

### Abstract

This study used four sets of parallel mediation models to examine how people's level of Machiavellianism (MACH) and attachment styles affect their use of breakup strategies. The first set proposed that anxious parental attachment (ANX-P) will be positively related to positive tone/self-blame strategies (PS) through anxious adult attachment (ANX-A) and Machiavellianism (MACH). The second set proposed that ANX-P will be negatively related to avoidance/withdrawal strategies (AW) through ANX-A and MACH. The third set proposed that avoidant parental attachment (AVD-P) will be positively related to AW through avoidant adult attachment (AVD-A) and MACH. The fourth set proposed that AVD-P will be negatively related to PS through AVD-A and MACH. A total of 332 heterosexual adults ( $M = 32.04$  years), females ( $n = 151$ ) and males ( $n = 181$ ), responded to a series of Likert-scale measures to assess their parental attachment, adult attachment, past adopted breakup strategies, and level of Machiavellianism. Results supported the specific indirect effects of ANX-P on PS via MACH, ANX-P on AW via MACH, and AVD-P on AW via AVD-A. This study shed new light on how people's relationship with their caregiver(s) affects their individual characteristics, which in turn, affects their use of problematic breakup strategies, as well as underlined the importance of preventing insecure attachment formation and the need for those who work with children to recognize attachment protection as a professional obligation to foster a better society.

*Keywords:* parental attachment, adult attachment, anxiety, avoidance, Machiavellianism, breakup strategies, positive tone/self-blame, avoidance/withdrawal, parallel mediation