

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

WILEY

# The antecedents of voter loyalty and the mediation role of party attachment: A case study from Turkey

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The primary objective of the present study is to identify the antecedents of voter loyalty, with a particular focus on the mediating role of party attachment in the relationship between inner-self, social-self, trust, and loyalty. Using a convenience sampling method, the data for this study were gathered from a sample of 750 voters residing in a developing European country, Turkey. The collected data were analyzed using confirmatory factor analyses and structural equation modeling. The results of the study demonstrate that significant and positive relationships exist between the aforementioned antecedents (i.e., inner-self, social-self, trust, and party attachment) and voter loyalty. Additionally, the findings suggest that party attachment acts as a mediator between the antecedents and loyalty. Drawing on these results and the existing literature on voter behavior and practice, the authors discuss methodological, theoretical, and practical implications for inner-self, social-self, trust, and party attachment.

## KEYWORDS

inner-self, party attachment, social-self, voter, voter loyalty, voting behavior

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

The question of what motivates citizens to vote for one candidate over another has become the one that various explanations have been offered over the 70-year history of voting behavior research (Hutchings & Jefferson, 2018). One of such explanations is called socio-psychological model. The current study focuses on this particular model and aims to investigate the antecedents that contribute to voter loyalty. Specifically, we investigate four antecedents: inner-self, social-self, trust, and party attachment. Our study seeks to contribute to the existing literature by identifying and analyzing these factors in relation to voter behavior. The principal driver for focusing on these four antecedents in relation to voter loyalty stems from a fundamental assumption that the voters in the country studied emotionally integrate themselves with their parties rather than the political positions and ideological attitudes of the parties they vote for. Their sense of self, attachment, and trust are believed to significantly impact their loyalty to their respective parties. Given this assumption, this study seeks to examine the role of emotional factors in shaping voter

loyalty, specifically through the lens of the four emotional premises outlined earlier.

Even though there is a large body of literature conducted to explain voter behavior, to the best of the authors' knowledge, no study in the electoral literature has combined inner-self, social-self, trust, and party attachment into a single model to explain whether and how these variables influence voter loyalty at the same time.

Pacek and Radcliff (1995) assert that developing countries offer such a wide variety that they can function as laboratories for social scientists. From this point of view, we use the data gathered from 750 voters residing in a developing European country, Turkey. There are three main reasons for choosing Turkey for the research. First, the AK Party, which came to power in Turkey in 2002, has not lost its power despite the five general elections held until today. Secondly, the rate of voter turnout in Turkey is relatively high (86.22% in 2018) when compared to other democratic countries (e.g., United Kingdom, 67.55% in 2019, Spain, 71.76% in 2019, Italy, 72.93% in 2018) (see, Database, 2022). Finally, emotions play a vital role on shaping Turkish voters' political behavior (Erişen, 2013).

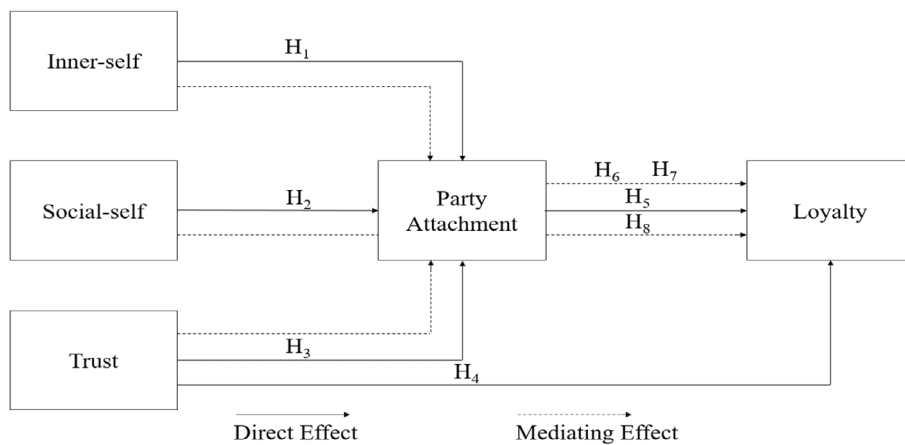


FIGURE 1 Conceptual model.

The data were obtained from the surveys we conducted after the last general elections in Turkey. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM) were applied to analyze the data. The findings revealed positive effects of socio-psychological factors on voter loyalty.

## 2 | CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

Drawing upon the literature reviewed in the subsequent sections, we put forth two fundamental constructs that directly impact voters' loyalty: trust and party attachment. Furthermore, we present three precursors to party attachment, namely inner-self, social-self, and trust, as the existing scholarship delineates. Finally, we posit that party attachment has a mediation role in voter loyalty.

The relationships among self, attachment, trust, and loyalty are previously examined in psychology (Macdonald et al., 1972; Norris & Zweigenhaft, 1999; Wu, 2009) and other fields of social sciences (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Esch et al., 2006; Tsiotsou, 2013). However, to the authors' knowledge, no study in the electoral literature has incorporated inner-self, social-self, trust, and party attachment, into a single model to explain if and how all these variables influence voter loyalty. Thus, the goal is to study the link between these variables and, if possible, demonstrate their effects on voter loyalty. The conceptual model described in Figure 1 shows the relationships among the variables.

Even though scholars in politics use the notion of party attachment (e.g., Oshri et al., 2021; Settle et al., 2009), party identification is more commonly used as a term to express the ties between self and a political party (Campbell et al., 1960; Greene, 2004; Jacoby, 1988). In this regard, party identification means a “sense of personal attachment which the individual feels toward the [party] of his (sic) choice” (Campbell et al., 1954, pp. 88–89). In fact, when the relevant literature is examined, it is seen that these two notions are often used interchangeably (e.g., Burden & Greene, 2000; Mughan, 2009; Vidal et al., 2010). However, in this paper, we employ the concept of party attachment within a distinct framework. While the underlying

differentiation between attachment and identification is theoretically justifiable, given that the theories of social identity and attachment were developed to tackle disparate issues and investigate distinct phenomena in their original iterations (Ashmore et al., 2004; Smith et al., 1999), we construe party attachment as an integral component of party identification, which we elucidate below.

The concept of identification was first articulated in the context of group membership and was believed to result in a more substantial commitment to the group and increased citizenship and extra-role behaviors (Terry & Hogg, 1996). Dutton et al. (1994) argue that when a person's self-concept comprises the same traits as those in the perceived organizational identity, we should label this cognitive relationship as organizational identification. In line with this view, Johnson and Morgeson (2005) claim that this argument depicts the cognitive process that occurs during an individual's self-definition when their personal identity collides with the organization's identity. On the other hand, as a more affective construct, identification is also associated with positive feelings about one's membership, including enthusiasm, pride, and a sense of affiliation or “belongingness” with others (Albert et al., 1998). In other words, identification can be separated into two parts: Cognitive and affective identification (Johnson et al., 2012). Considering this distinction, here we focus on the affective part of identification, and we call it party attachment, since attachment is also more of an affective construct (Thomson et al., 2005), and both attachment and affective identification relate to “belongingness.” As a fundamental need for human beings (Caporael & Brewer, 1995) “belongingness” plays a vital role in social action (Carvalho & Gabriel, 2006) and stimulates goal-directed activity (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Moreover, voting behavior as a social action (Becker, 2022) is also influenced by belongingness (Festinger, 1947). The usage of attachment in this sense is also common in other fields of social sciences (e.g., Sen et al., 2015), yet as far as our knowledge goes, it is not in politics.

As one of the main subjects of political psychology, it is asserted that the self is maintained by socialization or, in the case of a socially constructed self, by inter-group dynamics (Monroe et al., 2000). Numerous researchers have integrated the concept of the self with various notions about diverse facets of human behavior, thereby

engendering novel conceptualizations. In this study, we assess two conceptions of the self specifically: Inner-self and social-self. The latter refers to the socially significant aspect of a person's personality and actions (Warren, 2018a). In other words, the features that are deemed desirable in a social environment are referred to as the social-self. The former refers to a more internal aspect as a human quality that may or may not be exposed but is carefully cultivated and fulfilled once matching attributes are discovered (Monroe et al., 2000). The rationale for choosing these two notions is that the voters inner-self (or the kind of person they think they indeed are) and their social-self (or the way society views them) is directly related to the socio-psychological model we adopt. Also, in terms of their implication in political space, it is argued that political parties can use pre-existing organizations to exploit the role of the inner and social-self by finding features that can assist them in attracting people to their ideology (Banerjee & Chaudhuri, 2021).

The relationship between self and voting behavior has been the subject of numerous empirical investigations. One example of such research is the study conducted by Schoen and Schumann (2007) in Germany, which examined the impact of personality traits on voting behavior and partisan attitudes. The authors found that personality factors exerted an indirect effect on both voting behavior and partisan attitudes. Although conscientiousness and extraversion are favorably associated with vote decisions in Switzerland, Ackermann et al. (2018), by using the five-factor model of personality (see, McCrae & John, 1992), discovered that agreeableness and openness to experience are negatively related to voting for a political party. In a similar vein, employing the same model, Caprara et al. (1999) found that personality dimensions have a more substantial effect on political preferences than demographic variables in Italy. Despite the significant contributions of these studies, it is imperative to explore the impact of the self on party attachment. Thus, the following hypothesizes are:

**Hypothesis H1.** *Inner-self has a positive effect on party attachment.*

**Hypothesis H2.** *Social-self has a positive effect on party attachment.*

As self-beings, we have a trusting attitude toward persons or organizations we expect will be trustworthy (Carolyn, 2021). A psychological perspective on trust considers it as a fundamental personality attribute of individuals (Newton et al., 2018). From a sociological perspective, trust could be defined as socially learnt and socially validated expectations that people have of each other, of the organizations and institutions in which they live, and of the natural and moral social hierarchies that provide the fundamental understandings for their lives (Barber, 1983). Regardless of the starting point, it is widely acknowledged that trust constitutes a crucial ingredient of a flourishing society (Paxton & Ressler, 2018) and of a healthy democracy (Warren, 2018b). In this study, by trust we refer to the attitudes of voters toward the political parties they vote for.

Trust facilitates collaborative endeavors (e.g., Arrow, 1974; Gambetta, 1988). It plays a central role in how we relate to others (Golambiewski & McConkie, 1975) and lately has emerged as a critical strategic asset for organizations (see, Mishra, 1996). The existing body of research on voting behavior and trust aims to uncover the association between voters' party attachment and their positions concerning political trust (e.g., Dalton, 1999; Miller & Listhaug, 1990). The findings of some studies indicate a positive relation between the two concepts (e.g., Holmberg, 2003), while others show the relationship is not always positive (e.g., Söderlund & Kestilä-Kekkonen, 2009).

Scholars in politics generally focus on the effects of political attachment on political trust (see, Ostrom, 1997; Schmitt & Holmberg, 1995). Even though the impact of trust on attachment is being investigated in other fields of social sciences (e.g., Louis & Lombart, 2010; Tsiotsou, 2013), the political science literature is relatively scarce in this respect. As trust is a primary component of the attachment system (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003), voter's trust toward political parties they vote for might affect their attachment to the party. In other words, one may hypothesize:

**Hypothesis H3.** *Trust has a positive effect on party attachment.*

Shachar (2003) remarks that previous studies have identified three primary factors that influence voting behavior: (1) candidate characteristics, (2) party identification, and (3) policy distances between the candidate and the voter. Page and Jones (1979) contend that policy preferences exert a substantially more significant influence on voting choices than previously assumed, whereas party attachments appear to have a comparatively lesser impact. Their evaluations of the candidate significantly sway voters' perceived proximity to a candidate on policy matters, and transitory issues may impact their party identification.

According to another study (Richardson, 1991) conducted with the data from British, German, and Dutch voters, loyalists of a stable party are more likely to vote for their favored party in succeeding elections. Supporters of traditional cleavage parties are the most likely to have long-term political affiliations. Long-term party loyalty is a result of long-standing animosities toward other parties as well as well-developed party principles. Although scholars in the field examined the relationship between identification and voting behavior, the question of how attachment influences voters' loyalty remains that needs to be answered. In addition, the relationship between trust and voter loyalty is also required to be explained. There is a vast amount of literature on the effects of trust on voter turnout (e.g., Cox, 2003; Grönlund & Setälä, 2007; Wang, 2016), yet in terms of loyalty, the field is limited. Hence, we hypothesize:

**Hypothesis H4.** *Trust has a positive effect on voter loyalty.*

**Hypothesis H5.** *Party attachment has a positive effect on voter loyalty.*

	Frequency	%		Frequency	%
Gender			Monthly income		
Male	436	58.1	Low	345	46.0
Female	314	41.9	Middle	337	45.0
Occupation			High	68	9.0
Public official	122	16.3	Age		
Labor	124	16.5	18–25	208	27.7
Retired	73	9.7	26–35	215	28.7
Manager	33	4.4	36–45	151	20.1
Tradesman	113	15.1	46–55	117	15.6
Self-employed	63	8.4	56 and >	59	7.9
Student	143	19.1	Education		
Other	79	10.5	Secondary school or <	122	16.3
			High school	271	36.1
			College	331	44.1
			Post graduate	26	3.5

Note:  $N = 750$ .

Voter loyalty has received extensive attention from academics and practitioners and refers strictly to electoral choice in two consecutive elections (Chiru & Gherghina, 2012). Since it is directly related to volatility, voter loyalty attracts the attention of researchers. Party institutionalization and minimal electoral volatility has been argued as a critical independent determinant impacting the pace of democratic consolidation (Mainwaring & Scully, 1994; Mair, 1996). Based on a thorough examination of our hypothesis regarding the antecedents of party attachment, we contend that its fundamental characteristics of belongingness will mediate the impacts of the inner-self, social-self, and trust on voters' loyalty. Therefore, we hypothesize:

**Hypothesis H6.** *Inner-self significantly affects voter loyalty through party attachment.*

**Hypothesis H7.** *Social-self significantly affects voter loyalty through party attachment.*

**Hypothesis H8.** *Trust significantly affects voter loyalty through party attachment.*

### 3 | METHOD

#### 3.1 | Sampling and procedure

Our survey was conducted following the 2018 general elections in Turkey and comprised individuals hailing from four provinces, namely Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, and Eskisehir. The utilization of the convenience sampling method enabled the examination of the relationships hypothesized in the proposed model. Eligible participants were required to have cast their vote in the previous elections and professed support for a particular political party. During the debriefing phase, the research's

**TABLE 1** Demographic characteristics

objectives, scope, scientific content, and anonymous survey nature were expounded upon to the participants. Respondents participated voluntarily and were required to provide informed consent. Respondents' demographic distribution and party preferences are similar to Turkey's average (see, KONDA, 2019). Additional demographics are reported in Table 1.

#### 3.2 | Measures

A survey that includes items about scales and demographics was administered to test the relationships presented in the conceptual model (Figure 1). Using multi-item measures, participants evaluated the scales (inner-self, social-self, trust and party attachment and loyalty). Pre-existing scales that were deemed valid and reliable were utilized to measure the constructs. To measure inner-self and social-self, we used Tsiotsou's (2013) scale (originally based on Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006), consisting of four and five items, respectively. All three items were adapted from Tsiotsou (2013) for measuring trust. In order to measure attachment associated with a political party a three-item unidimensional scale was adapted from Dwyer et al. (2015). Finally, the loyalty construct, having nine items, consisting of behavioral (seven items) and intentional (two items) subdimensions, was adopted from Tsiotsou (2013); originally based on Zeithaml et al., 1996. All items in the research scales were measured on a five-point Likert scale where "1" stands for "strongly disagree" and "5" stands for "strongly agree." Demographic characteristics in the survey contained gender, age, occupation, income, and education.

#### 3.3 | Data analysis

Before applying the analysis of hypothesis tests, the data were tested to ensure that they met the essential assumptions. Since

**TABLE 2** Measurement items and loadings

Construct and scale items	Factor loading	$\alpha$	SD	Mean	Skewness	Kurtosis
Inner-self		0.930	1.035	3.379		
My party symbolizes the kind of person I really am inside	0.862				-0.523	-0.447
My party reflects my personality	0.918				-0.447	-0.630
My party is an extension of my inner-self	0.875				-0.474	-0.493
My party mirrors the real me	0.856				-0.155	-0.772
Social-self		0.874	0.994	3.029		
My party contributes to my image	0.804				-0.041	-0.824
My party describes my social role	0.826				-0.082	-0.879
My party has a positive impact on what others think of me	0.761				-0.061	-0.742
My party improves the way society views me	0.792				-0.161	-0.824
Party attachment		0.883	1.068	3.268		
I feel like I am a member of the party	0.848				-0.335	-0.784
It is important for me to be a fan of my party	0.860				-0.496	-0.585
The party is an important part of my life	0.833				-0.076	-0.935
Party trust		0.877	1.123	3.172		
I totally trust my party	0.895				-0.254	-0.901
I count on my party	0.807				-0.112	-1.062
My party is reliable	0.825				-0.348	-0.721
Loyalty		0.879	1.094	3.232		
I am devoted to my party	0.912				-0.312	-0.736
I am a loyal fan of my party	0.881				-0.236	-0.913
I am determined to be a supporter of my party as long as I live	0.755				-0.275	-0.949

Abbreviations:  $\alpha$ , Cronbah's alpha; SD, standard deviation.

the confirmatory factor analysis assumes that the data are normally distributed, the skewness and kurtosis values were examined to test the normal distribution assumption. Regarding the normal distribution assumption, skewness (range from -0.041 to 0.523) and kurtosis (range from -0.447 to -1.062) indices for the scale expressions in our model (see Table 2) were evaluated and it was seen that the data exhibited a normal distribution since the skewness and kurtosis values were in the range of  $\pm 2$  (Kline, 2011). Thus, there was no violation of the normality assumption. We conducted descriptive statistics to analyze data related to voter sample. Using bivariate correlation, we analyzed the relationships among inner-self, social-self, trust, political party attachment, and loyalty. Before moving on to SEM, a CFA was performed to evaluate the measurement models using SPSS Amos 24.0. Subsequently, reliability and validity tests were performed on the data. A structural equation model was utilized to evaluate the hypotheses and the interrelationships among the variables in the conceptual model. Furthermore, the path model was examined to establish whether the mediation was full or partial. A bootstrap method, based on 5000 samples using 95% confidence intervals, was used to determine the significance of indirect effects (Mallinckrodt et al., 2006).

## 4 | RESULTS

### 4.1 | Confirmatory factor analysis, reliability, and validity

We conducted CFA using the maximum likelihood (ML) estimation. The initial CFA measurement model showed that one item in the social-self dimension and six items in the voter loyalty dimension had factor loading below the minimum acceptable level of 0.70 (Hair Jr et al., 2019). This revealed the marginal fit value problem in the initial measurement model. In accordance with the guidelines of Bagozzi and Yi (1988a), Byrne (2010), and Kline (2011) we removed one item from social-self factor ("My party has an important role in how my friends perceive me") and six items from voter loyalty factor ("I follow the activities of the party I support, I participate in the activities of the party, I support my party even if it loses an election, I try to be friends with those who voted for the same party as me, I do not let people say bad things about my party, I spend money, time and effort on the party I support") the measurement model.

After items were removed, the measurement model was re-estimated. As we indicate in Table 3, CFA values showed that the overall measurement model has an acceptable fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Model fit measures			
Measure	Estimate	Threshold	Interpretation
CMIN	389.237	–	–
DF	109	–	–
CMIN/DF	3.571	Between 1 and 3 or <5	Acceptable
CFI	0.973	>0.95	Excellent
SRMR	0.035	<0.08	Excellent
RMSEA	0.059	<0.06	Excellent
PClose	0.012	>0.05	Acceptable

**TABLE 3** Confirmation factor analysis model fit results

Dimensions	CR	AVE	MSV	Iself	Sself	Pattach	Ptrust	Ployal
Iself	0.931	0.771	0.604	0.878				
Sself	0.874	0.634	0.612	0.767 <sup>a</sup>	0.796			
Pattach	0.884	0.717	0.717	0.777 <sup>a</sup>	0.782 <sup>a</sup>	0.847		
Ptrust	0.880	0.711	0.699	0.694 <sup>a</sup>	0.716 <sup>a</sup>	0.836 <sup>a</sup>	0.843	
Ployal	0.888	0.726	0.717	0.671 <sup>a</sup>	0.675 <sup>a</sup>	0.847 <sup>a</sup>	0.791 <sup>a</sup>	0.852

**TABLE 4** AVEs, CRs, and intercorrelations of the nomological validation

Note: Squared roots of the AVEs (discriminant validity) are on the diagonal.

Abbreviations: Iself, inner-self; Pattach, party attachment; Ptrust, party trust; Sself, social-self; Ployal, voter loyalty.

<sup>a</sup> $p < 0.001$ .

After testing our CFA model, reliability and validity tests of the constructs were performed. The factor loads of the items that form the structure varied between 0.75 and 0.93. Cronbach's alpha values of the constructs were between 0.874 and 0.930, which is higher than the lower limit of 0.70. Therefore, the construct validity is at an acceptable level. The average variance extracted (AVE) value was used to test the construct validity. AVE values ranged from 0.634 and 0.771, above the cut-off value of 0.50 (Bagozzi, 1981), and it was determined that there was no problem with convergent validity (see, Table 4).

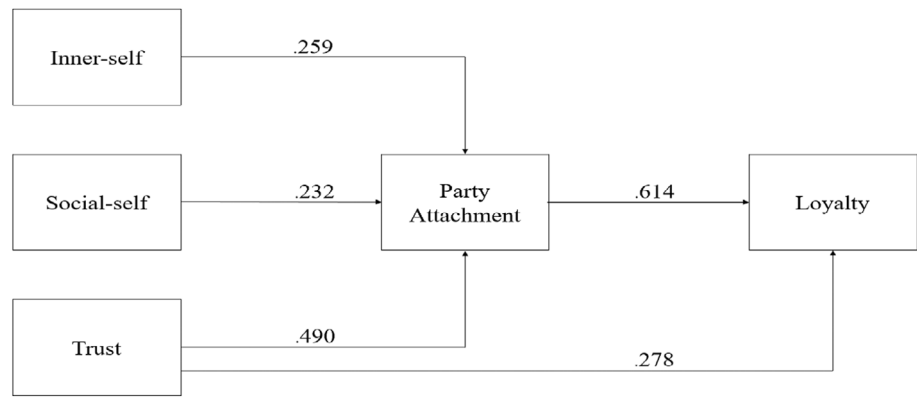
As presented in Table 4, the correlations among the five components were also significantly correlated. The significant correlation coefficients, ranging from 0.671 to 0.847, indicate that the eight dimensions are convergent on a common construct. The correlations between the constructs were below the 0.90 threshold (Kline, 2011), which indicates that discriminant validity has been reached. Additionally, correlation values between constructs and AVE values were compared for discriminant validity. The model was also tested to determine whether multicollinearity was present in the data. For this purpose, the variance inflation factors (VIF) were calculated. The VIF values (between 2.250 and 2.481) are below than 10 and the tolerance values (between 0.403 and 0.444) are above 0.1. As a result, the data can be said to be free of multicollinearity (Field, 2018). The corresponding AVE values were below the maximum share variance (MSV) for all factors, and the square root of AVE values was within the acceptable threshold values. The square root values of the AVE values are greater than (>0.7) the correlation values among the constructs show that there was no rising concern for discriminant validity

(Bagozzi & Yi, 1988b; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As a result of these evaluations, it can be concluded that the measurement model has sufficient validity.

Harman's one-factor variance test was performed to test for possible common method variance issues. The result of the EFA analysis, which was done by limiting the 17 items in the measurement model to a single factor, showed that a single factor explained 59% of the total variance. Although it was stated that the acceptable value should be 50% (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986), Fuller et al. (2016) stated that this value should be above 70% for the presence of CMB (see also, Sangeeta & Tandon, 2021). Since all factor loads in our measurement model were statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ), common method bias is unlikely to affect the results of our study (see, Pittino et al., 2018). According to another approach which is correlation analysis, a high-correlation value ( $r > 0.90$ ), is shown as evidence of CMB (Bagozzi et al., 1991). The correlation coefficients between variables in our model ( $r < 0.852$ ; Table 4) are less than 0.90. Upon thorough examination of the data and statistical analysis, we concluded that common method bias (CMB) is unlikely to be a serious concern for the current study.

## 4.2 | Hypothesis testing

After the measurement model reliability and validity tests were performed, the structural equation model was used to test the model's hypotheses via AMOS (version 24) software. SEM is a statistical approach that uses a confirmatory (i.e., hypothesis-testing) approach

**FIGURE 2** Results of structural equation model.**TABLE 5** Structural model fit results

Hypotheses	Structural relationships	Estimate	SE	t values	Result
H1	Pattac ← Iself	0.259	0.04	6.008 <sup>a</sup>	Supported
H2	Pattach ← Sself	0.232	0.05	4.92 <sup>a</sup>	Supported
H3	Pattach ← Ptrust	0.490	0.04	11.612 <sup>a</sup>	Supported
H4	Vloyalty ← Ptrust	0.278	0.06	4.833 <sup>a</sup>	Supported
H5	Vloyalty ← Pattach	0.614	0.06	10.389 <sup>a</sup>	Supported

Abbreviation: SE, standard error.

<sup>a</sup> $p < 0.001$ .

to the assessment of a structural theory based on some fact (Byrne, 2013). Figure 2 reveals the results of the structural equation model. We also used path coefficient analysis to test the proposed hypotheses.

Upon examining the structural model, it was found to have good fit values, including a chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio ( $\chi^2/df$ ) of 3.507, comparative fit index (CFI) of 0.973, standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) of 0.035, and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) of 0.058 with a  $p$ -close of 0.019. These values fall within the acceptable limits recommended by Hu and Bentler (1999), indicating good model fit. Table 5 shows structural model parameters estimates. The values presented in the table show that all model hypotheses are acceptable.

Inner-self ( $\beta = 0.26$ ,  $t = 6.08$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), social-self ( $\beta = 0.23$ ,  $t = 4.92$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and trust ( $\beta = 0.49$ ,  $t = 11.62$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) showed significant impact on party attachment and voter loyalty ( $\beta = 0.61$ ,  $t = 10.389$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Therefore H1, H2, H3, H4 and H5 hypotheses were supported.

### 4.3 | The mediating effect of party attachment

Before we tested the indirect effects; we tested whether inner-self, social-self and trust directly affected voter loyalty in the model. Our model showed that inner-self and social-self did not have direct effect on voter loyalty (inner-self [ $\beta = 0.01$ ,  $t = 0.170$ ,  $p = 0.865$ ] and social-self [ $\beta = -0.01$ ,  $t = -259$ ,  $p = 0.795$ ]), but trust had still a direct effect on voter loyalty (trust [ $\beta = 0.28$ ,  $t = 4.834$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ]).

This study used the bootstrap technique to test the mediation effect by Preacher (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). For bootstrapping method, 5000 samples were used with a 95% confidence interval. Bootstrap technique has high representation for small samples in mediation analyses. A bootstrap test reproduces the new sampling data to estimate standard errors and obtains a confidence interval (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). A path analysis was executed using the bootstrapping method in AMOS to test the indirect effects of inner-self, social-self and trust to voter loyalty through party attachment (Collier, 2020). With the values of trust ( $\beta = 0.28$ ,  $t = 4.83$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and party attachment ( $\beta = 0.61$ ,  $t = 10.38$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) reported that trust and party attachment have a direct impact on loyalty, thus H4 and H5 hypotheses were also supported. As shown in Table 6, our model indicates a partial mediation where inner-self and social-self have a significant indirect effect on voter loyalty through party attachment, but also trust has a significant direct impact on voter loyalty through party attachment (Awang, 2012).

Indirect effect values obtained from mediation analysis reveal that H6, H7, H8 hypotheses were supported.

## 5 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results of SEM analysis revealed that all eight hypotheses of the proposed theoretical model were supported. The direction of all supported hypotheses was positive. Party attachment has greater effect on loyalty followed by trust. When considering the effects of inner-self, social-self and trust on party attachment, trust had the highest

**TABLE 6** Indirect effects

Indirect path	Unstandardized estimate	Lower	Upper	p-value	Standardized estimate
Iself→Pattach→Vloyal	0.175	0.102	0.247	0.001	0.159 <sup>a</sup>
Sself→Pattach→Vloyal	0.163	0.088	0.236	0.01	0.142 <sup>a</sup>
Ptrust→Pattachment→Vloyal	0.289	0.230	0.369	0.001	0.301 <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> $p < 0.01$ .<sup>b</sup> $p < 0.001$ .

impact followed by inner-self and social-self. Therefore, all of the eight hypotheses (H1–H8) were supported. This result aligns with research findings (Tsiotsou, 2013) conducted in sport fans context.

We observe a direct positive relationship between trust, attachment, and loyalty. Moreover, we also observe that the relationship between inner-self, social-self and trust, and loyalty occurs through party attachment. In other words, party attachment can be seen as a mediator variable between inner-self, social-self, trust, and loyalty. Our empirical findings suggest that an indirect relationship exists between inner-self, social-self, and loyalty and between trust and loyalty. Finally, we find that this indirect relationship between inner-self and social-self and loyalty occurs when the level of attachment is high. We found that voters' party attachment level had a full mediating effect between inner-self, social-self, and loyalty, and had a partial mediating effect between trust and loyalty. Therefore, party attachment facilitates the relationship between antecedent variables and the consequence of behavior. In line with the socio-psychological model, the link between self and party attachment level may point to loyalty due to voter behavior.

Methodologically and theoretically, this study offers a holistic approach that can be used for understanding certain psychological variables as the most potent predictors of political voter loyalty; thus, it has provided support for taking a structural-model approach to investigate and explain loyalty of the voters. Therefore, the relational model approach that emphasizes inner-self and social-self will have essential implications for revealing how voters engage with a political party and trust it.

The results make critical theoretical contributions to political behaviorists and/or scientists' understanding of choice mechanisms and the mechanisms used in voting behavior. Voters are subjected to various influences when they choose, and some antecedents affect their behaviors, whether they are aware of them or not. These antecedents can affect attitudes, intentions, behaviors, choices and perceptions, among other variables. From this perspective, this study addresses the lack of investigations on the relationships between the variables that determine the loyalty phenomenon in voter behavior.

Theoretically, this study highlights the complex associations between voters' sense of self and trust the political party and their behaviors to engage in supporting party. All these complex associations ultimately emerge as antecedents of loyalty to a party. The theoretical contribution of this study carries significant implications for research in the voter behavior domain, particularly because of its reflections concerning the support toward psychological, attitudinal,

or behavioral dimensions. The study's outcomes also offer essential suggestions for voter behavioral psychologists regarding potential engagement approaches toward election campaigns.

Lastly, every political party wishes to boost the votes they received in the last election. There are fundamentally two requirements for this to occur. The first requirement is to keep the support of the voters who voted for them in the prior election. Aside from those who remain loyal to the party, the second requirement is to guarantee that new voters also support the party. The study's findings demonstrate that attachment is a crucial component of voter loyalty. Political parties must therefore comprehend the socio-psychological characteristics of voters who have 'feelings' if they wish to increase the number of votes they receive.

## 6 | LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE STUDIES

Although the study contributes to the field, the findings should be interpreted within the limitations. Limitations can be evaluated in terms of methodology and application. Firstly, the main limitation was related to the sampling method used in the applied study. Thus, involving individuals in research through a nonprobability method poses the problem of generalizability. Given the nonprobably sample, further research is necessary to investigate these relationships in developed and other developing countries.

Moreover, data were collected from only a limited number of cities (four) in a single country. Yet, as noted above, three of these four cities are the largest cities of Turkey, and the survey represents Turkish voters to some extent. Rather than generalizing, we aim to identify the antecedents that affect voter loyalty in a particular time and place. Based on this, the current study results may represent the individuals' voting behavior within a developing European country. The present study's findings are confined to the context of Turkish voting behavior and may not be generalizable to other countries' voters. Therefore, the findings of our study may differ according to sensitive conditions such as culture, education, economic situation, and electoral system. Second, it should be noted that the present study's one-time data collection method may not have captured the dynamics of voter behavior changes over time. Thus, in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of voter behavior, further empirical investigations are imperative. Thirdly, it is noteworthy that the present study relied on voters' subjective perceptions and self-reported data, which may be subject to potential biases and limitations.

Additionally, it should be acknowledged that the validity of the research findings is contingent upon the specific set of variables included in the analytical framework. The introduction of other relevant factors may potentially alter the magnitude and direction of the observed relationships.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

### DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data available on request due to privacy/ethical restrictions.

### ETHICS STATEMENT

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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**How to cite this article:** Topçuoğlu, E., Başkol, M., Argan, M., & Argan, M. T. (2023). The antecedents of voter loyalty and the mediation role of party attachment: A case study from Turkey. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 23(3), e2860. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pa.2860>