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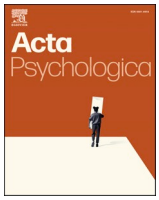

Properties of the SLOVAK and CZECH version of the Relationships Questionnaire (RQ)

Lenka Lapčák Kratochvílová [a,*], Jana Fűrstová [a], Jozef Hašto [a], Júlia Švecová [a], Peter Tavel [a], Natália Kaščáková [a,b]

[a] Palacky University, Olomouc, Olomouc University Social Health Institute, Czechia
[b] Psychiatric-Psychotherapeutic Outpatient Clinic, Pro mente sana, Bratislava, Slovakia

A B S T R A C T

Aims: The study aimed to assess the properties of the Slovak and Czech version of the Relationships Questionnaire (RQ) designed to measure adult attachment styles and to examine the sociodemographic differences among Slovak and Czech respondents.
Sample, settings, and methods: Representative samples of the adult Slovak population ($N = 1018$) and the Czech population ($N = 1800$) were collected. The Experience of Close Relationship – Revised (ECR-R) was used to assess the convergent validity of the RQ. The Short Form Health Survey (SF-8) was used to determine the ability of RQ to predict psychological well-being.
Results: In the Slovak and Czech settings, the RQ demonstrates good properties and is a suitable instrument for practical use. ECR-R anxiety and avoidance dimensions were related in the expected manner with secure, fearful, and dismissive categories, except for the category preoccupied. The RQ categories and dimensions proved to predict ECR-R anxiety and avoidance. There was also a significant relationship with psychological well-being in both samples.
Conclusion: The RQ questionnaire is a suitable tool for measuring relationships in adulthood.
Limitations: The main limitation of this research is that we did not address the possible discrepancy between administering the RQ using the Quick Choice and the Likert scale.

1. Introduction

Attachment theory remains deeply rooted in Bowlby's original formulations, particularly the concepts of a secure base and internal working models that guide socio-emotional functioning across the lifespan (Thompson et al., 2022). The child has an instinctive need for a close and continuous relationship during early development with the mother or another permanent caregiver (Bowlby, 1952). The mother provides the child with boundless love and care, and attends to all their needs (Bowlby, 1973; Hašto, 2005). Through these interactions, an attachment style is formed, which operates as an internal working model. When the mother is receptive and responsive to the child's needs, a sense of security is created in the child and the child has comfort with closeness and trust in others. However, in cases where the mother is not consistently available and supportive, a sense of security is not achieved, leading to the formation of negative inner working models, e.g., doubts regarding self-worth or concerns about others' intentions (Bowlby, 1988). Although originally focused on child–parent relationships, attachment theory has expanded to include various close relationships, such as romantic and peer relationships, raising questions about the conceptual boundaries of what constitutes an attachment relationship (Thompson et al., 2022). Research has shown the connection between attachment and the quality of mental and physical health (Farrell et al., 2018; Failo et al., 2019; Sharifian et al., 2019; van der Watt, 2014) as well as the establishment of relationships in adulthood (Schmoeger et al., 2018). These early experiences influence, for example, emotional regulation, resilience, and relationship satisfaction (Bowlby, 1982; Diamond & Hicks, 2005; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). A recent meta-analysis synthesizing data from 46 studies confirmed that adult attachment insecurity is associated with lower levels of self-compassion (Huang & Wu, 2024). Recent findings from research conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic (Eder et al., 2021; Vowels et al., 2021) support the relevance of attachment insecurity as a vulnerability factor for mental health outcomes and quality of intimate relationships. Attachment anxiety was associated with higher levels of depression and anxiety. Individuals high in attachment anxiety struggled to adapt to the prolonged stress of lockdown, while those low in anxiety showed improvements in mental health over time, suggesting that more securely attached individuals may recover more effectively from situational stress. Although attachment avoidance was initially hypothesized to

* Corresponding author.
E-mail address: lenka.lapcak@oushi.upol.cz (L. Lapčák Kratochvílová).

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predict distress, it did not significantly relate to depression, anxiety, or mood fluctuations. These findings further reinforce the distinctive role of anxious attachment as a predictor of psychological vulnerability in crises.

Self-evaluation measurement tools like questionnaires and scales for measurement of adult attachment style are important not only for research, but also find their use in clinical practice (Wongpakaran et al., 2021). Measures of attachment categorize individuals into attachment styles or assess the extent of different dimensions of attachment (Ravitz et al., 2010). Ainsworth et al. (1978) introduced a typology of attachment styles. The secure style entails comfort with closeness, interdependence, and confidence in others' love. The avoidant style is characterized by insecurity in others and a preference for distance. The anxious-ambivalent style reflects a strong desire for intimacy along with insecurity about others' responses. Based on this typology, for example, a questionnaire called Adult Attachment Styles (Hazan & Shaver, 1987) has been developed.

However, during the past decades, researchers have reached a consensus that attachment has two dimensions, which are considered orthogonal: anxiety and avoidance (Mikulincer et al., 2003). Attachment anxiety indicates concern about a partner's availability and support during times of need, prompting efforts to maintain closeness. In contrast, attachment avoidance reflects distrust in partners' goodwill and ability to help, leading to a preference for independence and self-reliance. These dimensions are measured by the Adult Attachment Questionnaire (AAQ) (Simpson et al., 2002) or the Experience in Close Relationships Revised (ECR-R) (Fraley et al., 2000). Lower scores on these dimensions indicate relatively secure attachment (Mikulincer et al., 2003). However, individuals with a history of unresponsive, cruel, or neglectful caregivers may score high in anxiety and/or avoidance, leading to insecure attachment styles.

The creation of the Relationship Questionnaire (RQ) was based on Bowlby's work, which provided a theoretical background for classification of individual differences in adult attachment (Garbarino, 1998). In Bartholomew and Horowitz's (1991) original study, the RQ was used in a categorical format, with participants selecting the one paragraph that best described their attachment style. These categories were then related to interpersonal problems (IIP) dimensions. The dimensional scoring of the RQ, including Likert-scale ratings and the derivation of model of self and model of other, was introduced later by Griffin and Bartholomew (1994) to allow more nuanced analysis. In the study by Stein et al., 2002 conducted on adolescents, the researchers modified RQ by asking participants to rate each of the four attachment styles on a scale from 0 to 100 and to use each value no more than once. Researchers Holmes and Lyons-Ruth (2006) created a clinical version of RQ (RQ-CV), which can detect attachment attitudes connected to severe attachment issues. RQ was part of the questionnaire battery in the International Sexuality Description Project (ISDP), which involved over 17,000 participants across 62 cultural regions (Schmitt, 2002; Schmitt et al., 2003). Although not always analyzed in final reports, its administration in large-scale cross-cultural surveys supports its practical applicability of the RQ in large-scale studies. Compared to other adult attachment measures, the RQ offers a simple and time-efficient tool that enables researchers to capture both categorical and dimensional aspects of attachment, making it suitable for large-scale surveys where longer questionnaires may not be feasible.

Internal consistency of the Relationship Questionnaire (RQ) cannot be obtained because each attachment style is measured by a single statement (Wongpakaran et al., 2021). Consequently, the standard validation process is not feasible. One approach to validate the RQ is to compare its results with the ECR-R and establish their theoretical agreement. Hence, this study aimed to examine the convergent validity of the RQ by comparing and explaining its results with the ECR-R in the Slovak and Czech samples, and to explore its association with general psychological well-being, using the Mental Component Summary (MCS) of the SF-8 as a proxy indicator.

2. Methods

2.1. Participants and procedure

2.1.1. Slovak sample

The Slovak sample (SK sample) consisted of 1018 participants aged 18–85, collected in April 2019 via a professional agency (FOCUS) using personal interviews (CAPI - Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing) (Baker, 1992). Quota sampling was applied to match the population structure in terms of age, gender, education, nationality, size of residence, and region, based on data from the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic. Although these six variables were used in quota sampling, representativeness is reported with respect to the four key demographic indicators (gender, age, education, and regional affiliation) commonly used in population. Participants were informed about the study purpose and data protection, and their participation was voluntary.

2.1.2. Czech sample

The Czech sample (CZ sample) included 1800 participants aged 15–88, collected in September and October 2016 by a survey agency. Quota sampling was used to reflect population characteristics in terms of age, gender, education, nationality, size of residence, and region, based on Czech Statistical Office data. As with the Slovak sample, representativeness is evaluated based on age, gender, education, and regional affiliation, which are considered core indicators in survey research.

2.1.3. Ethics approval and consent to participate

Respondents were informed about the aim of the study and voluntarily agreed to participate. All participants agreed with the electronic informed consent, including the data protection declaration, before their participation in the study. In the Czech study, parental informed consent for adolescents 15–18 years of age was obtained prior to the study. No monetary compensation was offered for participating in the study. The Slovak and Czech studies were approved by the Ethical Scientific Committee of Palacký University Olomouc, which serves as the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for research involving human participants at the university. Approval was granted on 5th March 2019 (Ref. No. 2019/05) for the Slovak study and on 14th June 2016 (Ref. No. 2016/3) for the Czech study. Both studies were conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Relationships Questionnaire (RQ)

RQ consists of four short paragraphs. Each paragraph describes an attachment pattern of close relationships in adulthood (Garbarino, 1998). Secure: "It is easy for me to become emotionally close to others. I am comfortable depending on them and having them depend on me. I don't worry about being alone or having others not accept me." Dismissive: "I am comfortable without close emotional relationships. It is very important to me to feel independent and self-sufficient, and I prefer not to depend on others or have others depend on me." Preoccupied: "I want to be completely emotionally intimate with others, but I often find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I am uncomfortable being without close relationships, but I sometimes worry that others don't value me as much as I value them." Fearful: "I am uncomfortable getting close to others. I want emotionally close relationships, but I find it difficult to trust others completely or to depend on them. I sometimes worry that I will be hurt if I allow myself to become too close to others.". RQ has two parts of administration. In the first part, participants are asked to select in a Quick choice one paragraph that best describes them. In the second part, participants are asked to rate their agreement with each attachment paragraph on a seven-point scale. The highest ratings are then used to classify participant into an attachment style. These four categories form two dimensions: a model of self and a model of others. Participants with a positive model of

self and a positive model of others have a secure attachment (Bartholomew, 1990). The model of self is calculated by summing secure and dismissive items and then subtracting the sum of the preoccupied and fearful items, and the model of others by summing the secure and preoccupied items and then subtracting the sum of the dismissive and fearful items. Positive scores on these attachment representations indicate more positive models, and negative scores indicate more negative models. There are also anxiety and avoidance scores similar to the Experience in Close Relationships – Revised scale (ECR-R). The RQ anxiety score is calculated by summing preoccupied and fearful items and then subtracting the sum of secure and dismissive items. RQ avoidance score is calculated by summing dismissive and fearful items and then subtracting the sum of secure and preoccupied items. The model of self and model of others correspond to the anxiety and avoidance dimensions. In the Slovak sample, both the Quick choice and Likert scale formats of the RQ were administered. In contrast, in the Czech data collection, only the Likert scale was used. While this difference limits the possibility of direct comparison of categorical attachment styles across samples, all main statistical analyses in this study were conducted based on dimensional scores, ensuring comparability of results between the two datasets.

2.2.2. Experience in close relationships – revised (ECR-R)

ECR-R is a 36-item, self-report measure of attachment in adulthood (Fraley et al., 2000). The ECR-R was used to detect close relationship experiences regarding attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance based on the assumptions of Brennan et al. (1998). According to the theory, the secure style corresponds to low anxiety and low avoidance, fearful to high anxiety and high avoidance, preoccupied to high anxiety and low avoidance, and dismissing to low anxiety and high avoidance. There are 36 items in the complete ECR-R scale: 18 items for the attachment anxiety and 18 for the attachment avoidance. The items are scored on a Likert scale from 1 (Strongly agree) to 7 (Strongly disagree). Items of the avoidance scale are reversed. The ECR-R was validated in Slovakia (Rozvadský Gugová et al., 2014; Rozvadský Gugová & Heretik, 2011) and later, a shorter form of the ECR-R-14 was created (Švecová et al., 2021). In the Czech Republic, the ECR-R was validated on a representative sample of 1000 participants (Kaščáková et al., 2016) and on a representative sample of 1800 respondents (Hašto et al., 2018). In the present study, reliability of the scale was high for both samples, $\alpha = 0.913$ and $\omega = 0.875$ in the Slovak and $\alpha = 0.921$ and $\omega = 0.899$ in the Czech sample.

2.2.3. The short form health survey (SF-8)

The SF-8 is a shorter version of the SF-36, which is one of the most widely used questionnaires used to assess health-related quality of life (Pestillo de Oliveira et al., 2022). The SF-8 questionnaire assesses physical and mental health based on eight domains: 1. general perception of health (GH), 2. physical function (PF), 3. limitation of physical activities (RF), 4. bodily pain (BP), 5. vitality (VT), 6. social functioning (SF), 7. perception of mental health (MH), and 8. emotional role limitation (RE) (Ware et al., 2001). Each item is scored on a six (items 1,4) or five-point (items 2,3,5,6,7,8) Likert type scale. The overall physical health PCS (Physical Component Summary) and the overall mental health MCS (Mental Component Summary) can be calculated. The Czech version was validated by Kabát et al. (2018). The Slovak version of the SF-8 scale is in the process of validation. In the present study, reliability of the scale was high for both samples, $\alpha = 0.933$ and $\omega = 0.937$ in the SK and $\alpha = 0.915$ and $\omega = 0.918$ in the CZ sample. For the purpose of this study, only the Mental Component Summary score (MCS) was used as a general indicator of psychological well-being in the general population. We acknowledge that this is not a diagnostic measure, but rather a broad proxy of mental health functioning.

2.3. Statistical analysis

All the statistical analyses were performed using the IBM SPSS Statistics software version 21 (IBM Corp., Armonk, New York, NY, USA) and the JASP version 0.17.2 (University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands). There were no missing values in the data. Means with standard deviations (SD), frequencies, and percentages were used as descriptive characteristics of the data. Student's *t*-test and ANOVA were used to compare differences between groups. We used ECR-R to examine the convergent validity of RQ since ECR-R is widely accepted as a valid measure of attachment with good psychometric properties. For investigating attachment dimensions and categories, we used Pearson correlation coefficients and regression analysis.

Our hypotheses include statistically significant correlations among attachment categories: secure attachment (low anxiety and avoidance), fearful attachment (high anxiety and avoidance), preoccupied attachment (high anxiety and low avoidance), and dismissive attachment (high avoidance and low anxiety) (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Additionally, we expect positive correlations between RQ anxiety and avoidance and ECR-R anxiety and avoidance. We conducted three multiple linear regression analyses. First, ECR-R Anxiety was entered as the dependent variable, and the four RQ attachment categories (Secure, Fearful, Preoccupied, Dismissive) were entered as predictors. Second, ECR-R Avoidance was regressed on the same four RQ categories. Finally, we examined the predictive value of the RQ categories and dimensions (anxiety and avoidance) for general psychological well-being using SF-8 Mental Component Score (MCS) as the dependent variable. All models included age and gender as covariates. We clarify that all regression models used are linear, and reported coefficients are standardized Beta values. Confidence intervals are provided for each coefficient to enhance interpretability. The significance level was set to $\alpha = 0.001$ due to multiple testing. Other levels of *p*-value are indicated for informative reasons only.

3. Results

3.1. Background characteristics of the samples

Characteristics of the two samples are shown in Tables 1 and 2. In both samples the participants were evenly distributed in terms of gender (51.3 % female). Approximately half of the respondents in both samples were married (SK 54.3 %, CZ 51.6 %). In the Czech sample, more people were single than in the Slovak sample (SK 22.1 %, CZ 24.4 %). Regarding education, the most represented group in both samples were respondents having graduated secondary school (SK 37.5 %, CZ 47.4 %).

Regarding the Quick choice administration in the Slovak sample, the most prevalent attachment style was secure (48.5 %). Following that, preoccupied (18.6 %) and fearful attachment (18.1 %) styles were the next most frequent. The least common attachment style was dismissive (14.8 %). We also compared the attachment categories to which respondents were allocated using the Quick Choice method and the Likert scale. Agreement was assessed based on scores ranging from 5 to 7 on the Likert scale. The results indicated an agreement of 82.4 % for secure attachment, 43.5 % for fearful attachment, 63.5 % for preoccupied attachment, and 68.2 % for dismissive attachment. Conversely, the Quick choice method was not realized in the Czech sample so in this case no comparison was conducted.

In the Slovak sample, married respondents scored significantly higher on secure attachment style compared to the divorced ($p < 0.001$) and widowed group ($p < 0.001$). Married respondents scored significantly lower on dismissive attachment style than single ($p < 0.001$) and widowed group ($p < 0.001$). Single ($p < 0.001$), divorced ($p < 0.001$), and widowed ($p < 0.001$) respondents showed higher attachment avoidance than the married group. Respondents in partnership showed significantly lower attachment avoidance than the divorced ($p < 0.001$). In the Czech sample, married respondents scored significantly higher on

Table 1
Descriptive characteristics of the Slovak sample; distribution of the RQ score and their comparison among groups.

		RQ categories				RQ dimensions	
		secure	fearful	preoccupied	dismissing	anxiety	avoidance
Sociodemographic group	N (%)	mean (SD)	mean (SD)	mean (SD)	mean (SD)	mean (SD)	mean (SD)
Total	1018 (100)	4.65 (1.71)	3.18 (1.59)	3.55 (1.57)	3.34 (1.75)	−1.26 (3.37)	−1.68 (3.52)
Gender *(p-value)*		*0.484*	*0.015*	*0.107*	*0.749*	*0.087*	*0.906*
Men	496 (48.7)	4.61 (1.68)	3.05 (1.52)	3.47 (1.55)	3.36 (1.74)	−1.44 (3.16)	−1.67 (3.56)
Women	522 (51.3)	4.68 (1.74)	3.30 (1.65)	3.63 (1.59)	3.32 (1.76)	−1.08 (3.55)	−1.69 (3.47)
Marital status *(p-value)*		*< 0.001*	*0.006*	*0.275*	*< 0.001*	*0.382*	*< 0.001*
Single	225 (22.1)	4.53 (1.71)	3.47 (1.74)	3.63 (1.62)	3.64 (1.80)	−1.08 (3.72)	−1.05 (3.80)
Married	553 (54.3)	4.86 (1.61)	3.03 (1.53)	3.52 (1.54)	3.11 (1.70)	−1.43 (3.20)	−2.23 (3.33)
Divorced	72 (7.1)	3.92 (1.85)	3.42 (1.52)	3.39 (1.54)	3.76 (1.81)	−0.88 (3.44)	−0.13 (3.74)
Widow/widower	78 (7.7)	4.03 (1.95)	3.05 (1.53)	3.41 (1.72)	3.81 (1.91)	−1.37 (3.24)	−0.58 (3.22)
With partner (not married)	90 (8.8)	4.73 (1.65)	3.24 (1.55)	3.83 (1.52)	3.22 (1.48)	−0.88 (3.52)	−2.10 (3.14)
Education level *(p-value)*		*0.140*	*0.100*	*0.501*	*0.706*	*0.017*	*0.398*
Primary school	137 (13.5)	5.37 (1.57)	3.80 (1.73)	3.83 (1.63)	3.97 (1.93)	−0.93 (3.42)	−1.31 (3.93)
Completed apprenticeship	272 (26.7)	5.43 (1.41)	3.74 (1.70)	3.99 (1.64)	3.72 (1.81)	−0.95 (3.32)	−1.70 (3.35)
Secondary school, graduated	382 (37.5)	5.46 (1.48)	3.49 (1.71)	3.75 (1.69)	3.67 (1.79)	−1.25 (3.26)	−1.63 (3.59)
University	227 (22.3)	5.50 (1.47)	3.48 (1.72)	3.66 (1.71)	3.61 (1.78)	−1.83 (3.52)	−1.96 (3.32)

Table 2
Descriptive characteristics of the Czech sample; distribution of the RQ score and their comparison among groups.

		RQ subscale			RQ dimensions		
		secure	fearful	preoccupied	dismissing	anxiety	avoidance
Sociodemographic group	N (%)	mean (SD)	mean (SD)	mean (SD)	mean (SD)	mean (SD)	mean (SD)
Total	1800 (100)	5.45 (1.43)	3.57 (1.71)	3.80 (1.68)	3.69 (1.81)	−1.78 (3.36)	−1.99 (3.18)
Gender *(p-value)*		*0.013*	*0.807*	*0.895*	*0.376*	*0.698*	*0.120*
Men	877 (48.7)	5.37 (1.46)	3.56 (1.69)	3.79 (1.64)	3.73 (1.79)	−1.75 (3.31)	−1.87 (3.19)
Women	923 (51.3)	5.54 (1.41)	3.58 (1.73)	3.8 (1.71)	3.66 (1.82)	−1.81 (3.40)	−2.10 (3.17)
Marital status *(p-value)*		*< 0.001*	*0.004*	*0.038*	*0.132*	*0.002*	*< 0.001*
Single	439 (24.4)	5.28 (1.54)	3.64 (1.78)	3.70 (1.68)	3.85 (1.81)	−1.79 (3.53)	−1.49 (3.29)
Married	929 (51.6)	5.57 (1.36)	3.48 (1.67)	3.77 (1.66)	3.59 (1.80)	−1.90 (3.25)	−2.26 (3.04)
Divorced	158 (8.8)	5.32 (1.30)	3.56 (1.64)	3.90 (1.70)	3.80 (1.76)	−1.67 (3.34)	−1.87 (3.20)
Widow/widower	133 (7.4)	5.19 (1.62)	4.08 (1.73)	4.20 (1.53)	3.79 (1.70)	−0.70 (3.12)	−1.53 (3.33)
With partner (not married)	141 (7.8)	5.66 (1.43)	3.48 (1.73)	3.74 (1.85)	3.66 (1.95)	−2.11 (3.59)	−2.26 (3.34)
Education level *(p-value)*		*0.799*	*0.021*	*0.031*	*0.241*	*0.069*	*0.178*
Primary school	141 (7.8)	5.37 (1.57)	3.80 (1.73)	3.83 (1.63)	3.97 (1.93)	−1.70 (3.31)	−1.43 (3.56)
Completed apprenticeship	442 (24.6)	5.43 (1.41)	3.74 (1.69)	3.99 (1.64)	3.72 (1.81)	−1.43 (3.18)	−1.97 (3.09)
Secondary school, graduated	854 (47.4)	5.46 (1.41)	3.49 (1.71)	3.75 (1.69)	3.67 (1.79)	−1.89 (3.38)	−2.05 (3.19)
University	363 (20.2)	5.50 (1.47)	3.48 (1.72)	3.66 (1.71)	3.61 (1.78)	−1.97 (3.49)	−2.07 (3.09)

secure attachment style than single respondents ($p < 0.001$). Married respondents also scored lower on attachment avoidance than single respondents ($p < 0.001$).

3.2. Convergent validity of the RQ

Tables 3 and 4 present comparisons of the categories and dimensions of RQ with the ECR-R subscales in the Slovak and the Czech samples. The convergent validity of the RQ was met in the categories of secure, fearful, and dismissive attachment and was not met in the categories of preoccupied attachment in both samples. In both samples, the RQ was shown to have significant positive correlation coefficients with moderate strength in anxiety and avoidance dimensions, respectively, compared to the ECR-R.

3.3. Predictive ability of RQ

Predictive ability of the RQ categories and dimensions to anticipate the ECR-R subscales in both samples is presented in Table 5. The results show that RQ categories and dimensions reliably predict ECR-R anxiety and avoidance in addition to the RQ category preoccupied in both samples. Our model predicted a nonsignificant result of ECR-R anxiety for RQ preoccupied. Results also show that RQ dimensions anxiety and avoidance significantly predict ECR-R anxiety and ECR-R avoidance.

Table 3
Comparison of the RQ categories and dimensions with the ECR-R subscales in the Slovak sample.

Variable	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8
1. RQ secure	–														
2. RQ fearful	−0.309	***	–												
3. RQ preoccupied	−0.134	***	0.364	***	–										
4. RQ dismissive	−0.237	***	0.293	***	0.143	***	–								
5. RQ anxiety	−0.593	***	0.646	***	0.631	***	−0.194	***	–						
6. RQ avoidance	−0.684	***	0.585	***	−0.145	***	0.681	***	0.203	***	–				
7. ECR-R anxiety	−0.332	***	0.337	***	0.357	***	0.055		0.465	***	0.182	***	–		
8. ECR-R avoidance	−0.490	***	0.306	***	0.142	***	0.340	***	0.282	***	0.482	***	0.314	***	–

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 4
Comparison of the RQ categories and dimensions with the ECR-R subscales in the Czech sample.

Variable	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8
1. RQ secure	–														
2. RQ fearful	−0.261	***	–												
3. RQ preoccupied	−0.138	***	0.388	***	–										
4. RQ dismissive	−0.156	***	0.244	***	0.272	***	–								
5. RQ anxiety	−0.545	***	0.684	***	0.610	***	−0.211	***	–						
6. RQ avoidance	−0.607	***	0.589	***	−0.102	***	0.626	***	0.171	***	–				
7. ECR-R anxiety	−0.259	***	0.246	***	0.240	***	0.034		0.338	***	0.141	***	–		
8. ECR-R avoidance	−0.287	***	0.320	***	0.227	***	0.237	***	0.272	***	0.316	***	0.338	***	–

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 5
Predictive ability of RQ categories and dimensions to anticipate the ECR-R subscales.

	SK sample				CZ sample			
			95 % CI				95 % CI	
Variable	Beta	P	Lower	Upper	Beta	p	Lower	Upper
RQ secure								
ECR-R anxiety	−0.346	< 0.001	−0.263	−0.188	−0.262	< 0.001	−0.227	−0.161
ECR-R avoidance	−0.482	< 0.001	−0.385	−0.308	−0.285	< 0.001	−0.265	−0.193
RQ fearful								
ECR-R anxiety	0.335	< 0.001	0.194	0.275	0.249	< 0.001	0.127	0.183
ECR-R avoidance	0.306	< 0.001	0.192	0.282	0.318	< 0.001	0.184	0.243
RQ preoccupied								
ECR-R anxiety	0.357	< 0.001	0.213	0.294	0.249	< 0.001	0.129	0.186
ECR-R avoidance	0.139	< 0.001	0.062	0.157	0.222	< 0.001	0.122	0.183
RQ dismissive								
ECR-R anxiety	0.039	0.052	0.000	0.078	0.036	0.130	−0.006	0.048
ECR-R avoidance	0.236	< 0.001	0.195	0.276	0.236	< 0.001	0.121	0.179
RQ anxiety								
ECR-R anxiety	0.467	< 0.001	0.136	0.172	0.344	< 0.001	0.095	0.123
ECR-R avoidance	0.278	< 0.001	0.080	0.123	0.268	< 0.001	0.077	0.107
RQ avoidance								
ECR-R anxiety	0.189	< 0.001	0.041	0.079	0.142	< 0.001	0.032	0.063
ECR-R avoidance	0.475	< 0.001	0.147	0.185	0.316	< 0.001	0.099	0.130

Note: CI = Confidence interval.

Table 6 shows the predictive ability of RQ categories and dimensions to anticipate the SF-8 MCS. In both samples, the RQ was shown to have a sufficient predictive ability with significant regression coefficients in all dimensions but dismissive.

4. Discussion

This study aimed to assess the RQ's convergent validity by comparing and elucidating its outcomes with those of the ECR-R within both Slovak and Czech samples. Additionally, the study aimed to explore its connection with general psychological well-being.

4.1. Background characteristics of the samples and quick choice of attachment style

In the present study, nearly half of the respondents in the Slovak sample identified themselves in a quick choice with a secure attachment style. These findings are align with other studies indicating that the representation of secure attachment in the population, although assessed by other methods, typically ranges over half (Mickelson et al., 1997; Van IJzendoorn & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 1996). The lowest level of agreement between attachment categories in the Quick Choice and Likert scales was observed for fearful attachment, with responses aligning for less than half of the participants. Among respondents who initially identified themselves as having a fearful attachment style, more than half of them identified with a different category on the Likert scale. In contrast, the most significant level of agreement – more than three

Table 6
Predictive ability of RQ categories and dimensions to anticipate the SF-8 MCS.

	SK sample				CZ sample			
Variable	Beta	p	95 % CI		Beta	p	95 % CI	
			Lower	Upper			Lower	Upper
RQ secure	0.198	< 0.001	0.665	1.205	0.228	< 0.001	1.132	1.683
RQ fearful	−0.186	< 0.001	−1.235	−0.654	−0.137	< 0.001	−0.946	−0.476
RQ preoccupied	−0.239	< 0.001	−1.519	−0.939	−0.107	< 0.001	−0.803	−0.321
RQ dismissive	−0.052	0.079	−0.509	0.028	−0.032	0.177	−0.378	0.070
RQ anxiety	−0.272	< 0.001	−0.784	−0.517	−0.204	< 0.001	−0.655	−0.419
RQ avoidance	−0.099	< 0.001	−0.360	−0.094	−0.138	< 0.001	−0.511	−0.259

Note: CI = Confidence interval.

quarters - was observed for secure attachment. Previous research pointed out that respondents with different Quick choice and Likert scale assessment scores should be treated carefully (Wongpakaran et al., 2021). Authors say that the reasons for the discrepancy between the Quick choice and Likert scale scores may include socially desirable behaviors, which are more likely to occur in people with fearful and dismissive attachment styles. We can also consider potential factors such as misinterpretation of statements or the influence of fatigue, given that the RQ was included as part of a larger test battery. The occurrence of discrepancies between responses could be the focus of further research.

In both samples, married participants showed the highest score of secure attachment among the compared groups. The Slovak sample showed a significant difference between married, divorced, and widowed participants. The Czech sample showed a significant difference between married and single. Married respondents also showed lower avoidance than other groups. In the Slovak sample, even respondents in the relationship though unmarried showed lower avoidance compared to the divorced and widowed. These results are in line with several other studies that have linked attachment style with relationship satisfaction (Diamond et al., 2018; Meyers & Landsberger, 2002; Towler & Stuhlmacher, 2013). Secure attachment was previously shown to be associated with higher relationship satisfaction, while avoidant attachment was linked to lower satisfaction. Meyers and Landsberger (2002) found that divorced, separated, and single individuals had lower secure attachment scores compared to those who were married or in a relationship. In their study, separated/divorced participants also reported higher dismissive and fearful attachment scores than married individuals. It is possible that individuals with higher levels of attachment avoidance may report lower relationship satisfaction, have more expectations of relationship failure, and exhibit commitment aversion, leading to more frequent breakups (Birnie et al., 2009). Avoidance behavior by widows/widowers may be the cause of unfinished grief in order to protect themselves from another loss (Grossmann & Grossmann, 2012).

4.2. Convergent validity of the RQ and predicting ECR-R

According to our first assumption of examining the compliance between the RQ and the ECR-R, the results supported an agreement between the RQ and the ECR-R. ECR-R anxiety and avoidance scores correlate with attachment categories and dimensions of RQ. Secure attachment is associated with low anxiety and avoidance, fearful attachment is associated with high anxiety and avoidance, and dismissive attachment is associated with high avoidance and low anxiety. These results were confirmed in both representative samples. The correlation between ECR-R anxiety and RQ anxiety is consistent across studies (Conradi et al., 2006;Tsagarakis et al., 2007; Wongpakaran et al., 2021).

However, in both samples, preoccupied RQ attachment style showed significant anxiety and avoidance as well, although we expected high anxiety and low nonsignificant avoidance, which was confirmed in other studies (Tsagarakis et al., 2007; Wongpakaran et al., 2021). Regarding the Central European setting, in the case of the German version of the ECR-R, the ECR-RD, there was also a moderate positive relationship between attachment avoidance and category preoccupied in one of the two samples (Ehrenthal et al., 2008). In the present study, there was also a relationship between the anxiety and avoidance subscales, i.e. they are interrelated as in Bowlby's (1973) original conceptualization of the stages of attachment. Bowlby posited that these two dimensions could be orthogonal in theory but oblique in actual practice (Cameron et al., 2012). Individuals with a preoccupied attachment style commonly possess a strong need for relationship maintenance (Guerrero, 1998). They commonly experience higher levels of anxiety and insecurity, leading to socially desirable responses and potential inconsistency in answers. Moreover, they may struggle to definitively identify which attachment style best characterizes them, because a single attachment category may not accurately capture their entire experience. This can be also interpretation of such discrepancy between the Quick choice and Likert scale in preoccupied and fearful individuals in Slovak respondents. Interestingly, (Choi-Kain et al., 2009) described a mixed model involving both preoccupied and fearful insecure attachment. This mixed model is particularly observed in the context of borderline personality disorder. It is evident that attachment styles are not rigid categories, they can overlap and sometimes it can be difficult to fit into one category.

However, the RQ has also has also faced psychometric criticism. Despite the existence of several well-validated attachment measures, evidence shows that different tools often assess distinct aspects of attachment, which raises concerns about their convergence and the construct validity of attachment measurement (Thompson et al., 2022). Several studies have questioned its test–retest reliability and conceptual limitations, particularly the use of a forced-choice categorical format to represent what many researchers argue are underlying continuous dimensions of attachment (Baldwin & Fehr, 1995; Wilson & Wilkinson, 2012). Baldwin and Fehr (1995) found that nearly one-third of participants changed their self-identified attachment style over several months, with especially high instability among anxious-ambivalent individuals. These findings suggest that attachment classifications may reflect temporary relational schemas rather than stable personality traits. The dimensional scoring system, later introduced by Griffin and Bartholomew (1994), addresses some of these limitations by allowing for the assessment of attachment-related anxiety and avoidance. As Strauss et al. (2022) demonstrated, the convergence between categorical and dimensional attachment measures is low, especially between self-report and interview-based tools. They identified four distinct attachment dimensions based on factor analysis of different instruments, suggesting that each method may tap into different facets of attachment, such as internal working models versus interpersonal behaviors or mental representations. Dimensional self-reports tend to show higher internal consistency and inter-measure agreement than categorical formats. The RQ is interesting in that it provides both categorical and dimensional data, but each approach has its advantages and limitations. Categorical classifications may be intuitive and useful in clinical practice, but they risk oversimplifying the complex and continuous nature of attachment experiences. Dimensional tools like the RQ or ECR-R may offer psychometric advantages, but they also risk simplifying the qualitative complexity of attachment patterns originally described in the categorical model (Thompson et al., 2022). In our study, we prioritized dimensional scores in all main analyses to enhance sensitivity and comparability with the ECR-R, which is a fully dimensional measure.

4.3. RQ predicting well-being

In the present study, the RQ categories and dimensions showed a significant effect on general psychological well-being (as measured by the SF-8 MCS score), except for the dismissive category in both samples. Secure attachment type was positively associated with higher MCS score, while fearful and preoccupied attachment types were associated with lower MCS score. In our results, the effect of dismissive attachment was not significant. This finding was not surprising because previous studies have examined the significant relationship between attachment style, attachment anxiety, avoidance, and mental health in diverse samples, including high school and college students, as well as adult men and women (Eng et al., 2001; Mostafaei et al., 2016; Raque-Bogdan et al., 2011; Vismara et al., 2022). But the results in previous studies are inconclusive about impact of attachment avoidance. Oon-arom et al. (2021) described that attachment anxiety has a stronger relationship with mental health problems than avoidance. On the other hand, Cooke et al. (2019) found that higher levels of anxiety and avoidance were both associated with a higher prevalence of depression and anxiety. Even the attachment styles characterized by high anxiety, such as preoccupied and fearful attachment, have been shown to significantly elevate the risk

of suicide (Oon-arom et al., 2019; Miniati et al., 2017). The attachment experiences during childhood and subsequent insecurities in adulthood can contribute to low self-esteem, pessimism, and feelings of hopelessness.

5. Limitations

One limitation of this research is that the Quick choice was used only in the Slovak sample, not in Czech. Another limitation is that the Slovak data collection was realized three years after the Czech collection. However, it's important to emphasize that both collections were developed using the same methodologies. Additionally, utilizing a standardized interview approach poses the risk of socially desirable responses. On the other hand, the interview administrators were unfamiliar to the respondents. An additional limitation could have arisen from integrating the RQ into a broader test battery positioned roughly in the middle. Due to the potential of respondent fatigue, it is possible that individuals might have misconstrued the reverse questions in the ECR-R that relate to the avoidance dimension and can be more difficult to understand. Another limitation concerns the use of the SF-8 Mental Component Summary (MCS) as an indicator of mental health. It does not capture specific clinical domains such as depression, anxiety, or coping. Therefore, the findings related to mental health should be interpreted as reflecting general psychological well-being.

6. Conclusion

The RQ demonstrates acceptable psychometric properties and may serve as a useful screening tool. The anxiety and avoidance dimensions were associated in theoretically consistent ways with the RQ's secure, preoccupied, fearful, and dismissive categories. Almost all RQ categories and dimensional scores predicted ECR-R anxiety and avoidance. Moreover, both RQ categories and dimensions were significantly related to general psychological well-being in both Slovak and Czech samples. A key advantage of the RQ in clinical practice is its ability to assign individuals to an attachment category, which can be more intuitive and interpretable compared to dimensional scores of tools such as the ECR-R. Among its main strengths are its brevity, simplicity of administration, and suitability for inclusion in larger test batteries with minimal burden on participants.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Lenka Lapčák Kratochvílová: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Software, Methodology, Formal analysis, Conceptualization. **Jana Fűrstová:** Supervision, Software, Methodology, Formal analysis, Data curation. **Jozef Hašto:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Supervision, Resources, Methodology. **Júlia Švecová:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Resources, Methodology, Investigation. **Peter Tavel:** Writing – review & editing, Visualization, Validation, Supervision, Resources. **Natália Kaščáková:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Validation, Supervision, Resources, Project administration, Formal analysis, Conceptualization.

Declaration of competing interest

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Data availability

The datasets generated and analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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