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Review of the Doctoral Dissertation by Emrullah Ecer

Emrullah Ecer's doctoral dissertation, entitled "*Objectification and Exchange Orientation as Attachment Insecurity: An Exploration of Their Relationship and Underlying Psychological Mechanisms*," is based on a series of nine studies reported in three peer-reviewed publications. The studies aim to identify the compensatory mechanisms associated with an insecure attachment style.

The first article entitle *From Insecurity to Exchange: Attachment Anxiety and Avoidance Predict Exchange Orientation via Different Psychological Mechanisms* published in *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, comprising three studies, examined whether and why attachment insecurities are associated with an exchange orientation in interpersonal relationships. In particular, the authors investigated whether attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance predict a stronger tendency to exchange orientation – view romantic partners and acquaintances in terms of exchange relationships. The authors proposed that an exchange orientation may serve different psychological needs for individuals with

different forms of attachment insecurity. For individuals experiencing attachment anxiety, an exchange orientation may provide a sense of certainty, predictability, and structure in interpersonal relationships. In contrast, for individuals characterized by attachment avoidance, an exchange orientation may reflect a need for autonomy, independence, and self-control.

The second article, entitled *From Insecurity to Instrumentality: Exchange Orientation as a Relational Mechanism Linking Attachment to Interpersonal Objectification* and published in the *British Journal of Social Psychology*, reports three studies employing complementary quasi-longitudinal and experimental designs. The studies investigated whether exchange orientation towards romantic partners functions as a relational mechanism linking attachment insecurity to interpersonal objectification. The authors proposed that although an exchange orientation may serve different psychological needs among individuals characterised by attachment insecurity, it may also carry interpersonal costs, including an increased tendency to objectify others. In the quasi-longitudinal study conducted in the United Kingdom, exchange orientation mediated the relationships between both attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance and interpersonal objectification. In the second experimental study conducted in the United States, activating attachment anxiety or avoidance increased interpersonal objectification through heightened exchange orientation. The third study, also experiment conducted in Canada using a mediation-by-moderation design, demonstrated that activating an exchange orientation strengthened the relationship between attachment insecurity and objectification. The findings indicate that exchange orientation may serve as a coping strategy for attachment insecurity, but may simultaneously produce adverse interpersonal consequences by fostering the tendency to objectify others.

The third article, entitled *Uncovering the Link Between Attachment and Interpersonal Objectification: The Role of Theory of Mind and Empathy* and published in *Acta Psychologica*,

reports three studies conducted in Poland, the United Kingdom, and Italy. The studies examined whether attachment avoidance predicts a persistent tendency towards interpersonal objectification and sought to identify the sociocognitive mechanisms, other than exchange orientation, that might explain this relationship. In particular, the authors investigated Theory of Mind and empathy as potential mechanisms linking attachment avoidance to the objectification of others. The theoretical rationale was based on the deactivating strategies characteristic of attachment avoidance: the suppression of emotional needs, distancing from other people's internal states, and prioritisation of self-reliance over relational engagement. These strategies may contribute to deficits in mentalisation and affective resonance, thereby reducing the psychological processes that normally inhibit the instrumental perception of others. Across all three studies, attachment avoidance was consistently associated with a stronger tendency to objectify others. This relationship was accounted for by differences in Theory of Mind and by empathy. The findings therefore extend the previous studies by demonstrating that the relationship between attachment avoidance and interpersonal objectification involves not only exchange-based thinking but also more fundamental sociocognitive and affective processes.

Several aspects of the research conducted and reported in the articles deserve particular attention. First, the studies were carried out in several countries, including Poland, the United Kingdom, Canada, Italy, and South Africa, which supports universality and the cross-cultural relevance of the phenomena and relationships under investigation. Second, the findings provide a complex and multidimensional account of these relationships and are replicated across studies employing different methodologies and different operationalisation of the same constructs (e.g. attachment and objectification). The research programme included cross-sectional, longitudinal, and experimental designs. Another indication that the

research was conducted in accordance with current standards of scientific practice is that most of the studies reported in the dissertation were preregistered.

All three articles were co-authored, with Emrullah Ecer listed as either the first or second author. In the first article, *"From Insecurity to Exchange..."*, he is the second of two authors, with a declared contribution of 50 per cent. In the second article, *"From Insecurity to Instrumentality..."*, he is the first of two authors, likewise with a declared contribution of 50 per cent. In the third article, *"Uncovering the Link..."*, he is the first of four authors, with a declared contribution of 30 per cent. Taken together, these authorship positions and declared contributions indicate that Emrullah Ecer made a substantial and, in two cases, leading contribution to the research presented in the dissertation. They also demonstrate his ability to collaborate effectively within international research teams.

All three articles underwent a rigorous peer-review process and were published in well-established and respected psychology journals. *Acta Psychologica* is assigned 70 points in the Polish ministerial ranking and has a Journal Impact Factor of 3.8. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology* is assigned 100 ministerial points and has a Journal Impact Factor of 1.9, while the *British Journal of Social Psychology* is likewise assigned 100 ministerial points and has a Journal Impact Factor of 3.8. The standing and bibliometric indicators of these journals confirm the high academic standard of the publications included in the dissertation.

The studies presented in the articles demonstrate the doctoral candidate's strong research competence and academic writing skills. The studies are carefully designed and methodologically rigorous, and the data are thoroughly analysed using appropriate and advanced statistical methods. The findings are clearly presented and discussed with reference to an extensive body of relevant literature. Taken together, these qualities demonstrate Emrullah Ecer's considerable methodological expertise, analytical skills, theoretical knowledge, and ability to communicate research findings effectively.

The articles are well written and the research projects have been carefully conducted; consequently, it is difficult to formulate any substantial criticisms of them. I occasionally had certain reservations, but most of these were addressed in the extensive discussion of the findings, particularly in the sections devoted to the limitations of the studies. It would be particularly interesting if future research included experiments in which exchange orientation was treated as a dependent variable and measured as a function of manipulations of other variables. The doctoral candidate also acknowledges the relatively small effect sizes, which suggest that factors not considered in the studies conducted thus far may play a more important role in explaining the relationships among attachment insecurity, exchange orientation, and objectification.

In conclusion, I consider the dissertation to be of high scholarly value. The doctoral candidate has demonstrated extensive theoretical knowledge in the discipline of psychology, as well as the ability to conduct complex research projects independently and to collaborate effectively within international research teams. The dissertation also provides an original contribution to the scientific understanding of the phenomena under investigation. I therefore conclude that the submitted dissertation meets the requirements set out in Article 187 of the Act of 20 July 2018 – Law on Higher Education and Science. I highly recommend that Candidate to the final stage of the doctoral procedure, which is the public defence.

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