



Article history:
Received 01 November 2025
Revised 01 March 2026
Accepted 05 March 2026
Published online 01 May 2026

Iranian Journal of Neurodevelopmental Disorders

Volume 5, Issue 3, pp 1-10



E-ISSN: 2980-9681

Comparison of Attachment Styles in Adolescents and Adults with Obsessive and Non-Obsessive Mothers

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Article Info

Article type:

Original Research

How to cite this article:

Sattari, F., & Azizi, M. (2026). Comparison of Attachment Styles in Adolescents and Adults with Obsessive and Non-Obsessive Mothers. *Iranian Journal of Neurodevelopmental Disorders*, 5(3), 1-10.
<https://doi.org/10.61838/kman.jnnd.785>



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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The present study aimed to compare attachment styles in adolescents and adults with obsessive and non-obsessive mothers.

Methods and Materials: This study employed a causal-comparative (ex post facto) research design. The statistical population consisted of all individuals aged 14 to 40 years residing in District 4 of Tabriz in 2026 whose mothers had referred to psychological centers and clinics due to obsessive behaviors; the population size was reported as 2,736 individuals. The sample size was determined using Cochran's formula, and ultimately 340 participants were selected through convenience sampling. The research instruments included the Attachment Styles Questionnaire {Hazan & Shaver, 1987}. Data were analyzed using multivariate analysis of variance through SPSS version 27, and the significance level for the tests was set at 0.05.

Findings The findings indicated significant differences in attachment styles between adolescents and adults with obsessive mothers and those with non-obsessive mothers ($p < .05$). Specifically, children of obsessive mothers obtained higher scores on anxious and avoidant insecure attachment styles and lower scores on secure attachment style ($p < .05$).

Conclusion: Based on the findings, it can be concluded that parental characteristics and interactions within families affected by obsessive behaviors may contribute to the development of maladaptive cognitive-emotional patterns in children. Accordingly, the necessity of designing preventive interventions and empowering children from such families to enhance coping skills and reduce negative psychological consequences is emphasized.

Keywords: *secure attachment, insecure attachment, obsessive mothers*

1. Introduction

Attachment is considered one of the most fundamental developmental constructs in psychology and plays a central role in shaping emotional regulation, interpersonal functioning, and psychological adjustment across the lifespan. According to attachment theory, early interactions between children and caregivers form internal working models that influence perceptions of self, others, and interpersonal security in later developmental stages. Secure attachment emerges when caregivers respond consistently and sensitively to children's emotional needs, whereas insecure attachment patterns develop in environments characterized by inconsistency, rejection, anxiety, or emotional unavailability. These attachment patterns not only affect emotional functioning during childhood but also continue to influence psychological well-being during adolescence and adulthood. Recent studies have emphasized that attachment styles are significantly associated with vulnerability to psychopathology, maladaptive coping strategies, emotional dysregulation, and impaired social functioning (Bozzatello et al., 2019; Nielsen et al., 2025; Pozza, Marazziti, et al., 2021). Adolescence and early adulthood represent particularly sensitive developmental periods because identity formation, emotional independence, and interpersonal intimacy intensify during these stages. Consequently, the quality of attachment relationships established within the family environment becomes highly influential in determining later psychological adjustment.

Within the family context, maternal psychological functioning has consistently been identified as one of the most important determinants of children's emotional and cognitive development. Mothers play a primary role in emotional caregiving, socialization, and the establishment of secure relational frameworks for children. Research has demonstrated that maternal emotional availability, reflective functioning, and psychological stability contribute significantly to the development of adaptive attachment patterns in offspring (Borelli et al., 2019; MacMillan et al., 2021). Conversely, maternal psychopathology may disrupt caregiving consistency and emotional responsiveness, thereby increasing the likelihood of insecure attachment development in children. Obsessive-compulsive tendencies in mothers may be particularly influential because obsessive symptoms are frequently accompanied by heightened anxiety, perfectionism, rigidity, intrusive thoughts, and controlling behaviors. Such characteristics can negatively

affect parent-child interactions and limit the establishment of emotionally secure relationships. Hasani and Shirkondmoghaddam highlighted the central role of maternal characteristics in children's emotional and spiritual development, emphasizing the influence of maternal behavior on psychological formation within the family system (Hasani & Shirkondmoghaddam, 2023).

Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is recognized as a chronic and debilitating psychological disorder characterized by intrusive thoughts, compulsive behaviors, excessive anxiety, and impaired cognitive-emotional functioning. The disorder affects multiple domains of individual and interpersonal life and is often associated with substantial social and occupational dysfunction (Goodman et al., 2021; Kruz et al., 2022). Contemporary research indicates that OCD is not merely a symptom-based condition but a multifactorial disorder influenced by genetic, neurobiological, cognitive, environmental, and developmental variables. Blanco-Vieira et al. demonstrated through a systematic review and meta-analysis that genetic and familial mechanisms play substantial roles in the etiology and transmission of obsessive-compulsive symptoms (Blanco-Vieira et al., 2023). Moreover, neurobiological investigations have identified abnormalities in emotional processing, cognitive control, and anxiety regulation among individuals with obsessive-compulsive symptoms (Goodman et al., 2021). These impairments can influence parenting behaviors and family interactions, thereby increasing the psychological vulnerability of children raised within such family environments.

A growing body of literature has explored the relationship between attachment styles and obsessive-compulsive symptoms. Evidence suggests that insecure attachment patterns, especially anxious and avoidant attachment styles, are strongly associated with obsessive beliefs, emotional dysregulation, perfectionism, and maladaptive coping strategies (Akbarzadeh, 2025; Nanava & Raisi, 2025; Nielsen et al., 2025). Nielsen et al. proposed an attachment-based model of obsessive-compulsive disorder, indicating that insecure attachment contributes to deficits in emotion regulation, which subsequently intensify obsessive-compulsive symptoms (Nielsen et al., 2025). Similarly, Hodny et al. reported that patients with obsessive-compulsive disorder frequently exhibit insecure attachment styles and impaired relational security (Hodny et al., 2021). Pozza et al. further demonstrated that different facets of adult attachment are significantly associated with obsessive-compulsive symptom severity and maladaptive emotional

functioning (Pozza, Marazziti, et al., 2021). These findings collectively support the conceptualization of OCD as a disorder closely linked with attachment insecurity and relational dysfunction.

Parenting practices and family emotional climate also appear to mediate the relationship between obsessive-compulsive pathology and attachment formation. Parenting characterized by overcontrol, excessive criticism, perfectionistic expectations, and emotional inconsistency may contribute to the development of insecure attachment and anxiety-related disorders in children. Hu et al. found that parenting styles influence obsessive-compulsive symptoms indirectly through perfectionism among university students (Hu et al., 2023). Likewise, Yadav emphasized the relationship between parenting style, attachment insecurity, and anxiety-related psychopathology in individuals with obsessive-compulsive disorder (Yadav, 2021). Theoretical frameworks suggest that children exposed to highly anxious or controlling maternal behaviors may internalize perceptions of unpredictability and insecurity, thereby forming maladaptive attachment schemas. Sharma also highlighted the association between early maladaptive schemas, attachment styles, and obsessive-compulsive disorder, particularly among individuals with histories of adverse childhood experiences (Sharma, 2021). These findings underscore the importance of examining family relational dynamics in understanding attachment outcomes among children of mothers with obsessive tendencies.

The influence of insecure attachment extends beyond childhood emotional functioning and affects multiple psychological domains during adolescence and adulthood. Insecure attachment has been associated with impaired emotion regulation, elevated psychological distress, interpersonal difficulties, maladaptive coping mechanisms, and increased vulnerability to psychiatric disorders (Ding et al., 2021; Li et al., 2021). During adolescence, attachment insecurity may contribute to identity confusion, emotional instability, social withdrawal, and heightened anxiety sensitivity. In adulthood, insecure attachment is associated with difficulties in intimacy, relational instability, compulsive behaviors, and emotional dysregulation. These developmental implications are especially important because attachment styles formed within the family context tend to persist over time and shape later interpersonal functioning. Lai and Yeung emphasized that mental health challenges among adolescents and young adults are increasingly associated with emotional and relational

vulnerabilities originating within family systems (Lai & Yeung, 2023).

Recent research has also linked obsessive-compulsive pathology with broader psychosocial and behavioral dysfunctions. Individuals with obsessive tendencies often demonstrate impairments in attention, social cognition, and adaptive functioning. Dalmaso et al. reported altered attentional responses among individuals with obsessive-compulsive disorder, suggesting atypical socio-cognitive processing patterns (Dalmaso et al., 2022). Similarly, Japutra et al. found that obsessive-compulsive tendencies are associated with impulsive and maladaptive behavioral patterns in consumer contexts (Japutra et al., 2022). Jalal et al. further discussed how contamination fears and compulsive behaviors intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic, reflecting the pervasive influence of obsessive psychopathology on emotional functioning and everyday behaviors (Jalal et al., 2022). These findings indicate that obsessive-compulsive characteristics can influence not only the affected individuals but also the emotional climate of family environments in which children develop.

The developmental consequences of insecure attachment are particularly concerning because attachment insecurity has been associated with a broad range of psychopathological outcomes, including borderline personality features, emotional dysregulation, anxiety disorders, and impaired interpersonal functioning (Bozzatello et al., 2019). Furthermore, attachment insecurity may weaken adaptive coping resources and increase vulnerability to stress-related conditions. Ding et al. demonstrated that coping styles and perceived stress significantly influence psychological distress (Ding et al., 2021), while Li et al. found that social support and coping strategies play important roles in emotional adjustment (Li et al., 2021). Children raised by mothers with obsessive tendencies may therefore face cumulative developmental risks involving emotional insecurity, maladaptive coping, and heightened stress vulnerability.

Although previous studies have examined obsessive-compulsive disorder, parenting practices, and attachment insecurity separately, relatively limited research has specifically compared attachment styles among adolescents and adults with obsessive and non-obsessive mothers. Existing investigations have primarily focused either on clinical OCD populations or on adult attachment patterns among diagnosed patients (Hodny et al., 2021; Pozza, Marazziti, et al., 2021). Moreover, much of the literature has emphasized symptom severity and neurobiological

mechanisms rather than developmental family processes influencing offspring attachment formation. Comparative studies examining both adolescents and adults within the context of maternal obsessive characteristics remain scarce. This gap is important because developmental stage may moderate the manifestation of attachment insecurity and emotional adaptation. Adolescents are still strongly embedded within family systems, whereas adults may exhibit more stabilized internal working models shaped by earlier family experiences. Therefore, investigating attachment styles across these developmental stages may provide a more comprehensive understanding of the long-term psychological implications of maternal obsessive tendencies.

Additionally, contemporary conceptualizations increasingly emphasize the mediating role of attachment processes in obsessive-compulsive psychopathology. Nanava and Raisi demonstrated that attachment styles mediate the relationship between fear of self and obsessive-compulsive symptoms (Nanava & Raisi, 2025). Akbarzadeh similarly reported that dysfunctional obsessive beliefs mediate the relationship between attachment styles and nomophobia among university students (Akbarzadeh, 2025). These findings support the notion that attachment insecurity constitutes a significant psychological vulnerability factor linked with maladaptive cognitive-emotional processes. Consequently, understanding attachment patterns among children of obsessive mothers may contribute to early identification of psychological risk factors and facilitate the development of preventive interventions targeting emotional security and adaptive coping mechanisms.

Furthermore, psychosocial adjustment and behavioral outcomes may also be indirectly influenced by attachment insecurity and family psychopathology. Kulkarni and Sullivan noted associations between emotional and behavioral adjustment difficulties and broader developmental outcomes (Kulkarni & Sullivan, 2022). Emotional insecurity within the family environment may therefore contribute not only to relational dysfunction but also to broader academic, behavioral, and psychological maladjustment. Yani and Samanik also illustrated the pervasive psychological impact of obsessive-compulsive symptoms through literary analysis, highlighting the emotional distress and relational disruption associated with obsessive experiences (Yani & Samanik, 2023). Collectively, these findings suggest that obsessive family environments may exert profound influences on emotional

development and attachment security across multiple developmental domains.

Given the theoretical importance of attachment relationships, the documented influence of maternal psychological functioning on child development, and the growing evidence linking obsessive-compulsive pathology with attachment insecurity, examining attachment styles among adolescents and adults with obsessive and non-obsessive mothers appears necessary. Such investigations may contribute to a better understanding of developmental vulnerabilities associated with maternal obsessive behaviors and provide implications for preventive family-based psychological interventions. Therefore, the present study aimed to compare attachment styles in adolescents and adults with obsessive mothers and those with non-obsessive mothers.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

The present study employed a causal-comparative (ex post facto) design. The statistical population consisted of all individuals aged 14 to 40 years residing in District 4 of Tabriz in 2026 whose mothers had referred to psychological centers and clinics due to obsessive behaviors; the size of this population was reported to be 2,736 individuals. Cochran's formula was used to determine the sample size, and ultimately 340 participants were selected through convenience sampling. Inclusion criteria included belonging to one of the two age groups of adolescents (14–19 years) or adults (20–40 years), having a mother with a specified psychological status (obsessive or non-obsessive), willingness to cooperate, and the ability to complete the Attachment Styles Questionnaire. Exclusion criteria included unwillingness to continue participation at any stage of the study and inability to complete the questionnaires during the research process.

After obtaining the necessary permissions and referring to the psychological centers and clinics in District 4 of Tabriz, eligible participants were first identified based on the inclusion criteria. Following an explanation of the study objectives and the acquisition of informed consent, the questionnaires were administered in person. Participants completed the questionnaires in a calm environment free from external interference, and when necessary, the researcher clarified the instructions to improve response accuracy. After data collection, the questionnaires were reviewed, and incomplete cases or those not meeting the

study criteria were excluded according to the exclusion criteria. Finally, valid data were entered into the analysis stage.

2.2. Measures

Attachment Styles Questionnaire: The Adult Attachment Styles Questionnaire was originally developed by Hazan and Shaver {Hazan & Shaver, 1987} to assess secure, avoidant, and ambivalent attachment styles in adults. This instrument was designed based on Ainsworth's three-category attachment classification and consists of three descriptive statements regarding individuals' feelings toward intimacy and close relationships, with respondents rating the degree to which each statement corresponds to their personal experiences on a seven-point Likert scale. In the original study conducted by the developers, the reliability of the instrument was reported to be satisfactory, with a test-retest reliability coefficient of 0.81 and a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.87 {Hazan & Shaver, 1987}. Evidence for convergent validity was also reported by Levy and Davis {Levy & Davis, 1988}; specifically, the secure attachment style showed correlations of 0.25, 0.19, and 0.18 with the intimacy, commitment, and passion subscales of Sternberg's Love Questionnaire, respectively. For the ambivalent attachment style, the correlation coefficients were -0.24 , -0.21 , and -0.24 , whereas for the avoidant attachment style, the coefficients were -0.32 , -0.28 , and -0.24 , all indicating acceptable convergent validity of the instrument. In the

Iranian standardization study, Besharat {Besharat, 2011} reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.85 for secure attachment, 0.85 for insecure avoidant attachment, and 0.84 for anxious-ambivalent attachment. In the present study, the calculated Cronbach's alpha coefficients were 0.82 for secure attachment, 0.79 for insecure avoidant attachment, and 0.78 for insecure anxious-ambivalent attachment.

2.3. Data Analysis

To examine differences and compare the research variables across the study groups, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was employed. The analyses were conducted using SPSS version 27 at a significance level of 0.05.

3. Findings and Results

The age distribution of the participants indicated that the mean age of the adolescent group was 15.8 years with a standard deviation of 1.9 years, and the age range was between 14 and 19 years. Regarding gender, 88 participants (52%) were female and 82 participants (48%) were male, indicating a relatively balanced sample distribution. In the adult group, the mean age of participants was 32.4 years with a standard deviation of 8.1 years, and their ages ranged from 20 to 40 years. In terms of gender, 94 participants (55%) were women and 76 participants (45%) were men. Table 1 presents the descriptive indices of the research variables.

Table 1

Descriptive Indices of the Research Variables

Variable	Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Secure Attachment	Obsessive Mothers	12.25	4.31	0.743	-0.221
	Non-Obsessive Mothers	15.87	3.04	0.543	0.102
Insecure Avoidant Attachment	Obsessive Mothers	20.03	4.04	0.045	1.03
	Non-Obsessive Mothers	18.34	4.37	0.890	-0.055
Insecure Anxious Attachment	Obsessive Mothers	15.68	4.98	-0.238	0.918
	Non-Obsessive Mothers	12.27	3.87	0.055	-0.718

The results presented in Table 1 indicate that the mean score of secure attachment among children of non-obsessive mothers (15.87) was higher than that of children of obsessive mothers (12.25), suggesting a higher level of emotional security and trust in relationships within this group. In contrast, the mean scores of insecure attachment styles were higher among children of obsessive mothers. Specifically, the mean score of insecure avoidant attachment in this group (20.03) was higher than that of the non-obsessive mothers

group (18.34), and the mean score of insecure anxious attachment among children of obsessive mothers (15.68) was also higher than that of children of non-obsessive mothers (12.27). This pattern suggests that children of mothers with obsessive tendencies are more likely to exhibit insecure attachment patterns. Furthermore, examination of the skewness and kurtosis indices in both groups demonstrated that the values were within an acceptable range and that the data distribution exhibited relative

normality; therefore, the use of parametric statistical tests for data analysis was considered appropriate.

Table 2

Results of the Significance Tests for Multivariate Analysis of Variance of Attachment Styles

Effect	Test	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	p	Eta Squared
Group Effect	Pillai's Trace	0.469	6.864	2	57	0.001	0.469
	Wilks' Lambda	0.531	6.864	2	57	0.001	0.469
	Hotelling's Trace	0.833	6.864	2	57	0.001	0.469
	Roy's Largest Root	0.833	6.864	2	57	0.001	0.469

As shown in Table 2, the significance levels of all tests supported the appropriateness of using multivariate analysis of variance. These findings indicate that there was a significant difference between the studied groups in at least one of the dependent variables (Wilks' Lambda = 0.53, F = 6.86, $p < .01$). The eta squared value demonstrates that the

difference between the groups with respect to the dependent variables was significant overall, and according to Wilks' Lambda, the magnitude of this difference was 0.46, indicating that 46% of the variance related to differences between the groups was attributable to the combined effect of the dependent variables.

Table 3

Results of Multivariate Analysis of Variance for Examining the Effect of Group on Attachment Styles

Source of Variation	Dependent Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	Eta Squared
Model	Tendency Toward Secure Style	234253.012	1	234253.012	258.097	0.000	0.768
	Tendency Toward Avoidant Style	11882.813	1	11882.813	37.855	0.000	0.327
	Tendency Toward Ambivalent Style	183648.613	1	183648.613	101.760	0.000	0.911
Group	Tendency Toward Secure Style	10374.012	1	10374.012	11.430	0.001	0.128
	Tendency Toward Avoidant Style	1757.813	1	1757.813	5.600	0.020	0.067
	Tendency Toward Ambivalent Style	2964.613	1	2964.613	12.930	0.001	0.142
Error	Tendency Toward Secure Style	70793.975	57	907.615			
	Tendency Toward Avoidant Style	24484.375	57	313.902			
	Tendency Toward Ambivalent Style	17883.775	57	229.279			

As shown in Table 3, there were significant differences in the tendency toward different attachment styles between adolescents with obsessive mothers and those with non-obsessive mothers ($p < .05$). Therefore, it can be concluded that the research hypothesis was confirmed, indicating that the tendency toward different attachment styles differs significantly between adolescents with obsessive mothers and adolescents with non-obsessive mothers.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed to compare attachment styles in adolescents and adults with obsessive mothers and those with non-obsessive mothers. The findings demonstrated significant differences between the two groups in terms of attachment patterns. Specifically, children of obsessive mothers obtained lower scores on secure attachment and higher scores on insecure anxious and avoidant attachment styles compared to children of non-obsessive mothers. These

findings indicate that maternal obsessive characteristics may negatively influence the formation of emotional security and adaptive relational schemas in offspring. The results support the assumption that family emotional climate and maternal psychological functioning play critical roles in the development of attachment representations across adolescence and adulthood.

One of the principal findings of the study was the lower level of secure attachment among children of obsessive mothers. This finding is theoretically consistent with attachment theory, which emphasizes that secure attachment develops through stable emotional responsiveness, consistent caregiving, and sensitive interpersonal interactions. Mothers with obsessive tendencies often experience heightened anxiety, intrusive thoughts, perfectionism, excessive control, and cognitive rigidity, all of which may reduce emotional availability and disrupt responsive caregiving patterns. Consequently, children

raised in such environments may develop uncertainty regarding emotional support and interpersonal trust. This finding aligns with the work of Nielsen et al., who demonstrated that insecure attachment and difficulties in emotion regulation are strongly associated with obsessive-compulsive pathology (Nielsen et al., 2025). Similarly, Hodny et al. reported elevated levels of insecure attachment among individuals with obsessive-compulsive disorder, emphasizing the importance of relational insecurity in obsessive symptomatology (Hodny et al., 2021). The present findings extend this perspective by suggesting that obsessive tendencies in mothers may contribute not only to their own attachment difficulties but also to maladaptive attachment formation in their children.

The higher levels of anxious attachment observed among children of obsessive mothers can also be interpreted within the framework of inconsistent emotional responsiveness and elevated family anxiety. Anxious attachment is typically characterized by fear of abandonment, emotional dependency, hypervigilance to interpersonal cues, and persistent concerns regarding relational stability. Mothers with obsessive traits may display fluctuating emotional responsiveness due to preoccupation with obsessive concerns and compulsive behaviors, thereby creating unpredictable emotional environments for children. This inconsistency may encourage children to become excessively dependent on approval and reassurance while simultaneously experiencing insecurity regarding relational acceptance. These findings correspond with the results reported by Pozza et al., who found strong associations between attachment insecurity and obsessive-compulsive symptoms (Pozza, Marazziti, et al., 2021). Nanava and Raisi also demonstrated that attachment insecurity mediates obsessive-compulsive symptoms through maladaptive self-related fears and emotional vulnerability (Nanava & Raisi, 2025). Therefore, the current findings support the notion that obsessive family environments may foster relational anxiety and emotional instability in offspring.

The findings also revealed elevated avoidant attachment among children of obsessive mothers. Avoidant attachment is often associated with emotional distancing, suppression of emotional needs, distrust of intimacy, and discomfort with interpersonal dependence. In families characterized by obsessive rigidity and excessive control, children may learn to minimize emotional expression and avoid closeness as protective strategies against criticism, anxiety, or emotional unpredictability. Such children may gradually internalize beliefs that emotional needs are unlikely to be met

consistently, leading to relational withdrawal and emotional self-reliance. This interpretation is consistent with Sharma's findings regarding the association between maladaptive schemas, insecure attachment, and obsessive-compulsive pathology (Sharma, 2021). Likewise, Yadav emphasized the relationship between dysfunctional parenting styles, attachment insecurity, and obsessive-compulsive tendencies (Yadav, 2021). The current findings therefore suggest that maternal obsessive characteristics may contribute to both anxious and avoidant relational strategies depending on how children adapt to emotionally stressful family conditions.

Another important aspect of the findings is that attachment insecurity was observed in both adolescents and adults with obsessive mothers, indicating that the effects of maternal obsessive behaviors may persist across developmental stages. Attachment theory proposes that internal working models formed during childhood tend to remain relatively stable throughout life unless modified through corrective emotional experiences. Consequently, emotional insecurity developed in early family interactions may continue to influence interpersonal functioning during adulthood. This interpretation is supported by research demonstrating long-term associations between attachment insecurity and adult psychopathology. Bozzatello et al. highlighted that early relational disturbances and emotional dysregulation contribute significantly to later personality dysfunction and psychological vulnerability (Bozzatello et al., 2019). Similarly, Nielsen et al. emphasized the enduring relationship between attachment insecurity, emotional dysregulation, and obsessive-compulsive symptoms during adulthood (Nielsen et al., 2025). Therefore, the present findings suggest that the relational consequences of maternal obsessive behaviors may extend beyond adolescence and continue to affect emotional functioning later in life.

The findings may also be explained through the role of emotional regulation processes within obsessive family systems. Mothers with obsessive tendencies frequently experience chronic anxiety, heightened perceived threat, perfectionistic concerns, and excessive monitoring behaviors. Such emotional conditions may limit children's opportunities to develop adaptive emotional regulation skills and autonomous coping mechanisms. Children exposed to chronic parental anxiety may internalize heightened sensitivity to uncertainty and interpersonal stress, which in turn contributes to attachment insecurity. This interpretation corresponds with findings reported by Ding et al., who demonstrated that maladaptive coping styles and perceived stress significantly predict psychological distress (Ding et

al., 2021). Li et al. similarly emphasized the protective role of social support and adaptive coping in emotional adjustment (Li et al., 2021). In families affected by obsessive psychopathology, emotional support and flexibility may be compromised, thereby weakening children's emotional resilience and attachment security.

The current findings are also consistent with studies highlighting the role of parenting styles and perfectionism in obsessive-compulsive symptom development. Hu et al. found that parenting styles influence obsessive-compulsive symptoms indirectly through perfectionism (Hu et al., 2023). Mothers with obsessive tendencies may unintentionally impose rigid standards, excessive expectations, or overprotective behaviors on children, thereby increasing psychological pressure and emotional insecurity. Such parenting environments may hinder children's ability to develop autonomy and emotional confidence. Akbarzadeh further demonstrated that dysfunctional obsessive beliefs mediate the relationship between attachment styles and maladaptive technological anxiety, indicating that attachment insecurity may interact with obsessive cognitive structures in broader psychosocial contexts (Akbarzadeh, 2025). Consequently, attachment insecurity among children of obsessive mothers may reflect both emotional and cognitive developmental vulnerabilities.

The findings can additionally be interpreted in light of broader psychosocial dysfunction associated with obsessive-compulsive pathology. Goodman et al. emphasized that obsessive-compulsive disorder involves significant impairments in emotional processing, cognitive flexibility, and behavioral regulation (Goodman et al., 2021). Such impairments may reduce parental emotional attunement and responsiveness during daily interactions with children. Similarly, Dalmaso et al. demonstrated atypical attentional processes among individuals with obsessive-compulsive disorder, suggesting alterations in socio-emotional processing (Dalmaso et al., 2022). These cognitive-emotional impairments may contribute to emotionally strained family interactions and weaken the development of secure attachment bonds. Jalal et al. also highlighted how obsessive fears and compulsive behaviors intensify psychological distress and interfere with adaptive functioning (Jalal et al., 2022). Collectively, these findings reinforce the interpretation that obsessive maternal characteristics may shape family emotional environments in ways that increase attachment insecurity in offspring.

The present findings also align with studies emphasizing the intergenerational transmission of emotional and

relational difficulties. Borelli et al. demonstrated that maternal psychological experiences and trauma-related functioning influence children's emotional adjustment and relational development (Borelli et al., 2019). MacMillan et al. similarly found that maternal emotional well-being and social support significantly affect mother-child emotional interactions (MacMillan et al., 2021). These studies suggest that maternal psychopathology can influence offspring development through disruptions in emotional availability and caregiving quality. In the context of obsessive mothers, chronic anxiety, emotional preoccupation, and compulsive behaviors may limit opportunities for emotionally secure interactions, thereby facilitating insecure attachment formation in children.

The findings may also have implications for understanding broader psychosocial outcomes associated with attachment insecurity. Previous studies have linked insecure attachment with behavioral maladjustment, interpersonal dysfunction, emotional distress, and reduced psychological well-being (Kulkarni & Sullivan, 2022; Lai & Yeung, 2023). Adolescents and adults with insecure attachment may experience difficulties in trust formation, emotional intimacy, self-esteem, and adaptive coping. Moreover, attachment insecurity may increase vulnerability to future anxiety-related disorders and obsessive-compulsive symptoms. Pozza et al. found that obsessive beliefs are closely associated with emotional and interpersonal dysfunction (Pozza, Dettore, et al., 2021). Therefore, the elevated insecure attachment observed among children of obsessive mothers may represent an important developmental risk factor for later psychological difficulties.

Another notable implication of the present findings involves the importance of early identification and preventive intervention. Since attachment styles are shaped significantly by early caregiving experiences, interventions targeting family emotional functioning may reduce long-term psychological vulnerability among children of obsessive mothers. Hasani and Shirkondmoghaddam emphasized the influential role of mothers in shaping children's emotional and cognitive development within family systems (Hasani & Shirkondmoghaddam, 2023). Improving maternal emotional regulation, parenting flexibility, and relational responsiveness may therefore contribute to healthier attachment formation in offspring. Such interventions may be particularly important during adolescence, a developmental stage characterized by heightened emotional sensitivity and identity formation.

The findings of the present study also contribute to the growing literature emphasizing the relational dimensions of obsessive-compulsive pathology. Although many previous investigations have focused primarily on neurobiological or symptom-based explanations of obsessive-compulsive disorder (Blanco-Vieira et al., 2023; Goodman et al., 2021), the current results highlight the importance of family emotional dynamics and attachment processes. Obsessive psychopathology appears to influence not only the affected individuals but also the emotional development of family members, particularly children exposed to chronic anxiety and maladaptive relational patterns. This perspective supports more integrative conceptualizations of obsessive-compulsive pathology that incorporate developmental, interpersonal, and attachment-related mechanisms.

One limitation of the present study was the use of a causal-comparative design, which restricts causal interpretations regarding the relationship between maternal obsessive characteristics and attachment styles. Additionally, the use of convenience sampling and restriction of the sample to one geographical region may limit the generalizability of the findings to broader populations. Another limitation was reliance on self-report questionnaires, which may be influenced by response biases, social desirability, or participants' subjective perceptions. Furthermore, other influential family variables such as paternal psychological functioning, socioeconomic status, family conflict, and parenting quality were not controlled in the present study.

Future research is recommended to employ longitudinal and developmental designs to examine how maternal obsessive characteristics influence attachment formation across different stages of development. Investigating mediating variables such as emotion regulation, parenting practices, perfectionism, family cohesion, and coping styles may also provide a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms underlying attachment insecurity in children of obsessive mothers. Moreover, future studies could compare clinical and non-clinical populations, include fathers' psychological characteristics, and utilize observational or mixed-method approaches to improve the depth and validity of findings.

From a practical perspective, the findings highlight the importance of developing preventive and family-based psychological interventions for families affected by obsessive tendencies. Mental health professionals may benefit from incorporating attachment-focused approaches into therapeutic programs for obsessive-compulsive disorder

and parenting interventions. Educational workshops aimed at improving emotional responsiveness, adaptive parenting skills, stress management, and healthy family communication may help reduce attachment insecurity among children. Early screening and psychological support for adolescents and adults raised in obsessive family environments may also contribute to improved emotional adjustment and long-term psychological well-being.

Authors' Contributions

All authors significantly contributed to this study.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

Acknowledgments

We hereby thank all individuals for participating and cooperating us in this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

Funding

According to the authors, this article has no financial support.

Ethical Considerations

In this study, to observe ethical considerations, participants were informed about the goals and importance of the research before the start of the study and participated in the research with informed consent.

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