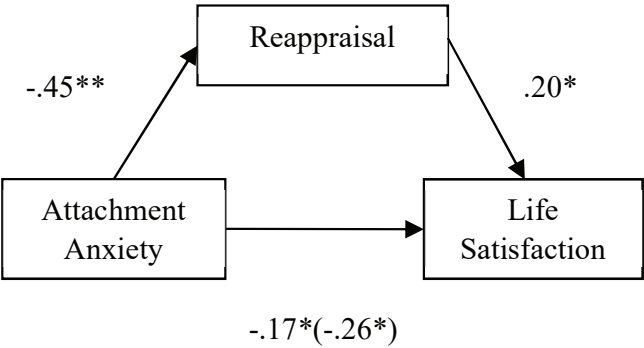
Given these results, a mediation analysis was conducted to examine whether reappraisal mediates the relationship between attachment anxiety and life satisfaction (Table 3).

**Table 3**  
*Total, Direct, and Indirect Effects of Attachment Anxiety on Life Satisfaction Mediated by Reappraisal*

Predictor	Mediator	<i>a</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>c</i>	<i>c'</i>	<i>ab</i>
Attachment Anxiety	Reappraisal	-.45**	.20*	-.26**	-.17*	-.09*

*Note.* *a* = effect of the predictor on the mediator, *b* = effect of the mediator on the criterion, *c* = total effect of the predictor on the criterion, *c'* = direct effect of the predictor on the criterion when the proposed mediator is controlled for, *ab* = indirect effect, i.e., the effect of the mediator in the relationship between the predictor and the criterion. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

**Figure 1**  
*Reappraisal as a Mediator Between Attachment Anxiety and Life Satisfaction*



The results showed that attachment anxiety significantly predicted lower use of reappraisal, and reappraisal positively predicted life satisfaction. Attachment anxiety also had a significant total negative effect on life satisfaction. When reappraisal was

included in the model, the direct effect of attachment anxiety on life satisfaction was reduced but remained significant, indicating partial mediation. The indirect effect through reappraisal was also significant, suggesting that reappraisal partially explains the negative impact of attachment anxiety on life satisfaction. The mediation analysis model is illustrated in Figure 1 to enhance the clarity and understanding of the results.

Subsequently, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed to examine the predictive effects of attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance on positive affect and to test whether reappraisal and suppression mediate these effects. In Step 1 of regression analysis, attachment anxiety and avoidance explained 5% of variance in positive affect ( $R^2 = .05$ ,  $F(2, 201) = 7.36$ ,  $p < .05$ ), with attachment anxiety being a significant negative predictor ( $B = -.19$ ,  $SE = .05$ ,  $\beta = -.26$ ,  $p < .01$ ). In Step 2, adding reappraisal and suppression increased explained variance to 8% ( $R^2 = .08$ ,  $\Delta R^2 = .07$ ,  $F(4, 199) = 4.84$ ,  $p < .001$ ), with only reappraisal being a significant positive predictor ( $B = .24$ ,  $SE = .11$ ,  $\beta = .28$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Based on these findings and the established relationship between attachment anxiety and reappraisal, a mediation analysis was conducted to examine whether reappraisal mediates the relationship between attachment anxiety and positive affect (Table 4).

**Table 4**

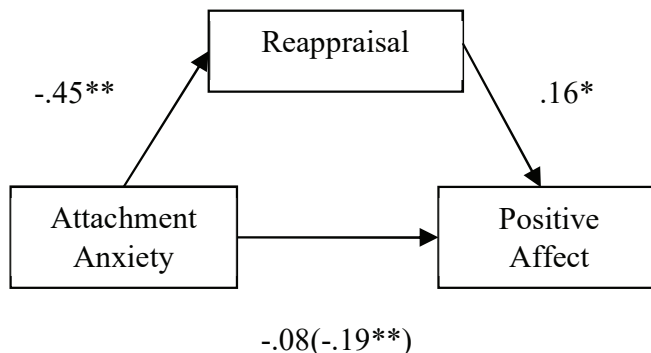
*Total, Direct, and Indirect Effects of Attachment Anxiety on Positive Affect Mediated by Reappraisal*

Predictor	Mediator	<i>a</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>c</i>	<i>c'</i>	<i>ab</i>
Attachment Anxiety	Reappraisal	-.45**	.16**	-.19**	-.08	-.07*

*Note.* *a* = effect of the predictor on the mediator, *b* = effect of the mediator on the criterion, *c* = total effect of the predictor on the criterion, *c'* = direct effect of the predictor on the criterion when the proposed mediator is controlled for, *ab* = indirect effect, i.e., the effect of the mediator in the relationship between the predictor and the criterion. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

**Figure 2**

*Reappraisal as a Mediator Between Attachment Anxiety and Positive Affect*



The results indicated that attachment anxiety significantly predicted lower use of reappraisal strategies, and reappraisal was positively associated with positive affect. Attachment anxiety also had a significant negative total effect on positive affect. However, when reappraisal was included in the model, the direct effect of attachment anxiety on positive affect was reduced and became non-significant, suggesting full mediation. The indirect effect of attachment anxiety on positive affect through reappraisal was significant, indicating that reappraisal fully mediates the negative effect of attachment anxiety on positive affect. The mediation analysis model is illustrated in Figure 2 to enhance the clarity and understanding of the results.

Lastly, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed to examine the predictive effects of attachment anxiety and avoidance on negative affect, and to test whether reappraisal and suppression mediate these effects. In Step 1 of regression analysis, attachment anxiety and avoidance explained 4% of variance in negative affect ( $R^2 = .04$ ,  $F(2, 201) = 5.12$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Attachment anxiety was a significant positive predictor ( $B = .07$ ,  $SE = .02$ ,  $\beta = .21$ ,  $p < .05$ ). In Step 2, with mediators added, explained variance increased to 5% ( $R^2 = .05$ ,  $\Delta R^2 = .03$ ,  $F(4, 199) = 3.01$ ,  $p < .05$ ). However, neither attachment anxiety nor avoidance remained significant, suggesting potential mediation effects may account for the earlier direct effect of attachment anxiety. Furthermore, suppression ( $B = .02$ ,  $SE = .04$ ,  $\beta = .05$ ,  $p = .62$ ) and reappraisal ( $B = -.04$ ,  $SE = .05$ ,  $\beta = -.07$ ,  $p = .46$ ) did not significantly predict negative affect. Although attachment anxiety predicted greater suppression and reduced reappraisal, neither emotion regulation strategy had a significant effect on negative affect in this model. Consequently, the indirect effects are very small and lack statistical significance, suggesting that mediation effects are minimal or practically nonexistent. Overall, the model's explanatory power is limited, accounting for only about 5% of the variance.

## Discussion

The current study investigated the relationships between attachment dimensions (anxiety and avoidance), emotion regulation strategies (reappraisal and suppression), and subjective well-being indicators (life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect). The findings offer several key insights into the psychological mechanisms linking attachment with subjective well-being.

Consistent with previous research (Wei et al., 2011; Zhang et al., 2016), attachment anxiety was associated with lower life satisfaction and positive affect, as well as with greater negative affect. Notably, mediation analyses revealed that reappraisal significantly mediated the relationship between attachment anxiety and both life satisfaction and positive affect, with partial mediation in the case of life satisfaction and full mediation in the case of positive affect. In line with prior studies (e.g., Karreman & Vingerhoets, 2012; Read et al., 2018), this underscores reappraisal as an emotional regulation process that people with high attachment anxiety are less likely to utilize. The identified mediation pathway indicates that

cognitive interventions focused on enhancing reappraisal could be especially beneficial in reducing the adverse psychological effects of anxious attachment. For instance, cognitive-behavioral techniques that address and modify automatic negative thoughts might help protect individuals with high attachment anxiety from experiencing low life satisfaction and diminished positive emotions.

In contrast, attachment avoidance negatively predicted life satisfaction but did not significantly relate to either reappraisal nor suppression, and showed no significant relationships with affective outcomes. These results align with previous research indicating that avoidant and secure individuals experience similar levels of negative affect, yet those with avoidant attachment report lower levels of happiness (Sheinbaum et al., 2015). Concerning the nonsignificant relationship with positive and negative affect, research has shown that people with high levels of attachment avoidance often struggle to differentiate between emotional states and have limited awareness of their own feelings (Mallinckrodt & Wei, 2005). Furthermore, they may not fully recognize their emotional distress and, due to their distrustful and negative views of close relationships, tend to cope independently to preserve autonomy, control, and emotional distance (Simpson & Rholes, 2017). Therefore, it can be assumed that their constant self-reliance and a persistent sense of disconnect can foster feelings of isolation, which in turn reduce life satisfaction.

The absence of mediation effects through reappraisal or suppression suggests that attachment avoidance has an effect on life satisfaction through different mechanisms beyond straightforward difficulties in managing or regulating emotions. According to attachment theory, individuals high in attachment avoidance tend to prioritize self-reliance and emotional distance by downplaying emotional needs and suppressing closeness or dependence in relationships (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). In this context, the absence of mediation through emotional regulation strategies like reappraisal or suppression is quite consistent with the avoidant attachment style. Individuals with high attachment avoidance often report low emotional expressiveness not necessarily because they lack regulation skills, but because they consciously distance themselves from emotional processing. That is, they may not struggle to manage emotions in the same way individuals with high attachment anxiety do, but instead choose not to engage emotionally at all. Therefore, the findings suggest that the reduced life satisfaction seen in avoidant individuals may not be related to emotional regulation, but rather with other underlying psychological patterns linked to their attachment style. This aligns with emerging research (e.g., Lavy & Littman-Ovadia, 2011; Deniz & Yıldırım Kurtuluş, 2025) showing that positive psychological strengths rather than just emotion regulation strategies may be more relevant mediators in the link between attachment avoidance and life satisfaction. Overall, these findings highlight the complex relationship between attachment avoidance and subjective well-being. Gaining a more thorough understanding of these dynamics may provide valuable insight into how attachment avoidance contributes to individuals' experiences of well-being.

Cognitive reappraisal consistently predicted higher life satisfaction and increased positive affect, reflecting existing research that highlights its value in

effective emotion regulation (Brewer et al., 2016; Gross & John, 2003; Haga et al., 2009; John & Gross, 2004). The capacity to mentally reframe emotionally charged situations appears to play an important role in enhancing subjective well-being. Conversely, emotional suppression demonstrated weak and non-significant associations with subjective well-being, consistent with earlier research (e.g., Butler et al., 2003).

The prediction model, which included attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance, reappraisal, and suppression, explained only a small portion of the variance in negative affect. While attachment anxiety was initially a significant predictor, its effect weakened once mediating variables were included, and neither reappraisal nor suppression had a significant effect on negative affect. These findings suggest that other unmeasured factors may have a greater impact on negative emotionality. Future research should explore additional potential mediators to better understand how attachment relates to subjective well-being.

This study also faced several limitations. First, its cross-sectional design prevents conclusions about causality; longitudinal or experimental approaches are needed to establish the direction of the observed relationships. Second, although the focus on young adults was intentional, the sample's homogeneity limits the generalizability of the findings. Finally, all measures were self-reported, raising concerns that the results were influenced by how people chose to present themselves or how they interpreted the questions. This can lead to bias, as people might not always be fully accurate or honest, intentionally or unintentionally, when reporting on their thoughts, feelings, or behaviors.

In summary, the results highlight the central role of attachment anxiety on subjective well-being, primarily through its effect on emotion regulation strategy reappraisal. Although avoidant attachment is associated with lower life satisfaction, it seems to operate through different pathways. Emotion regulation strategies, particularly reappraisal, show potential as effective intervention targets to improve well-being, especially for those with high levels of attachment anxiety.

## Conclusion

This research advances a more detailed understanding of how different attachment dimensions have an effect on subjective well-being directly as well as through emotion regulation strategies. Notably, attachment anxiety plays a significant role in lowering levels of subjective well-being by interfering with the use of reappraisal, which in turn has an effect on life satisfaction and positive affect. Conversely, attachment avoidance seems to have an effect on well-being through factors other than emotion regulation, indicating the need to explore additional underlying mechanisms. The distinct pathways observed for anxious and avoidant attachments underscore the importance of customized strategies in both research and clinical settings. While cognitive reappraisal consistently supports better well-being, suppression appears to have minimal effect, aligning with the existing evidence. The

model's limited explanation of negative affect suggests that further studies should incorporate a wider range of psychological and environmental factors. Although this study faced methodological constraints, including its cross-sectional design, a relatively uniform sample, and reliance on self-report data, its findings highlight the important role of emotion regulation, especially reappraisal, in connecting attachment to subjective well-being. Future research employing longitudinal and experimental methods should seek to establish causal links and identify additional mediators to enhance our understanding of these relationships. In conclusion, this research highlights the complex connections between attachment and well-being and offers direction for developing focused interventions aimed at improving life satisfaction and positive affect, particularly for individuals with high attachment anxiety.

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## **Regulacija emocija kao medijator odnosa između afektivne vezanosti i subjektivnog blagostanja mladih**

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### **Apstrakt**

Ovo istraživanje je imalo za cilj ispitivanje direktne efekte dimenzija privrženosti (anksioznost i izbegavanje) na subjektivno blagostanje (zadovoljstvo životom, pozitivan afekt i negativan afekt), kao i medijatorsku ulogu strategija regulacije emocija (kognitivna reinterpretacija i potiskivanje) kod mladih odraslih osoba. Hipoteza je bila da će anksioznost, izbegavanje i potiskivanje imati negativni efekat na subjektivno blagostanje, dok će kognitivna reinterpretacija imati pozitivan efekat. Konkretno, očekivalo se da će viši nivoi izbegavanja biti povezani sa nižim nivoima kognitivne reinterpretacije, ali višim nivoima potiskivanja, dok je što se tiče anksioznosti bilo očekivano da bude povezano sa nižim nivoima kognitivne reinterpretacije. Takođe, pretpostavka je da kognitivna reinterpretacija posreduje u

odnosima između privrženosti i blagostanja. Uzorak je činilo 204 mladih odraslih osoba (56,9% žena; prosečna starost = 21,17), a podaci su prikupljeni u domovima ispitanika i popunjavanjem upitnika preko interneta. Instrumenti koji su bili korišćeni su: Iskustva u bliskim vezama – revidirana verzija (ECR-RD12), Upitnik emocionalne regulacije (ERQ), Skala životnog zadovoljstva (SWLS) i Skala pozitivnog i negativnog afekta (PANAS). Rezultati su pokazali da je anksioznost povezana sa nižim zadovoljstvom životom i pozitivnim afektom, kao i sa višim nivoima negativnog afekta. Kognitivna reinterpretacija se pokazala kao medijator između anksioznosti i subjektivnog blagostanja; kao parcijalni u odnosu na zadovoljstvo životom i kao potpuni u odnosu na pozitivan afekt. Izbegavanje je bilo negativno povezano sa zadovoljstvom životom, ali nije pokazalo značajnu povezanost sa regulacijom emocija ili afektom. Potiskivanje je imalo slabe i statistički neznajne efekte na subjektivno blagostanje. Rezultati ističu kognitivnu reinterpretaciju kao važan mehanizam koji povezuje anksioznost sa subjektivnim blagostanjem, što ukazuje da bi intervencije zasnovane na kognitivnoj regulaciji emocija mogle biti posebno korisne za osobe sa visokim nivoom afektivne anksioznosti.

*Ključne reči:* afektivna anksioznost, afektivno izbegavanje, subjektivno blagostanje, regulacija emocija

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