

# Self – Compassion as a Moderator on the Relationship between Attachment Anxiety and Social Anxiety via Affective Empathy

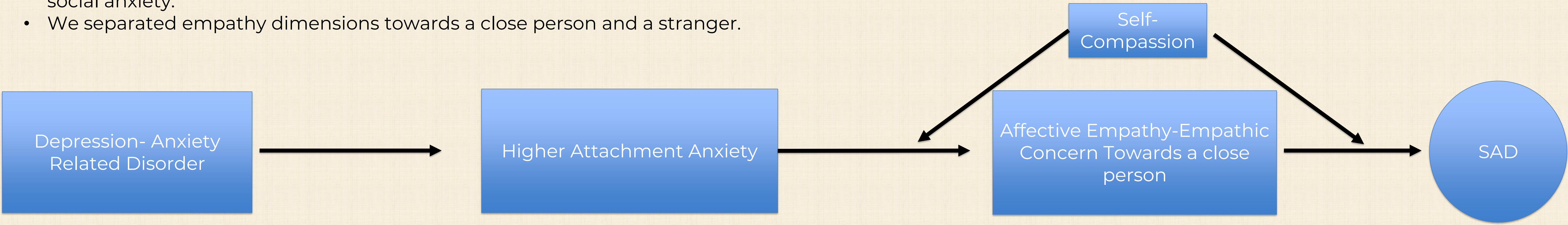
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## Introduction:

- Comorbidities of social anxiety disorder include depression and other anxiety-related disorders (1).
- Higher attachment anxiety predicts depression via increased affective empathy, while higher attachment avoidance predicts depression via lower empathic concern (2).
- Higher affective empathy is associated with increased emotional interference in the Emotional Go/NoGo task, whereas in the Emotional Stroop task, higher cognitive empathy is associated with reduced emotional interference (3).
- However, little is known about how individuals with depression and anxiety-related disorders contribute to the development of social anxiety.
- In this study, we explored a socio-cognitive model integrating attachment insecurities, economic constraints, PTSD, and empathy towards both close persons and strangers. Since attachment anxiety has a stronger relationship with depression than attachment avoidance (4),
- We hypothesized that attachment anxiety would be related to affective empathy towards a close person, which in turn would result in social anxiety in patients with depression and anxiety-related disorders.
- Additionally, self-compassion regulates empathy (5) and serves as a protective factor for social anxiety (6).
- Therefore, we examined the moderating effect of self-compassion on the relationship between attachment anxiety and social anxiety via empathic concern and personal distress towards a close person.

## Originality of the study:

- Attachment anxiety, economic problems, empathic concern, and affective empathy towards both a close person and a stranger are risk factors for social anxiety in a clinical sample.
- Self-compassion alleviates the adverse effect of attachment anxiety on social anxiety as well as the negative impact of affective empathy towards a close person on social anxiety.
- We separated empathy dimensions towards a close person and a stranger.



### Study 1: Underlying Mechanism

#### Method

N = 60 Turkish Participants who are diagnosed with depression and anxiety related disorder (40 women 20 men, M<sub>age</sub> = 32.20, SD = 10.70).

#### Independent Variables:

- Attachment anxiety (*M* = 4.61 *SD* = 1.62) and attachment avoidance (*M* = 2.94 *SD* = 1.23)
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (*M* = 3.39, *SD* = 0.96)
- Economic constraints (*M* = 4.01, *SD* = 1.57)
- Socioeconomic status (*M* = 6.12 *SD* = 1.68)
- Personal distress CL (*M* = 2.55 *SD* = 0.62)
- Personal distress STR (*M* = 1.64, *SD* = 0.63)
- Empathic Concern CL (*M* = 3.41 *SD* = 0.61)
- Empathic Concern STR (*M* = 2.23 *SD* = 0.62)
- Perspective-Taking CL (*M* = 2.85 *SD* = 0.66)
- Perspective-Taking STR (*M* = 2.27 *SD* = 0.84)

#### Dependent Variable

- Social Anxiety (*M* = 2.13 *SD* = 0.96)

### Study 2a. Replicated Study

#### Method

N = 154 Polish Students who are diagnosed with depression and anxiety-related disorder (129 Women 22 Men M<sub>age</sub> = 24.10, SD = 6.37).

#### Independent Variables:

- Attachment anxiety (*M* = 4.03 *SD* = 1.32) and attachment avoidance (*M* = 2.59 *SD* = 1.14)
- Socioeconomic status (*M* = 5.75 *SD* = 1.60)
- Personal distress CL (*M* = 2.31 *SD* = 0.63)
- Personal distress STR (*M* = 1.61 *SD* = 0.62)
- Empathic Concern CL (*M* = 3.22 *SD* = 0.87)
- Empathic Concern STR (*M* = 2.20 *SD* = 0.94)
- Perspective-Taking CL (*M* = 2.84 *SD* = 0.80)
- Perspective-Taking STR (*M* = 2.51 *SD* = 0.82)

#### 2c. Moderator:

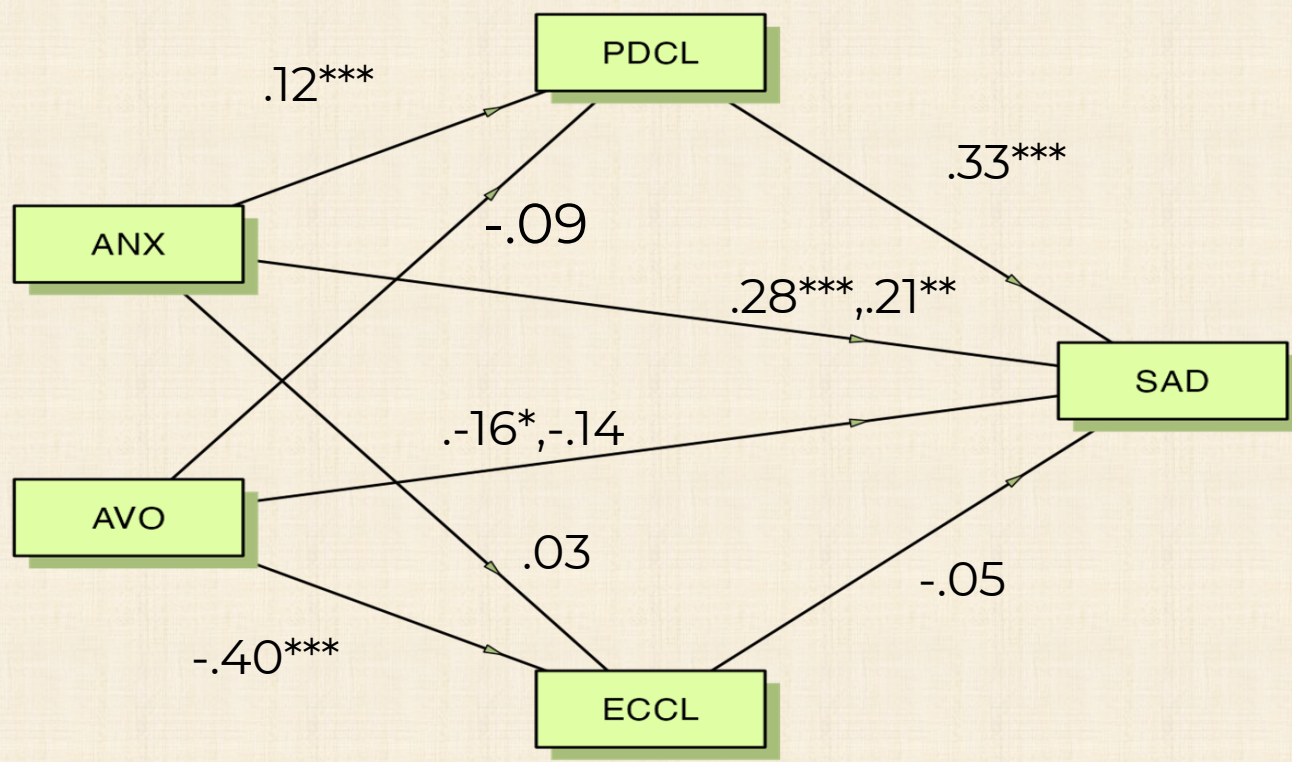
Self-compassion (*M* = 2.70 *SD* = 0.64)

#### Dependent Variable

- Social Anxiety (*M* = 3.10, *SD* = 0.74)

### Results 2b

- We analyzed the mediation effect of personal distress towards a close person on the relationship between attachment insecurities and social anxiety after controlling empathic concern towards a close person as a mediator



		95% C.I. (a)	
	β	Lower	Upper
ANX ⇒ PDCL ⇒ SAD	.04	.01	.07
ANX ⇒ ECCL ⇒ SAD	-.001	-.01	0.01
AVO ⇒ PDCL ⇒ SAD	-.03	-.06	.004
AVO ⇒ ECCL ⇒ SAD	.02	-.04	.08

### Results 2c

- We explored the moderation effect of self-compassion on the relationship between attachment anxiety and social anxiety via affective empathy towards a close person.

Moderator	Interaction	β	Lower	Upper
SC	ANX:SC ⇒ PDCL	-.12	-.23	-.01
	AVO:SC ⇒ PDCL	-.00	-0.12	.11
	ANX:SC ⇒ SAD	.03	-.10	.16
	AVO:SC ⇒ SAD	-.04	-.18	.10
	SC:PDCL ⇒ SAD	-.07	-.14	.002

### Results 1

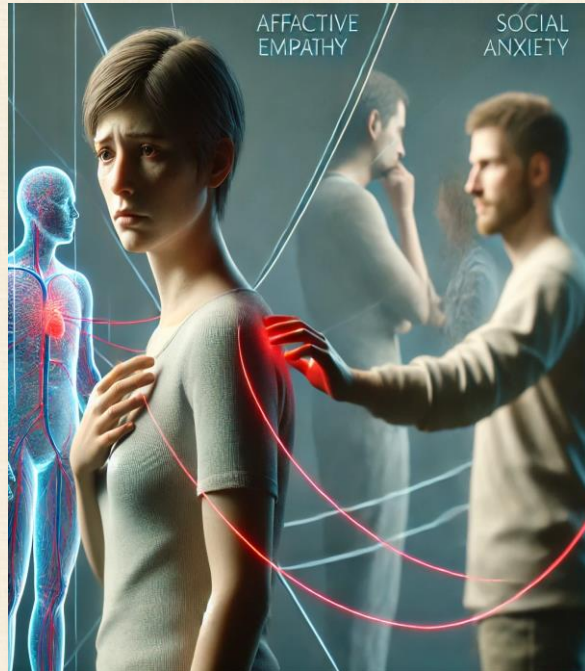
		β 95% Confidence Intervals		
Names	β	Lower	Upper	p
(Intercept)	-0.000	-0.212	0.212	<.001
ANX	0.397*	0.160	0.635	0.002
AVO	0.136	-0.102	0.375	0.256
ECO	0.261*	0.009	0.513	0.043
ECCL	0.379*	0.084	0.674	0.013
PTCL	-0.206	-0.516	0.105	0.189
PDCL	-0.164	-0.417	0.090	0.200
ECSTR	0.132	-0.262	0.527	0.504
PTSTR	-0.128	-0.543	0.286	0.536
PDSTR	0.023	-0.230	0.276	0.855
SES	-0.021	-0.257	0.215	0.860
PTSD	0.148	-0.091	0.387	0.220



### Conclusion

### Results 2a

		β 95% Confidence Intervals		
Names	β	Lower	Upper	p
(Intercept)	-0.000	-0.149	0.149	<.001
ANX	0.200*	0.039	0.361	0.015
AVO	-0.131	-0.314	0.052	0.160
ECCL	-0.008	-0.245	0.228	0.944
PTCL	-0.085	-0.305	0.136	0.448
ECSTR	-0.001	-0.217	0.214	0.991
PTSTR	0.118	-0.079	0.316	0.239
PDCL	0.248*	0.072	0.424	0.006
PDSTR	0.055	-0.138	0.248	0.573



### Conclusion

- In this study, we replicated that attachment anxiety predicted social anxiety with affective empathy towards a close person, while empathic concern did not predict social anxiety in Polish sample.

### Discussion

- For individuals with **attachment anxiety**, therapeutic approaches supporting **affective empathy towards a close person and self-compassion can be a protective factor to develop SAD**.
- Social assistance** and **support programs** can be implemented to mitigate the effects of **economic hardships** on mental health.
- Note. We used chat GPT to create images.

### Reference

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