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A systematic review on anxious attachment and relationship satisfaction

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A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW ON ANXIOUS ATTACHMENT AND RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION

A clinical dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Psychology

by

Laura Mendez

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This clinical dissertation, written by

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DEDICATION

This work is wholeheartedly dedicated to my family who has been my source of inspiration and strength. To my father, thank you for coming around and accepting and more importantly, loving, the person that I was meant to be all along. Your growth has inspired me to grow. To my mother, thank you for your unconditional love and support especially, when I've been thousands of miles away from home. To my sister, Mely, thank you for being my rock throughout this entire journey. Despite the distance, I have always felt you next to me, holding my hand as I embarked on one of the most difficult challenges of my life. To my sister, Diana, thank you for being unconditionally proud of me. I hope I have laid down a path for you to take on when you are ready. To my brother, Frank, it is you who planted the first seed that I could possibly make a difference in this world. I hope you see the person I have grown up to be.

To my mentor and pastor, Dr. Gilberto Salinas, you played a big part in my decision to relocate and pursue my doctorate in California. Thank you for believing in me and for continuing to be such an important role model in my life. To my late friend, Steph, this win is for the both of us. I kept my promise to you, I gave it my all and I finished it!

Finally, I dedicate this accomplishment to my younger self. When you first started this journey, you didn't expect to face so much adversity. I know it was hard, and it felt so unfair, but you did it. You fought against all odds and now, here you are. Now, as you approach the finish line and prepare for the next chapter, don't forget to, every now and again, pat yourself on the back. You didn't fall, you flew!

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VITA

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ABSTRACT

Romantic relationships can serve as a source of intimacy, security, support, and comfort for many individuals. Many studies have identified adult attachment as an important predictor of romantic relationship/marital satisfaction. However, many studies have found anxious attachment to be a predictor of poor relationship satisfaction. Moreover, individuals high in attachment anxiety have been found to constantly worry and ruminate about their relationships, specifically, about the fear of being abandoned or rejected by their romantic partner. As such, it is important to further understand which factors strengthen or weaken relationship/marital satisfaction in anxiously attached adults. This systematic review aimed to answer the following questions: (a) What are the risk and protective factors that strengthen and weaken relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment? (b) What are the moderating effects of interpersonal trauma on relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment? The results of this systematic review revealed 22 risk factors and 17 protective factors for relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment. Specifically, this systematic review found perceptions to be both a significant risk and protective factor for relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment. In addition, this systematic review found Emotion focused couple therapy (EFT) to be a significant protective factor for relationship/marital satisfaction in anxious adults. Lastly, this review found that anxious partners perpetrate more psychological abuse against their partners.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

For many adults, romantic relationships serve as a source of intimacy, security, support, and comfort (Luerssen et al., 2019;). Many studies have identified adult attachment as an important predictor of romantic relationship quality, relationship functioning, and relationship satisfaction (Li & Chan, 2012; Lowyck et al., 2008; Luerssen et al., 2019). While romantic relationships can serve as a source of support, this, however, is not the case for adults with anxious attachment. Individuals high in attachment anxiety tend to constantly worry and ruminate about their relationship, specifically about the fear of being rejected and abandoned by their significant other (Campbell & Marshall, 2011; Fitzpatrick & Lafontaine, 2017). In addition, adults who are anxiously attached to their partners are likely to hold negative self-views and guarded but hopeful views about their partner. Consequently, these anxiously attached adults begin to not only doubt their self-worth, but they also develop resentment toward past attachment figures, fear future potential loses, and remain hypervigilant to perceived threats to the relationship (Fitzpatrick & Lafontaine, 2017).

According to adult attachment theory, developed by Hazan and Shaver (1987), attachment patterns seen in adults strongly align with the infant-caregiver attachment styles that were originally defined by John Bowlby in 1969. They concluded that attachment styles developed in childhood are not only carried over into adulthood, but are seen specifically, in the context of a romantic relationship. Moreover, in their research, Hazan and Shaver (1987) discovered that those who aligned with an insecure attachment style as a child used their partner as a *secure base,* a concept in infant attachment theory used to describe the attachment figure whom the child feels safest to and who helps meet the child's basic needs. This type of anxious

dependence on a romantic partner, however, can lead to numerous interpersonal problems such as codependence, abuse, and unfaithful partnerships (Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

It is important therefore, to consider the impact that attachment-related issues in childhood can have on interpersonal relationships in adulthood. For instance, current research suggests that disruptions in early attachment, such as parental divorce, loss, neglect, or abuse, are likely to result in a negative relational schema that impacts how one views the self, others, as well as how one learns to emotionally regulate later in life (Williams & Riskind, 2004). These negative schemas and an inability to self-regulate can further result in later psychopathology (Williams & Riskind, 2004). Further research has already linked insecure attachment to Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD), social phobia, PTSD, depressive symptoms, eating disorders, increased physical symptoms and poorer health, increased levels of interpersonal problems, and poorer levels of functioning in interpersonal relationships (Williams & Riskind, 2004).

However, while studies support the idea that early attachment styles impact the development of adult romantic attachment, other studies contend that this is not always the case (e.g., Bachem et al., 2019; Campbell & Marshall, 2011; Lowyck et al., 2008; Williams & Riskind, 2004). Recent studies argue that adults develop a relationship-specific romantic attachment style that results from actual experience with one's romantic partner (Lowyck et al., 2008). In other words, it is the romantic relationship itself that contributes to the development of a specific romantic attachment style and not predisposed factors. Furthermore, Williams and Riskind (2004) found that anxiously attached adults may not exhibit attachment-related distress in every context, but rather in specific environments where there is a potential for interpersonal rejection and relationship loss. Lastly, several studies have noted that attachment insecurities can

change and persist throughout one's life, and that it is those interpersonal and non-personal traumas that can that affect its trajectory (Bachem et al., 2019; Campbell & Marshall, 2011). The aforementioned studies indicate that perhaps not all anxiously attached children become anxiously attached adults by default. As such, it is imperative that we investigate and understand the risk and protective factors that play a role in strengthening or weakening relationship satisfaction in adults specifically, those with an anxious attachment.

Overview of Current Research

Attachment Theory

Research on attachment in romantic relationships grew out of Bowlby's attachment theory (1969/1982), which focused primarily on the quality of emotional bonds between caregiver and infants (as cited in Fitzpatrick & Lafontaine, 2017). As Bowlby observed how young children respond to the temporary loss of their mother, he proposed that children have an innate behavioral system designed to encourage proximity with their primary caregivers, or *secure-base*, when presented with a dangerous or threatening situation, and that these behaviors are crucial for survival and for the development of self-soothing skills (Campbell & Marshall, 2011; Fitzpatrick & Lafontaine, 2017; Trub & Starks, 2017). Bowlby's attachment theory also gave special attention to the parent-child interactions, and how these interactions shape how people see themselves, others, and relationships (Campbell & Marshall, 2011; Fitzpatrick & Lafontaine, 2017). If attachment figures are consistently accessible and responsive, the child will feel safe and secure, thus adopting a secure pattern of attachment (Fitzpatrick & Lafontaine, 2017). However, if caregivers are inaccessible, negligent, or inconsistent, the child will not learn the necessary skills to regulate distressing emotions and will therefore, adopt an insecure/anxious pattern of attachment (Fitzpatrick & Lafontaine, 2017). These primary attachment bonds

observed between infants and their primary caregivers influence the attachment bond that develops in adult romantic relationships (Fitzpatrick & Lafontaine, 2017; Ha et al., 2019; Heffernan et al., 2012; Luerssen et al., 2019; Williams & Riskind, 2004).

Anxious Attachment in Childhood

Anxious attachment is defined as "[the] uncertainty regarding the availability of attachment figures" (Campbell & Marshall, 2011, p. 1221). This attachment pattern develops when infants experience inconsistent care from their primary caregiver and become unsure of their availability, specifically in times of need (Campbell & Marshall, 2011). This uncertainty causes anxiously attached children to engage in approach-avoidance behaviors towards their caregiver when distressed, mixing bids for comfort and support with withdrawal and strong emotional expressions of anger (Campbell & Marshall, 2011). This doubt creates an internal working model of how children perceive others in close relationships (Campbell & Marshall, 2011). Bowlby (1969, 1973) noted three consequences that result from children being unsure that their caregiver will be available and responsive when needed: first, they are constantly concerned about their caregiver's availability and therefore, closely monitor the attachment figure's behavior and presence; second, the child is engaged in more attachment-related behaviors with the goal of maintaining both the attention and presence of the attachment figure; and third, because there is a preoccupation with monitoring the caregiver and keeping close proximity, the child is unlikely to explore his/her environment (as cited in Campbell & Marshall, 2011). The internal working model of the anxiously attached child, therefore, directs the child to constantly monitor and evaluate their surroundings for cues that indicate the potential loss of attention from the caregiver (Campbell & Marshall, 2011).

Research with infants and children using the strange situation (an experimental technique that subjects the child to increasing stress induced by a strange setting—the entrance of an unfamiliar person and two short separations from the caregiver) has focused on these approach-avoidant behaviors proposed as key factors of anxious attachment (Campbell & Marshall, 2011). For instance, in the strange situation, anxiously attached children are more likely to play closer attention to their mother's physical/emotional proximity and availability as soon as their mother begins interacting with a stranger in the room (Campbell & Marshall, 2011). Similar research has shown that anxiously attached children are also more likely to limit exploration of their environment and more likely to engage in more isolated play (Campbell & Marshall, 2011). These children are also more likely to abandon their own play to interact and engage with their caregiver (Campbell & Marshall, 2011). Overall, anxiously attached children are likely to be more attuned to the physical closeness and availability of their attachment figure and engage in behaviors that seek to maintain a high degree of interaction and proximity to them (Campbell & Marshall, 2011).

Adult Romantic Attachment

In 1987, Cindy Hazan and Philip Shaver were the first researchers to apply attachment theory to the understanding of adult romantic relationships (Campbell & Marshall, 2011; Lowyck et al., 2008; Williams & Riskind, 2004). While considerable research on romantic attachment has been conducted, one of the most agreed-upon conceptualizations of adult romantic attachments uses a two-dimensional measure of attachment (attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance), creating three attachment orientations: attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance, and attachment security (Fitzpatrick & Lafontaine, 2017; Williams & Riskind, 2004). *Attachment anxiety* in a romantic relationship is characterized by constant worry, fears of

abandonment, a desire for closeness, emotional lability, and doubts about a partner's trustworthiness (Fitzpatrick & Lafontaine, 2017; Luerssen et al., 2019). Individuals high in attachment anxiety hold negative self-views and apprehensive but hopeful views of others (Fitzpatrick & Lafontaine, 2017). *Attachment avoidance* in a romantic relationship is associated with avoidance of intimacy and a tendency to remain emotionally distant from the partner (Fitzpatrick & Lafontaine, 2017; Luerssen et al., 2019). Individuals high in attachment avoidance hold alternating self-views and negative views of others (Fitzpatrick & Lafontaine, 2017). Lastly, *attachment security* in a romantic relationship is characterized with feeling a sense of security around the partner, comfort with closeness and interdependence, and trust in the partner (Fitzpatrick & Lafontaine, 2017; Luerssen et al., 2019). Individuals high in attachment security hold positive self-views and positive views of others, which allows for more cognitive flexibility and is often related with greater relationship satisfaction (Fitzpatrick & Lafontaine, 2017). Securely attached couples are also more likely to have higher levels of trust, commitment, and marital satisfaction (Dalgleish et al., 2015).

Anxious Attachment in Adult Romantic Relationships

As previously mentioned, anxiously attached individuals experience constant worry and incessant rumination, specifically fears about being rejected or abandoned by their partner (Campbell & Marshall, 2011; Fitzpatrick & Lafontaine, 2017). They develop negative views about themselves yet hold positive but guarded views of their partner (Campbell & Marshall, 2011; Lowyck et al., 2008). These individuals crave constant emotional support, closeness, and reassurance from their partners (Campbell & Marshall, 2011; Luerssen et al., 2019), and when highly distressed, they become emotionally labile and obsess over thoughts about being abandoned (Campbell & Marshall, 2011). In addition, highly anxious adults tend to question

their partner's long-term availability and therefore, become hypervigilant of their partners and their behaviors (Campbell & Marshall, 2011). Due to their constant fears and worries about their partner's availability, anxious individuals are likely to use sex as a way to reduce insecurity and establish an intense closeness to their partners (Campbell & Marshall, 2011). They are also unlikely to negotiate on sexual acts, fearing that such discussion will alienate their partner (Campbell & Marshall, 2011). They are also likely to hold negative beliefs about condoms and report higher levels of erotophobia (Campbell & Marshall, 2011).

Mikulciner and Shaver (2003, 2007) introduced a model that explains the activation and operation of the adult attachment system [similar to the internal working model of anxiously attached children] (as cited in Campbell & Marshall, 2011). According to this model, the primary strategy of the adult attachment system is to seek and gain proximity to an attachment figure in times of distress (Campbell & Marshall, 2011; Fitzpatrick & Lafontaine, 2017). However, if the attachment figure is continuously unresponsive or unavailable, the system then resorts to activating its secondary strategies (Campbell & Marshall, 2011; Fitzpatrick & Lafontaine, 2017). These secondary strategies, also known as the *hyperactivating strategies*, aim to elicit care, support, and proximity from the unresponsive attachment figure (Campbell & Marshall, 2011; Fitzpatrick & Lafontaine, 2017). These strategies however, which typically involve clinging and controlling behaviors, seek to not only maintain proximity to the attachment figure, but to also monitor their partner closely for signs of deficient or weakening physical and/or emotional closeness that threatens the relationship (Campbell & Marshall, 2011; Fitzpatrick & Lafontaine, 2017). While the use of these secondary strategies may be effective in achieving proximity to the attachment figure, it is only successful for a brief period of time

before it starts causing relationship discord, distancing behaviors, and lower relationship satisfaction (Fitzpatrick & Lafontaine, 2017).

Betrayal Trauma Theory

Betrayal Trauma theory was introduced by Freyd (1996) to explain traumatic amnesia from an evolutionary perspective (as cited in Lindblom & Gray, 2010). According to Freyd, betrayal trauma is any trauma that violates the trust placed in others upon whom one is socially dependent (Hocking et al., 2016; Lindblom & Gray, 2010; Mackelprang et al., 2014). Such traumatic experiences are assumed to fall along a continuum of betrayal, where the degree of interpersonal violation is based on the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator (Lindblom & Gray, 2010; Mackelprang et al., 2014). When the perpetrator is someone the victim cares for, relies upon, or trusts, this interpersonal violation is considered high in betrayal (Hocking et al., 2016). For example, sexual or physical abuse by a caretaker or intimate partner would be considered a high betrayal (HB) trauma (Mackelprang et al., 2014). On the other hand, traumas that are not interpersonal in nature (i.e., natural disasters) or are perpetuated by someone with whom there is little, or no relationships are considered low betrayal (LB) traumas (Mackelprang et al., 2014). Research suggests that traumatic events regarded as high in betrayal are less likely to be remembered than those low in betrayal (e.g., Hocking et al., 2016; Mackelprang et al., 2014). This phenomenon is known as *betrayal blindness*; this adaptive blindness enables the victim to not only continue to trust and rely on the perpetrator, but also to help maintain the proximity and attachment bond between the perpetrator and the victim (Hocking et al., 2016; Mackelprang et al., 2014). While this may ensure immediate survival of the victim, trauma high in betrayal is associated with somatic symptoms, substance use, physical

illness, depression, anxiety, dissociative symptoms, and insecure attachment styles (Hocking et al., 2016; Owen et al., 2012).

Although betrayal trauma theory does not address the causes of revictimization, research suggests that individuals who experience trauma high in betrayal in childhood are more likely to experience trauma high in betrayal as adolescents and adults (Hocking et al., 2016; Mackelprang et al. 2014). For instance, Desai et al. (2002) found that childhood victimization increased the risk for adulthood victimization by any perpetrator (regardless of the relationship to the victim) for both men and women, and by an intimate partner for women but not men. In another study, Mackelprang et al. (2014) found that exposure to high betrayal traumas in childhood and poor family relationships predicted earlier risk of homelessness and higher risk of revictimization in adulthood. Research suggests that victims of betrayal trauma experience damage to the cognitive processes that help individuals identify signs of betrayal and interpersonal violations, thus leaving them to less likely to avoid or withdraw from relationships where they are at risk of being harmed or betrayed (DePrince, 2005; Hocking et al., 2016).

Relationship Satisfaction

The term "satisfaction" implies that certain needs or desires have been successfully fulfilled (Dandurand et al., 2013). Within adult attachment theory, satisfaction in a relationship entails having a romantic partner who provides a sense of security, closeness, and dependability, while simultaneously supporting autonomy when appropriate (Dandurand et al., 2013). Research consistently shows that relationship satisfaction is related to better mental and physical health, and an increased resilience to stress (e.g., Gove et al., 1983; Holt-Lunstad et al., 2008; Kõlves et al., 2012). On the other hand, relationship dissatisfaction is related to higher prevalence of

separation or divorce, increased suicidality, hopelessness, and depression (Batterham et al., 2014; Stack, 1990; Wyder et al., 2009).

When examining attachment styles, secure attachment has been linked to more satisfaction than those with an insecure or avoidance attachment style because of their inability to establish a healthy balance between autonomy and closeness (Dandurand et al., 2013). Research shows that those who are insecurely attached to their partners fail to foster positive relationships because they are either too anxious (i.e., clingy, hyper-vigilant) or avoidant (i.e., emotionally detached) (Hadden et al., 2014). People high in anxious attachment tend to overinvest in the relationship and are highly sensitive to indications that their partner may not be available if needed (Hadden et al., 2014). On the other hand, people high in avoidant attachment tend to experience lower relationship satisfaction because they are disengaged in their relationship and reject any sense of intimacy and closeness (Hadden et al., 2014). In a systematic review, which included 132 eligible studies, Candel and Turliuc (2019) found that there is a negative relationship between anxiety and relationship satisfaction as well as, avoidance and relationship satisfaction. Similar findings were also found in two previous meta-analyses, where both anxiety and avoidance were found to be detrimental to relationship satisfaction (Hadden et al., 2014; Li & Chan, 2012). Lastly, it is noteworthy to mention that previous research also shows that interpersonal trauma is related with lower relationship satisfaction (VanBergen et al., 2021). In a longitudinal study with different-gender newlywed couples, participants who reported childhood maltreatment (i.e., physical, sexual, psychological abuse or neglect) also reported lower marital satisfaction (DiLillo et al., 2009).

Relationship Satisfaction with Anxious Adults and Emotion Focused Therapy

As previously mentioned, anxiously attached adults experience constant worry and fear of being rejected and abandoned by their romantic partner (Campbell & Marshall, 2011; Fitzpatrick & Lafontaine, 2017). When highly distressed, anxious partners may resort to secondary strategies to elicit responsive behaviors from their partner (Campbell & Marshall, 2011; Fitzpatrick & Lafontaine, 2017). While this may be momentarily effective, it is detrimental to the sustainability of the relationship (Campbell & Marshall, 2011; Fitzpatrick & Lafontaine, 2017). As such, it is important to investigate and understand different approaches and interventions aimed at improving overall relationship/marital functioning.

Couple therapy continues to gain popularity, with growing evidence of its efficacy in treating and reducing relationship distress (Dalgleish et al., 2015). However, researchers have also reported that approximately 50% of couples in therapy do not reach recovery at the end of treatment (Dalgleish et al., 2015). This low percentage of success suggests that further research is needed to understand which models of couple therapy are most effective in treating and reducing relationship distress. EFT, developed by Susan Johnson (2004), is "an experiential-humanistic, systemic intervention" (as cited in Greenman & Johnson, 2013, p. 47). It is an empirically validated approach to couple therapy based in attachment theory whose effects appear to remain stable over time (Greenman & Johnson, 2013; Wiebe at al., 2017). This model has demonstrated a 70%–73% recovery rate for couples experiencing relationship distress, with 90% significant improvement over controls (Dalgleish et al., 2015).

EFT is an empirically supported approach to couple therapy that uses attachment theory to understand the needs of romantic partners (Dalgleish et al., 2015). As such, EFT views romantic partners as having an innate need for emotional contact and security (Dalgleish et al.,

2015; Greenman & Johnson, 2013). Relationship satisfaction is then based on the degree of closeness and security between partners and the level of accessibility and responsiveness to one another (Dalgleish et al., 2015). Research on adult romantic attachment has linked insecure attachment to relationship distress (Dalgleish et al., 2015). According to EFT, relationship distress occurs when partners fail to respond to individual attachment cues, resulting in an increase in negative emotions, negative interactions, and a weakening of the security of attachment bonds (Dalgleish et al., 2015; Wiebe et al. 2017). In other words, negative interactions result from an attempt to cope with separation distress and to change the partners' responses in the direction of increased accessibility and responsiveness (Dalgleish et al., 2015; Wiebe et al., 2017). However, relationship distress is likely to result from these ongoing negative interaction patterns when individuals feel as though their partner has failed to respond to their cries for emotional support and connection (Dalgleish et al., 2015; Wiebe et al., 2017). EFT, therefore, aims to create more events for bonding security through exploration and expression of emotional needs associated with loss of emotional connection, and to create increased accessibility and responsiveness between partners (Dalgleish et al., 2015; Wiebe et al., 2017).

Rationale

Due to the multitude of research that supports the notion that anxiously attached children become anxiously attached adults in their romantic relationships, it is important to further understand which factors strengthen or weaken relationship/marital satisfaction in anxiously attached adults. Additionally, seeing as how other factors may play a role in maintaining an insecure attachment in adulthood, it is imperative that further investigation is conducted to identify which factors exacerbate the development and maintenance of an anxious attachment style in adulthood. As such, this systematic review aimed to examine these issues by answering

the following key questions: (a) What are the risk and protective factors that strengthen and weaken relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment? (b) What are the moderating effects of interpersonal trauma on relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment? This review provides valuable information and resources for mental health professionals working with anxiously attached adults experiencing relationship dissatisfaction.

Chapter 2: Method

Systematic Review Approach

This systematic review was conducted utilizing a narrative synthesis approach. A narrative synthesis analysis using quantitative studies was conducted in order to describe and examine the trends observed from the existing literature surrounding anxious attachment in adults, relationship/marital satisfaction, and interpersonal trauma. Synthesizing studies yielded a better understanding of the relationship between these three areas of interest. This systematic review followed the guidelines from the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Protocols (PRISMA-P) which is informed by the review standards, guidelines, and recommendations from the Cochrane Collaborative, The Campbell Collaborative, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the National Academy of Sciences (Moher et al, 2009).

Eligibility Criteria

Inclusion Criteria

The studies met all the following criteria in order to be included: publication sources, types of studies, types of research variables, types of participants, types of settings, and exclusion criteria. These will be further described in the sections that follow.

Publication Sources

Publication sources eligible for inclusion included peer reviewed scientific journal articles published between 1987–2022, and included initial and recent studies on adult romantic attachment. Studies were published in a peer-reviewed publication journal as this systematic review is meant to inform clinicians who are working with adults experiencing relationship/marital dissatisfaction and peer-reviewed published journals serve as the gold

standard. Both peer-reviewed national and international journals were eligible, and all studies were in English.

Types of Studies

Only quantitative studies were eligible for inclusion in this systematic review to enhance objectivity, accuracy, and sample size. Primary data collection, as well as secondary data analysis, were included in the sample of selected studies. All measures of attachment or relationship/marital satisfaction were included. Studies were not limited based on statistical power and sample size.

Types of Research Variables

Studies involved an examination of anxious attachment as it related to relationship/marital satisfaction, and interpersonal trauma. Moreover, studies needed to have identified a risk or protective factor as it related to relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with an anxious attachment.

Types of Participants

Study participants included individuals who identified as male, female, and non-binary, and who were 18 years or older at the time the study was conducted.

Types of Settings

Studies included participants from all settings except inpatient hospitalizations related to severe psychiatric issues (i.e., psychosis). Individuals in such settings could be in a state of crisis that may naturally be causing interpersonal issues which may impact accurate reporting of data.

Exclusion Criteria

This review excluded studies containing participants with severe psychopathology (e.g., psychosis), developmental disabilities (e.g., intellectual disability), or severe trauma. The reason

for these criteria is that individuals with severe psychopathology or intellectual disabilities could have limited ability to accurately report their interpersonal skills and relationship functioning. Moreover, these individuals could have substantially altered attachment schemas due to these diagnoses, and/or interpersonal deficits that impact their ability to create and maintain relationships specifically, romantic relationships.

Search, Screening, and Selection Processes

Information Sources

Relevant studies were identified by the researcher and two research assistants through electronic searches of the following databases: PsychINFO, PsychArticles, and SAGE Journals. These databases were utilized to locate studies as they contain research on the relationship between attachment styles and interpersonal relationships. Moreover, an evaluation of the reference list contained in the final selected studies was conducted in order to see if any of the cited articles met the eligibility criteria for this systematic review.

Search Terms

A comprehensive list of search terms (see Appendix A) was identified for use in identifying appropriate studies to be included for this systematic review. Suitable synonyms for most terms were named and used to bolster the searching capacity of each database. The identified terms were: anxious attachment; insecure attachment; attachment anxiety; attachment styles; anxious romantic attachment; adult anxious attachment; adult romantic attachment; romantic bond; attachment anxiety in adulthood; romantic attachment; attachment styles; interpersonal trauma; traumatic bond; betrayal trauma; marital satisfaction; marital dissatisfaction. satisfaction; attachment trauma; insecure attachment. Each term was given an

identification number (ID) and variations of the pairing of the terms were provided in the search plan.

The comprehensive search plan (see Appendix B) included the search type, database or source used, search term ID numbers, search syntax or instruction, fields to search, specifiers, and plan notes. This plan was used to gather articles considered for inclusion or exclusion of the current review. The search documentation record (see Appendix C) included the different variations of the search syntax used to gather the articles. The information for each variation recorded included the search date, a full search ID number, the type of search (kind of database used), the database source, the search term ID numbers used, the search syntax, the fields that were searched, the included years, the publication type, and the number of records (articles) that appeared for that search.

Selection of Studies

The screening and selection record (see Appendix D) was used to document the articles that were being reviewed for consideration of inclusion in the study. They were divided into three phases. The first phase involved the screening of title/keywords/abstract of each study. The second phase included a full text review for eligibility. The third phase was the final decision whether to include the study for data extraction. The phases held a set of criteria that were met to move on to including analysis of the author, year, title of the article, database/sources, title/keyword screen, abstract screen decision, full text screen, inclusionary criteria, exclusionary criteria, secondary confirmatory decision, final decision, final decision date, and any notes pertaining to the decision made. The full text of the remaining articles was reviewed to make a final determination of eligibility. Furthermore, any articles that were questionable for inclusion were reviewed by the researcher and two research assistants, and a

collaborative determination was made. After the screening and selection process was complete, a PRISMA Flow Diagram was constructed (see Figure 1) to provide a transparent summary of the process of selecting the final set of studies for the systematic review.

Data Collection and Extraction

A data collection and extraction form (see Appendix F) was utilized to gather information from the selected articles. The following categories were evaluated: general information (date form completed, initials/ID of person extracting data, title, source/publication type, source name, publication status), design characteristics and methodological features (aim of the study, study design or specific research approach), assessment of research variables, study participant characteristics (population of interest, method of recruitment, sample size, age, sex, race and ethnicity, diagnosis if applicable), setting characteristics (study location, data collection settings), analyses conducted and measures used, results, conclusions and follow-up (key conclusions of study authors, recommendations for future research, study limitations, references to other relevant studies).

Quality Appraisal

The Individual Quality Assessment Form (see Appendix G) was used to determine the overall quality of each publication. This form was used to rate a range of criteria in each domain by evaluating each criterion and ranking them. The criteria in the quality assessment included: (a) strength of literature foundation and rationale for the study (b) clarity and specificity of research aims/objective/questions (c) quality of research design or methodological approach (d) sample selection and characteristics (e) measures/data collection tools (f) data collection procedures (g) analysis of data (h) discussion of study limitations (i) consideration of culture and diversity. Each of the outlined criteria was ranked as follows: (3) *Strong* (2) *Good/Adequate*

(1) *Weak* and (0) *Missing*. The critical appraisal occurred immediately after the completion of the data extraction of studies selected for inclusion. The researcher and one research assistant completed the critical appraisal form for each of the studies. If ranking/quality of a study was questionable, the reviewer and the researcher assistant reviewed and made a collaborative decision.

Data Management, Synthesis and Analysis Plan

Database Development

A central database was created to gather and store the data collected from all included studies into a single document. This database was an Excel spreadsheet using the variables from the Data Extraction and Quality Assessment Forms to allow the author to easily view all data points across all studies. This primary database was an extensive and comprehensive spreadsheet that held all of the extracted data and appraisal information from all the studies.

Reporting of the Results

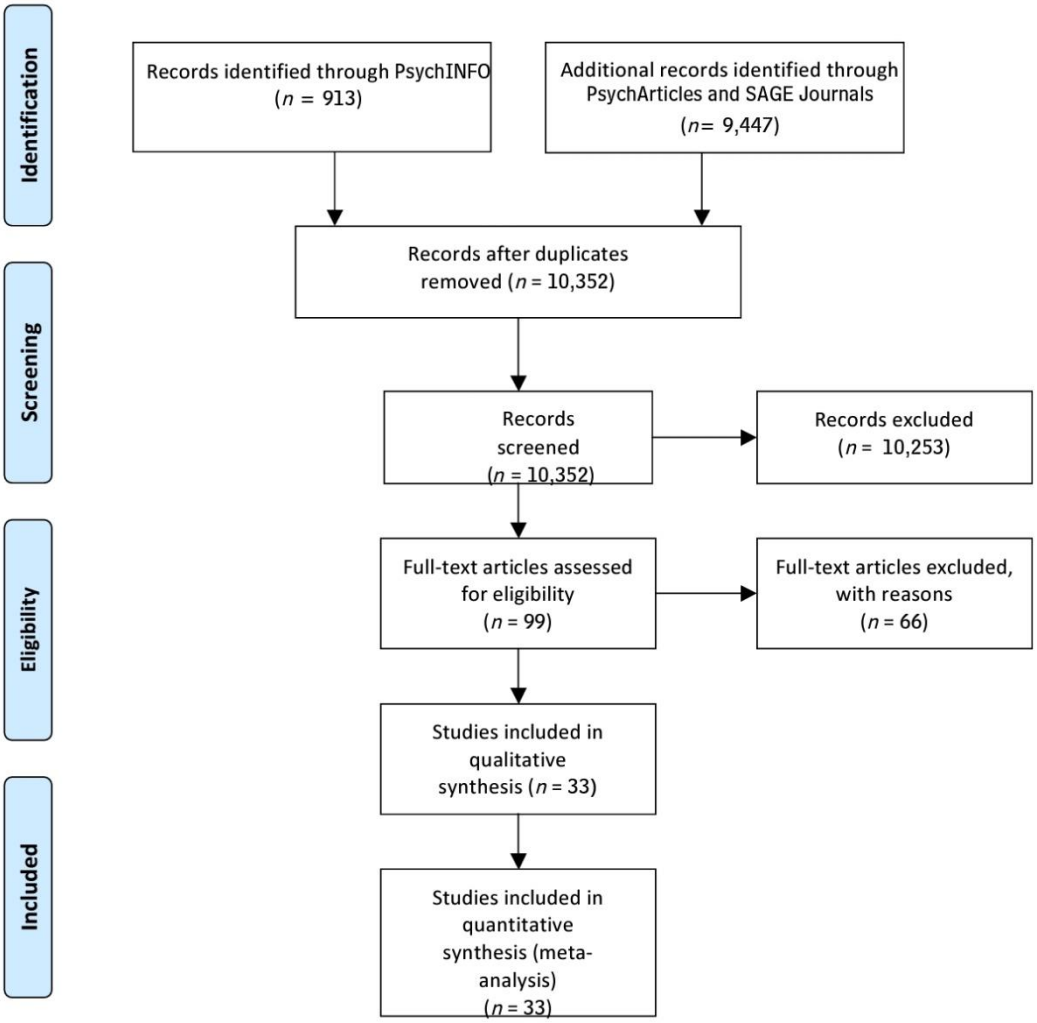
The Evidence Table (see Appendix H) was created to serve as a presentation of the results of the systematic review, reporting the findings from each of the studies reviewed. The Evidence Table reports the following information from each study reviewed: (a) author(s), (b) publication year, (c) study aim, (d) methods design, (e) sample characteristics, (f) research variables, (g) risk/protective factor(s), (h) results/main findings. The Evidence Table is the author's primary mode of reporting the results and major findings of this systematic review. Additionally, an IRB Non-Human Subjects Notification Form (see Appendix I) was signed and completed by the researcher and the faculty chairperson.

Chapter 3: Results

A total of 10,360 publications were identified using electronic databases, of which 10,352 were unique. After reviewing titles and abstracts in the context of identifiable inclusion criteria, 10,253 records were excluded, resulting in 99 full-text articles assessed comprehensively for eligibility. Of the full-text studies assessed, 66 were excluded primarily for not assessing marital or relationship satisfaction (*n* = 19, 19.19%), for not assessing anxious attachment relating to romantic relationships (*n* = 7, 7.07%), and for not elaborating or identifying a risk or protective factor for marital satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment (*n* = 41, 41.41%). In total, 33 quantitative studies were selected to be included in the systematic review as seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Prisma Flow Diagram



From: Moher D, Liberati A, Tetzlaff J, Altman DG, The PRISMA Group (2009). *P*referred *R*eporting *I*tems for *S*ystematic Reviews and *M*eta-*A*nalyses: The PRISMA Statement. PLoS Med 6(7): e1000097. doi:10.1371/journal.pmed1000097

For more information, visit www.prisma-statement.org.

General Characteristics of Included Studies

General characteristics of each of the included studies are reported in the Evidence Table of Included Studies (See Appendix H). This table includes author name(s), publication year, title of the article, study aim, study design or specific research approach, research variables (e.g., anxious attachment, romantic anxious attachment, relationship/marital satisfaction, risk/protective factors), sample size, participant characteristics (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity), study location, and key findings.

The included studies were conducted internationally, as seen in Figure 2, with a majority conduced in the United States of America (*n* = 12, 36.36%), followed by Canada (*n* = 3, 9.09%), New Zealand (*n* = 2, 6.06%), Chile (*n* = 1, 3.03%), Israel (*n* = 1, 3.03%), Australia (*n* = 1, 3.03%), Germany (*n* = 1, 3.03%), Turkey (*n* = 1, 3.03%), China (*n* = 1, 3.03%), Europe (*n* = 1, 3.03%), Quebec (*n* = 1, 3.03%), and Poland (*n* = 1, 3.03%). One study combined data from both the United States of America and the United Kingdom (*n* = 1, 3.03%). There were several studies that did not specify study location (*n* = 6, 18.18%). The included studies were conducted in the following years (as seen in Figure 3): 2021 (*n* = 6, 18.18%), 2020 (*n* = 3, 9.09%), 2019 (*n* = 3, 9.09%), 2018 (*n* = 3, 9.09%), 2017 (*n* = 4, 12.12%), 2015 (*n* = 2, 6.06%), 2014 (*n* = 3, 9.09%), 2013 (*n* = 2, 6.06%), 2012 (*n* = 2, 6.06%), 2010 (*n* = 2, 6.06%), 2006 (*n* = 1, 3.03%), 2005 (*n* = 1, 3.03%), and 2002 (*n* = 1, 3.03%). All the included publications were quantitative studies (*n* = 33. 100%). Specific study designs (as seen in Figure 4) included cross-sectional (*n* = 12, 36.36%), longitudinal (*n* = 8, 24.24), experimental (*n* = 3, 9.09%), meta-analysis (*n* = 2, 6.06%), and quasi experimental (*n* = 1, 3.03%). Several studies did not clearly specify their study design (*n* = 7, 21.21%). The following sections will provide results related to characteristics of study participants, quality appraisal, and key findings.

Figure 2

Study Location

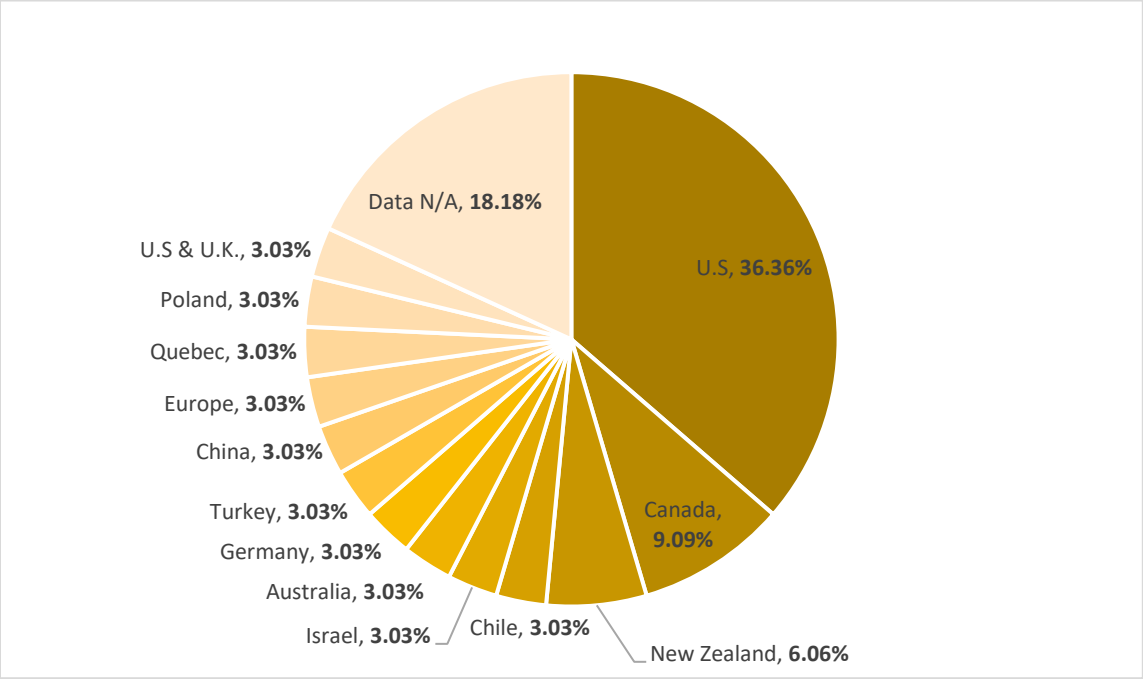


Figure 3

Publication Year

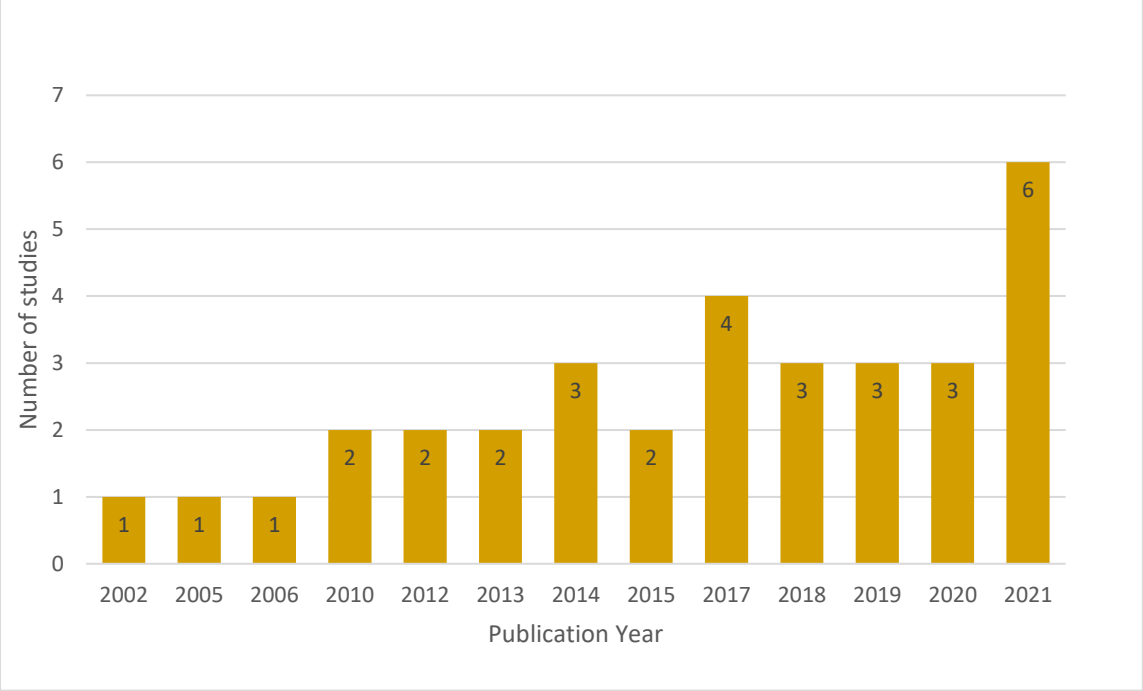
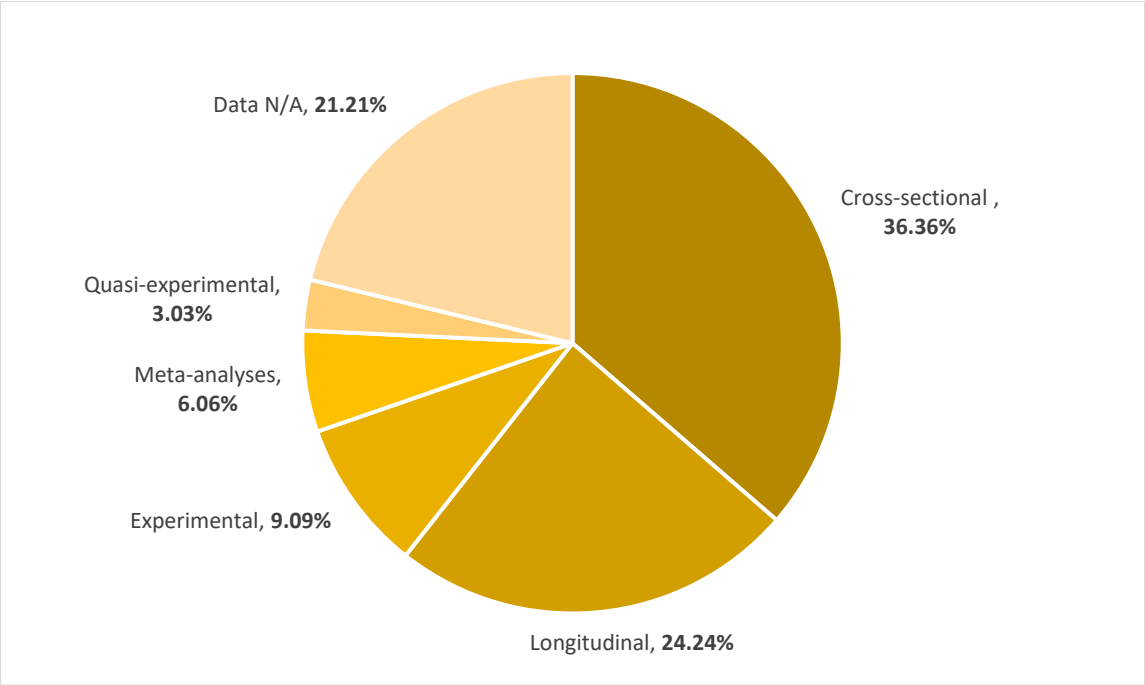


Figure 4

Study Design



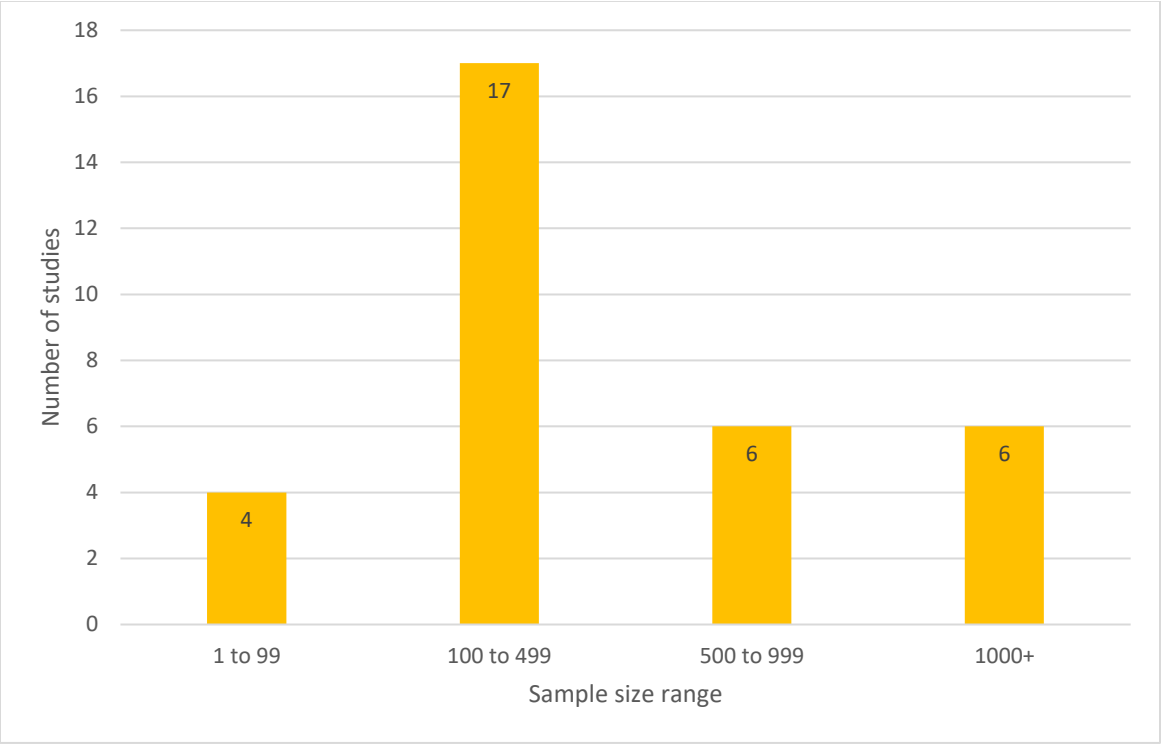
Characteristics of Study Participants

Sample Size

The sample sizes for the included studies ranged from 48 to 14,340 participants as seen in Figure 5. Four studies had a sample size between 1 to 99 (n = 4, 12.12%). Seventeen studies had a sample size between 100 to 499 (n = 17, 51.51%). Six studies had a sample size between 500 and 999 (n = 6, 18.18%). Six studies had a sample size over 1000 (n = 6, 18.18%).

Figure 5

Sample Size



Participant Characteristics

Twenty-four of the included studies gathered their data from couples (*n* = 24, 72.72%) (as seen in Figure 6.1). Six studies included only married couples (*n* = 5, 18.18%), seven studies had some married couples (*n* = 7, 21.21%), and 11 studies included couples that identified being in a committed relationship (*n* = 11, 33.33%). In addition, of these studies, one study specified that the couples were soon to be married (*n* = 1, 3.03%), while two studies specified that the couples were expecting their first child (*n* = 2, 6.06%). Moreover, 19 studies included only heterosexual couples (*n* = 19, 57.57%), while five did not specify if their sample consisted of mixed-sex or same-sex couples (*n* = 5, 15.15%). As seen in Figure 6.2, most studies included both male and female participants (*n* = 28, 84.84%). One study included only female participants (*n* = 1, 3.03%). Four studies did not report participant sex or gender (*n* = 4, 12.12%). Two studies had

some participants that did not report sex or gender (n = 2, 6.06%), and one study had a participant who identified as transgender (n = 1, 3.03%).

Figure 6

Participant Characteristics

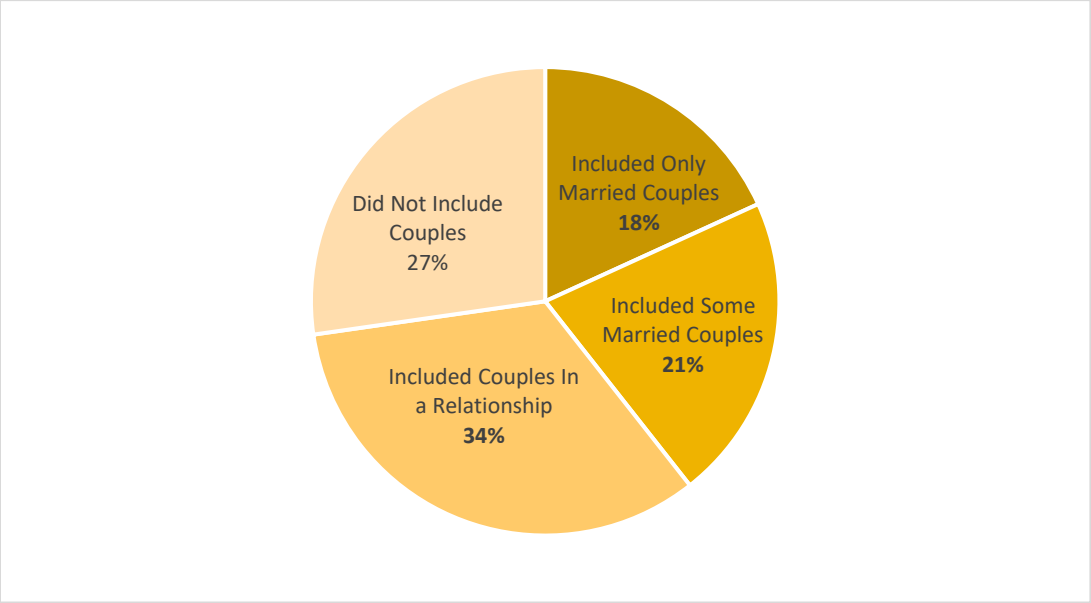
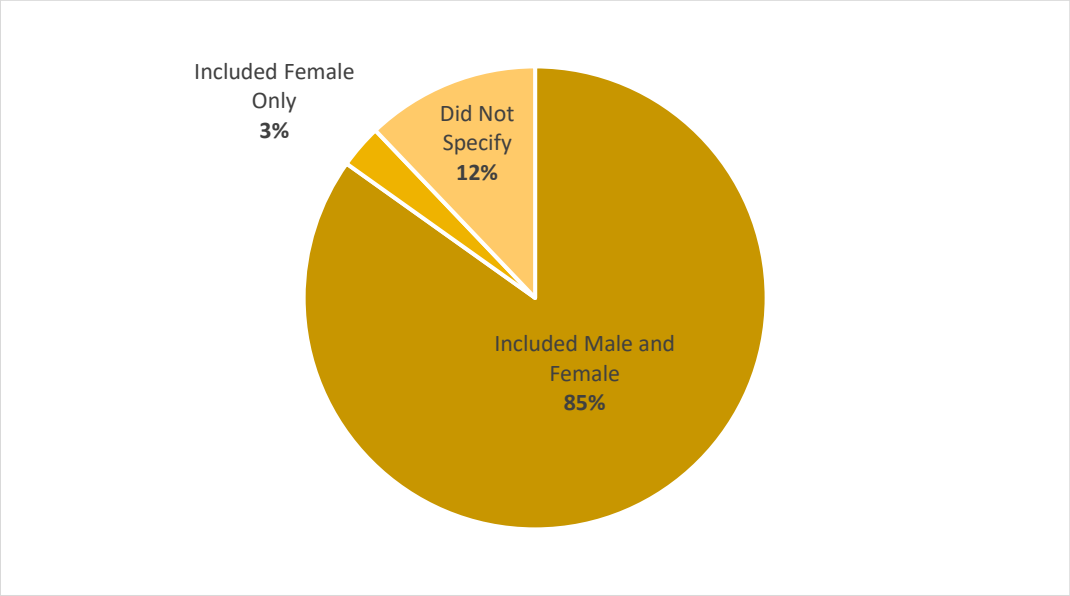


Figure 7

Participant Gender

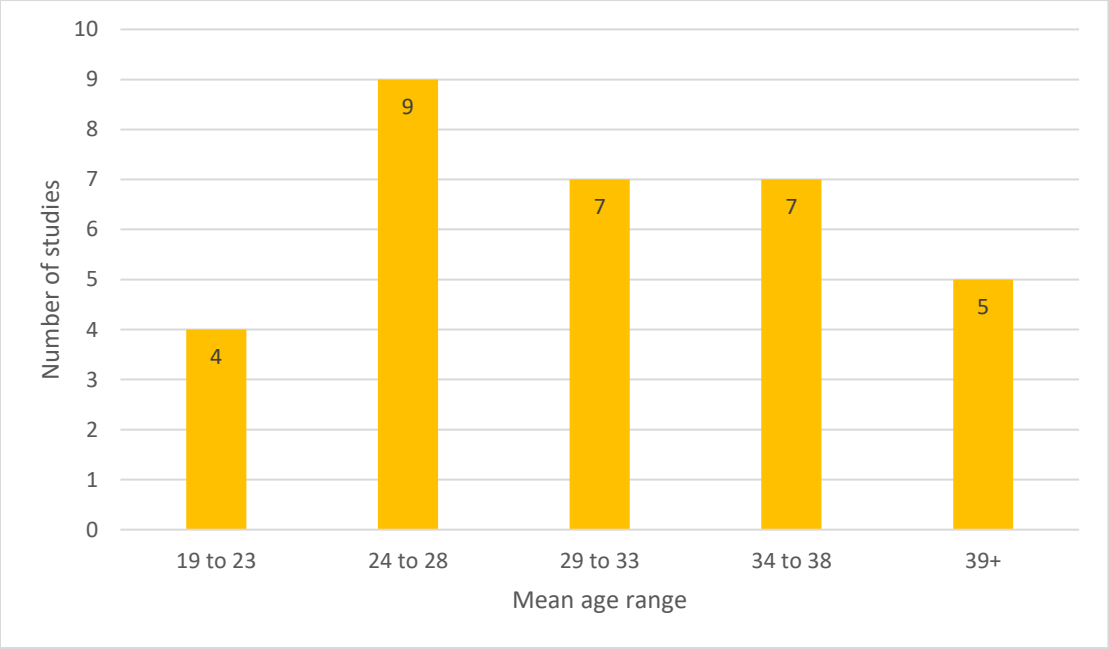


Participant Age

The mean ages of participants from the included studies ranged from 18.90 to 45.3 as seen in Figure 7. Four studies had mean ages ranging from 19 to 23 (*n* = 4, 12.12%). Nine studies had mean ages ranging from 24 to 28 (*n* = 9, 27.27%). Seven studies had mean ages ranging from 29 to 33 (*n* = 7, 21.21%). Seven studies had mean ages ranging from 34 to 38 (*n* = 7, 21.21%). Five studies had mean ages over 39 (*n* = 5, 15.15%). One study did not report the mean age of its participants (*n* = 1, 3.03%).

Figure 8

Participant Age



Participant Race-Ethnicity

Twenty-seven studies provided ethnicity/race data of participants (81.81%), while six studies did not provide sufficient demographic details of their participants (18.18%) (as seen in Figure 8). There were 21 studies with mostly White/Caucasian/European heritage participants (63.63%) (as seen in Figure 9.1). One study had predominantly Israeli participants (3.03%); one

study included only Chilean participants (3.03%); one study included only German participants (3.03%); one study included only French-Canadian participants (3.03%), and one study included only participants of Polish nationality (3.03%). Twelve studies explicitly stated that there were Latinos/Hispanic participants included in their sample (36.36%) (as seen in Figure 9.2), 13 studies included Asian/AAPI participants in their sample (39.39%), 11 studies included Black/African American participants in their sample (33.33%), two studies included Native American participants in their sample (6.06%), two studies included Middle Eastern participants in their sample (6.06%), one study included American Indian/Alaska Native participants in their sample (3.03%), one study included Caribbean participants in their sample (3.03%), one study included Māori participants in their sample (3.03%), and 10 studies included participants who identified as other/mixed/bi/multi-racial (30.30%).

Figure 9

Identification of Race/Ethnicity of Participants

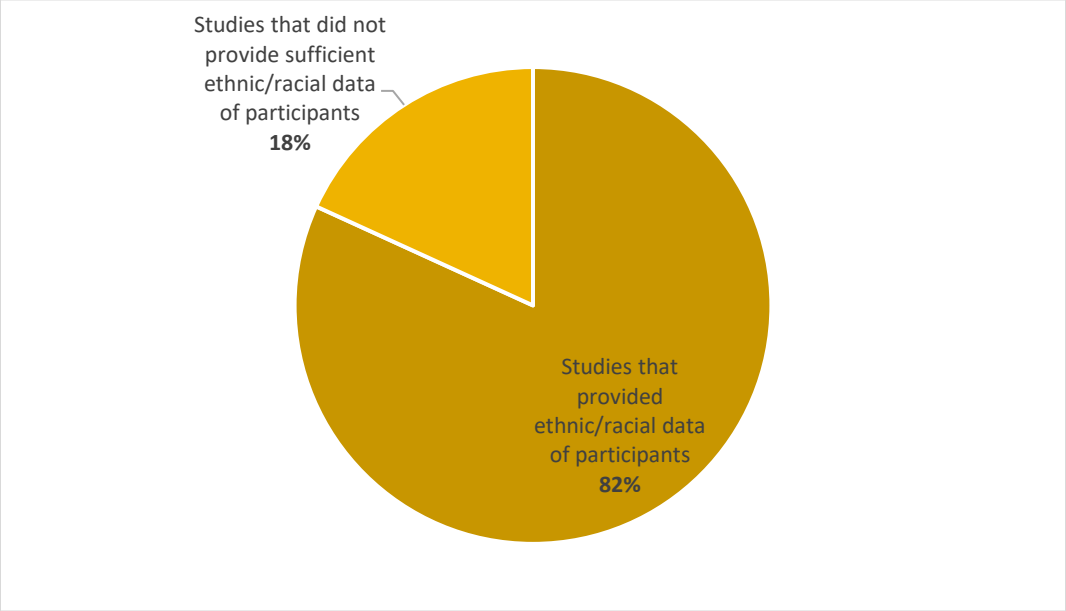


Figure 10

Racial/Ethnic Diversity of Participants in the Studies

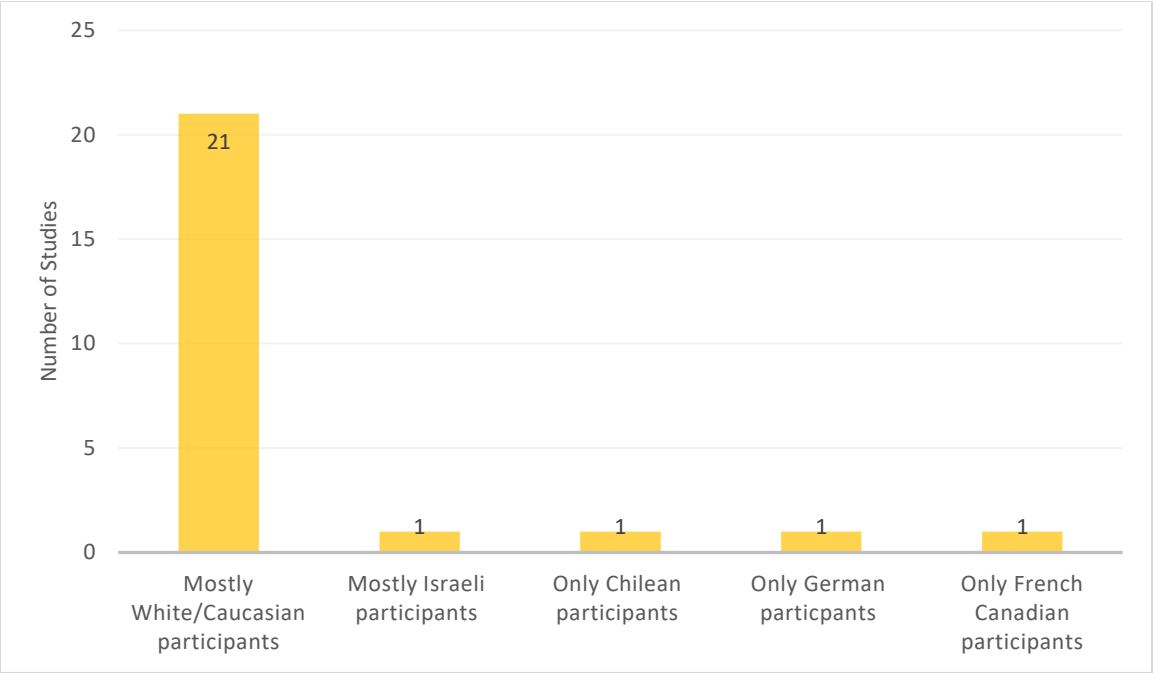
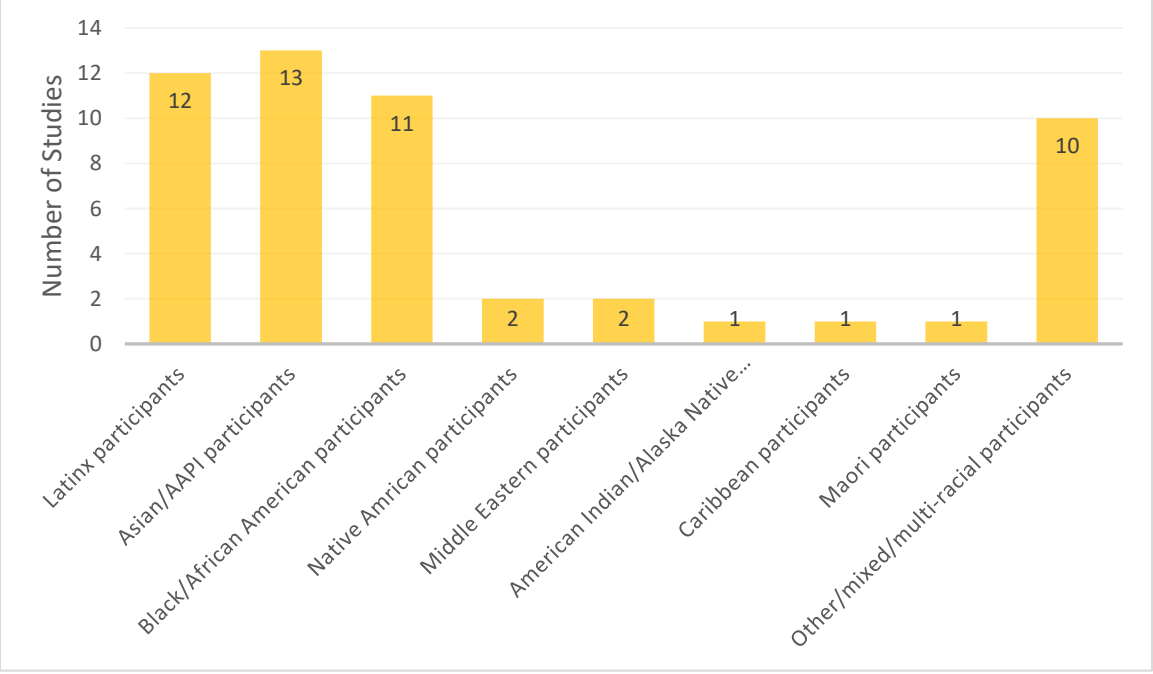


Figure 11

Racial/Ethnic Diversity of Participants in the Studies



Risk Factors

Research Question 1: What are the risk factors and protective factors that weaken and strengthen relationship satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment?

This systematic review uncovered 22 risk factors that were positively associated with lower relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment. Identified risk factors were grouped into the following categories: (a) individual factors, (b) interpersonal factors, and (c) contextual factors. The following sections describe how these factors were defined and analyzed. Refer to Figure 10 for a summary table of the identified risk factors (see Appendix H Evidence Table of Selected Studies).

Individual Factors

Of the selected studies, 12 publications (36.36%) revealed individual risk factors for relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment. The individual risk factors found were: (a) perceptions, (b) pessimistic attributions, (c) unforgiveness, (d) low trust, (e) low self-compassion, (f) negative religious coping, (g) expressive suppression, (h) romantic kissing motives, (i) pornography use, and (j) depressive masochistic personality. This section discusses the twelve individual risk factors that emerged from the review.

Perceptions. Three (9.09%) of the selected studies included in this systematic review examined the impact of an individual's perception on relationship/marital satisfaction. These studies found that anxious adults are likely to report lower relationship satisfaction when they have the following perceptions: they perceive their partner to have less responsible financial behaviors (Li et al., 2020); they perceive more relationship-based conflict and a tendency for conflict to escalate in severity (Campbell et al., 2005); they perceive their partner to be less supportive and as behaving more negatively towards them, and perceive to have greater work-

family conflict (Kohn et al., 2012). For instance, Li et al (2020) examined the associations between romantic attachment orientations and life outcomes, and conducted a mediating model to examine this association via an individual's own financial behaviors and perceived partners' financial behavior. The results revealed that high attachment anxiety was associated with low relationship satisfaction via perceived partners' less responsible financial behaviors (Li et al., 2020). In a second study, Campbell et al. (2005) examined how perceptions of relationship-based conflict and support are associated with relationship quality, closeness, and future quality. Their results showed that more anxiously attached adults perceived more conflict and reported a tendency for conflicts to escalate in severity (Campbell et al., 2005). Additionally, they found that anxious adults' perceptions of daily relationship-based conflicts negatively impacted the perceived satisfaction, closeness, and future of the relationship (Campbell et al., 2005). A third study investigated marital satisfaction trajectories across the first 2 years of parenthood. The results revealed that perceived support moderated the link between attachment anxiety and satisfaction among actors (Kohn et al., 2012). For instance, they found that for highly anxious individuals, relationship satisfaction was lower when they perceived their partners as less supportive and as behaving more negatively towards them (Kohn et al., 2012). Moreover, relationship satisfaction for anxious adults was lower when they perceived more work-family conflict and greater demands from their families (Kohn et al., 2012). Surprisingly, Kohn et al. (2012) found that men higher in attachment anxiety declined in satisfaction more sharply than women when they perceived higher levels of work-family conflict.

Pessimistic Attributions. One (3.03%) of the selected studies included in this systematic review examined the impact of pessimistic attributions on relationship/marital satisfaction. Pessimistic attributions were identified as "negatively skewed explanations that

individuals produce in response to their partners' behaviors" (Kimmes et al., 2015, p. 548). In their longitudinal study, Kimmes et al. (2015) found that for both husbands and wives, a higher level of anxious attachment was related to higher pessimistic attributions two years after the initial study. Moreover, they found that higher levels of pessimistic attributions predicted lower levels of relationship/marital satisfaction one year after the study for both husbands and wives (Kimmes et al., 2015). As such, the results revealed that pessimistic attributions significantly mediated the association between anxious attachment and relationship/marital satisfaction within spouses (Kimmes et al., 2015).

Unforgiveness/Low Trust. Two (6.06%) of the selected studies included in this review explored the effects of unforgiveness and low trust on relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment. These studies found that anxious adults are likely to have higher levels of unforgiveness (Guzmán-González et al., 2020) and lower levels of trust (Fitzpatrick & Lafontaine, 2017). According to Guzmán-González et al. (2020), *unforgiveness* is an emotional, cognitive, and motivational response to a transgression, or violation of implicit and explicit relationship norms. Unforgiveness can include feelings such as hurt, bitterness, resentment, and anger, often paired with rumination, and motivations of avoiding the person who committed the transgression and/or seeking revenge (i.e., revenge motivation) (Guzmán-González et al., 2020). In their study, Guzmán-González et al. (2020) found that high attachment anxiety was associated with greater revenge motivation (unforgiveness) and thus, with lower relationship satisfaction. In another study, Fitzpatrick and Lafontaine (2017) assessed the mediating effects of dyadic trust between insecure romantic attachment and relationship satisfaction. Dyadic trust was defined as the amount of benevolence and honesty an individual feels his or her romantic partner expresses toward him or her (Fitzpatrick & Lafontaine, 2017). Their results revealed that low dyadic trust

serves as a mediator between insecure romantic attachment and low relationship satisfaction for both actor and partner effects (Fitzpatrick & Lafontaine, 2017). More specifically, this study found that men who were high in attachment anxiety were more likely to have lower trust, which made them more likely to be dissatisfied in their relationship (Fitzpatrick & Lafontaine, 2017). In addition, they found that just as insecurely attached men were likely to report lower levels of satisfaction in their relationships, they were also more likely to have dissatisfied partners, when they themselves had low levels of trust (Fitzpatrick & Lafontaine, 2017).

Low Self-Compassion. One (3.03%) of the selected studies included in this systematic review examined the impact of low self-compassion on relationship satisfaction. Bolt et al. (2019) investigated whether self-compassion and compassion for one's partner mediated the relationship between insecure attachment and relationship quality. They defined relationship quality as "the degree to which a relationship provides or withholds beneficial experiences and interactions" (Bolt et al., 2019, p. 7). The results from their study revealed that a low compassionate attitude toward the self, mediated the relationship between anxious attachment and relationship quality. In other words, high attachment anxiety predicted a low compassionate attitude toward the self, which, in turn, predicted low relationship quality.

Negative Religious Coping. One (3.03%) of the selected studies included in this systematic review examined the impact of negative religious coping on relationship/marital satisfaction. Pollard et al. (2014) examined the associations between anxious/avoidant romantic attachment, positive and negative religious coping, and marital adjustment. Religious coping was defined as "the use of religion to find meaning and comfort when faced with stressful events" (Pollard et al., 2014, p. 6). Specifically, positive religious coping strategies such as, seeking a spiritual connections and positive religious appraisals, has been linked to better mental, physical,

and spiritual health whereas, negative religious coping strategies such as, doubting God and negative religious appraisals, has been linked to more psychological distress (Pollard et al., 2014). In their study, Pollard et al. (2014) found that high attachment anxiety was associated with more negative religious coping strategies, "which may be due to the exaggerated appraisals of threat, fears abandonment, low coping self-efficacy, and hyperactivation of the attachment system associated with anxious attachment" (Pollard et al., 2014, p. 621). Surprisingly, the results of this study also revealed that partner attachment anxiety was more detrimental to the relationship when negative religious coping was low (Pollard et al., 2014). In contrast, when negative religious coping was high, the influence of the partner's attachment anxiety on the relationship was somehow buffered (Pollard et al., 2014).

Expressive Suppression. One (3.03%) of the selected studies included in this systematic review examined the effect of expressive suppression on relationship satisfaction. Expressive suppression refers to "consciously hiding or inhibiting the outward expression of emotions" (Girme et al., 2021, p. 524–525). In their study, Girme et al. (2021) found that individuals' greater expressive suppression was associated with lower relationship satisfaction during daily life, lower perceptions of responsiveness and discussion success during couples' support discussion, and greater difficulty managing discussions about relationship threat regardless of individuals' level of attachment anxiety. For individuals low in attachment anxiety, low levels of expressive suppression did not have any impact on their partners' relationship satisfaction, perceptions of individuals' responsiveness, discussion success, and discussions about relationship threats (Girme et al., 2021). However, once expressive suppression surpassed moderate levels, negative effects were observed on partners' outcomes. In contrast, for

individuals high on attachment anxiety, the negative effect of moderate-to-high levels of expressive suppression on partners' outcomes was reduced (Girme et al., 2021).

Romantic Kissing Motives. One (3.03%) of the selected studies included in this systematic review examined the impact of romantic kissing motives on relationship/marital satisfaction. Kulibert et al. (2019) explored the relationship between romantic attachment, romantic kissing motives, and relationship satisfaction. In their study, two broad categories related to adults' motive for romantic kissing were assessed: sexual/relational motives and goal attachment/insecurity motives (Kulibert et al., 2019). The sexual/relational motives relate to becoming aroused, seeking love and affection, and acting on interpersonal attraction (Kulibert et al., 2019). On the other hand, goal attainment/insecurity motives relate to using kissing to avoid undesirable outcomes, boosting one's self-esteem, and mate-guarding (Kulibert et al., 2019). The results of this study revealed a negative relationship between goal attainment/insecurity motives and relationship satisfaction, indicating that adults who kiss more often for goal attainment/insecurity motives were less satisfied in their current relationship than those who kiss for these motives less frequently (Kulibert et al., 2019). Moreover, the results showed that the negative relationship between goal attainment/insecurity motives for romantic kissing and decreased relationship satisfaction was only present in individuals with an insecure romantic attachment style (avoidant or insecure) (Kulibert et al., 2019).

Pornography Use. One (3.03%) of the selected studies included in this systematic review examined the impact of pornography use on relationship satisfaction. Maas et al. (2018) examined moderators in the association between pornography use and relationship satisfaction. The results revealed that for women who are more anxiously attached, more pornography use was associated with lower relationship satisfaction (Maas et al., 2018). This finding was not

consistent with men, as more pornography use for men was identified as a protective factor and associated with higher levels of relationship satisfaction, as discussed in a later section. .

Depressive Masochistic Personality. One (3.03%) of the selected studies included in this systematic review examined the effect of depressive masochistic personality (DMP) on relationship satisfaction. DMP is a psychological structure defined in Kernberg's theory of personality disorders (Naud et al., 2013). According to Naud et al. (2013):

> DMP is related to excessive aggressive reactions to the frustration of their dependency needs, which often rapidly turn into depressive responses, excessive apologies, and/or submissive behaviors. The spiral to depressive feelings is often sustained by a second wave of anger toward their own submissiveness, producing a vicious cycle. (p. 17)

In their study, Naud et al. (2013) explored how romantic attachment and DMP predicted initial and long-term relationship satisfaction. Their results revealed that the effects of women's DMP on couples' satisfaction appeared stronger than what was observed in men (Naud et al., 2013). Moreover, the actor's DMP was negatively associated with relationship satisfaction and significantly added to the explained variance even after controlling for attachment insecurities, thus, highlighting the importance of assessing DMP traits when examining factors that are detrimental to relationship satisfaction (Naud et al., 2013). Additionally, only women's DMP was found to directly contribute and predict men's initial and long-term satisfaction (Naud et al., 2013). According to Naud et al. (2013), this suggests that women's increased sensitivity to negative interactions in the relationship acts as the starting point for relationship dissatisfaction.

Interpersonal Factors

Of the selected studies, seven publications (21.21%) revealed interpersonal risk factors for relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment. The interpersonal risk

factors found were: (a) psychological abuse, (b) hostile conflict, (c) daily conflict, (d) recent small transgression, (e) exchange norms, and (f) touch dissatisfaction. This section discusses the six interpersonal risk factors that emerged from the review.

Psychological Abuse/Hostile Conflict. Three (9.09%) of the selected studies included in this systematic review examined the impact of psychological abuse and hostile conflict on relationship/marital satisfaction. These studies found that anxiously attached adults are likely to perpetrate more psychological abuse (Gewirtz-Meydan & Finzi-Dottan, 2021; Gou & Woodin, 2017), and that hostile conflict intensified the negative association between anxious attachment and current relationship satisfaction (Saavedra et al., 2010). Psychological abuse was defined as "behaviors intended to harm a partner's emotional well-being" (Gewirtz-Meydan & Finzi-Dottan, 2021, p. 498). These behaviors include frightening, humiliating, ridiculing, controlling, purposefully ignoring, degrading, threatening to abandon or harm, and damaging personal property (Gewirtz-Meydan & Finzi-Dottan, 2021). Gewirtz-Meydan and Finzi-Dottan (2021) sought to test the mediating effect of perpetrating psychological abuse between insecure attachment and relationship satisfaction between couples. The results revealed that both men and women higher in anxious attachment perpetrate more psychological abuse, which then, leads to their low personal relationship satisfaction (Gewirtz-Meydan & Finzi-Dottan, 2021). In addition, the study found that women high in anxious attachment perpetrated more psychological abuse, which in turn was negatively linked to their partners' relationship satisfaction. The study also found that the higher the women's attachment anxiety, the more their partners perpetrated psychological abuse, which was then negatively linked to partners' relationship satisfaction (Gewirtz-Meydan & Finzi-Dottan, 2021).

Similar findings were found in a study by Gou and Woodin (2017) who sought to investigate the longitudinal links between attachment insecurity, relationship dissatisfaction, and psychological intimate partner violence in a sample of 98 heterosexual couples expecting their first child. The results revealed that anxiously attached men and women reported being less satisfied in their relationships at one year postpartum. In addition, those who were less satisfied in their relationships also perpetrated more psychological aggression against their partners more often at two years postpartum (Gou & Woodin, 2017). Thus, Gou and Woodin (2017) identified *relationship dissatisfaction* as having a mediating effect on the association between attachment anxiety and perpetration of psychological aggression. In a third study, Saavedra et al. (2010), sought to examine self-reported hostile conflict (e.g., sharp words, mocking tone, or critical comments) and mindfulness as potential moderators of the links between attachment and relationship quality over time. The results suggested that hostile conflict intensified the negative association between anxious attachment and relationship satisfaction particularly, current relationship satisfaction (Saavedra et al., 2010). In addition, the results revealed that shifts in hostile conflict over time also exacerbated the longitudinal association between attachment anxiety and relationship satisfaction (Saavedra et al., 2010).

Daily Conflict. One (3.03%) of the selected studies included in this systematic review examined the effect of daily conflict on relationship/marital satisfaction. Cooper et al. (2018) sought to examine the relationship between daily conflict and relationship quality depending on attachment to help explain volatility in relationship quality. The results showed that attachment anxiety was predictive of volatility in daily perceptions of relationship quality (Cooper et al., 2018). Additionally, when women were higher in attachment anxiety, both they and their partners had greater volatility in daily reports of relationship quality (Cooper et al., 2018).

Moreover, on days when greater conflict was reported, individuals also reported lower relationship quality, with this association being stronger for those whose partners were high in anxious attachment (Cooper et al., 2018). This suggests that individuals with a highly anxious partner may be more susceptible to lower relationship quality on days when conflict is high (Cooper et al., 2018).

Recent Small Transgressions. One (3.03%) of the selected studies included in this systematic review examined the impact of recent small transgressions on relationship/marital satisfaction. Feeney (2002) explored the relationships between measures of attachment, spousal behavior, and marital satisfaction. The results revealed that within longer–term marriage, negative spouse behaviors were positively related to both own and partners' anxiety over relationships (Feeney, 2002). The results also indicated that insecure individuals have greater reactivity to recent spouse behavior (Feeney, 2002). Moreover, the data revealed that the effects of insecure attachment and negative spouse behavior added to the prediction of marital satisfaction for husbands only (Feeney, 2002).

Exchange Norms. One (3.03%) of the selected studies included in this systematic review examined the impact of exchange norms on relationship/marital satisfaction. Clark et al. (2010) examined norm use across a group of engaged, and then married, individuals across time. Each participant was asked to indicate whether they agreed with a communal or exchange prototype for giving and receiving support. Clark et al. (2010) defined communal norms as:

> The way marital relationships should operate is that each person should pay attention to the other person's needs. Each person should give a benefit to the other in response to the other's needs when the other has a real need that he or she cannot meet by him- or herself. Each person should do this to the best of his or her ability so long as the personal

> costs are reasonable. When one person does something for the other, the other should not owe the giver anything. (p. 945)

On the other hand, Clark et al. (2010) defined exchange norms as:

> The way marital relationships ideally should operate is that each person should benefit the other with the expectation of receiving a benefit of similar value in return. After receiving a benefit, members should feel obligated to give the other a benefit of comparable value. Members of the relationship ought to keep track of benefits given and received in order to keep them in balance. (p. 945)

The results revealed that overall, the communal norm was perceived as ideal and was reported to have been followed by participants and their partners to a greater extent than an exchange norm (Clark et al., 2010). Moreover, across all participants, adherence to an exchange norm was negatively linked with satisfaction at Time 2 (Clark et al., 2010). Regarding anxious attachment, the results demonstrated that at Time 1, anxious attachment predicted lower adherence to and perception of partner adherence to communal norms and higher own use of an exchange norm (Clark et al., 2010). Moreover, individuals high in attachment anxiety who reported greater adherence to an exchange norm at Time 1 and greater perceptions of the partner's adherence to an exchange norm at Time 2 were linked with lower satisfaction (Clark et al., 2010).

Touch Dissatisfaction. One (3.03%) of the selected studies included in this systematic review examined the impact of touch satisfaction on relationship/marital satisfaction. Wagner et al. (2020) explored the relationship between attachment and touch satisfaction in marriages. The results overall highlighted that attachment was relevant to touch (Wagner et al., 2020). Moreover, the results revealed that greater attachment anxiety was linked with less touch satisfaction when controlling for routine affection (Wagner et al., 2020). Surprisingly, this effect

was only true for husbands (Wagner et al., 2020). However, when routine affection was high, more anxious husbands were indistinguishable in touch satisfaction from their less anxious peers (Wagner et al., 2020). In addition, the results revealed a negative association between anxious wives and touch dissatisfaction (Wagner et al., 2020).

Contextual Factors

Of the selected studies, three publications (9.09%) revealed contextual risk factors for relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment. The contextual risk factors found were: (a) relationship duration, (b) anxious-avoidant combination, and (c) partner phubbing. This section discusses the three contextual risk factors that emerged from the review.

Relationship Duration. One (3.03%) of the selected studies included in this systematic review examined the impact of relationship duration on relationship/marital satisfaction. Hadden et al., (2014) explored the relationship between attachment and relationship satisfaction/commitment as well as the moderating effects of relationship duration. Consistent with previous findings, the results revealed that insecure attachment (anxious and avoidant) was negatively linked with relationship satisfaction and commitment (Hadden et al., 2014). Moreover, this negative link between anxious attachment styles and relationship satisfaction was found to be more negative in samples with longer average relationship duration (Hadden et al., 2014).

Anxious-Avoidant Combination. One (3.03%) of the selected studies included in this systematic review examined the impact of an anxious-avoidant combination on relationship/marital satisfaction. Kuncewicz et al. (2021) sought to examine the role of relationship length in predicting the effects of a combination of insecure attachment patterns on different aspects of its quality. The results showed that only in longer relationships, men

demonstrated poor relationship quality (lower satisfaction level and tenderness) when they were high in avoidant and their female partners were high in anxiety (Kuncewicz et al., 2021). Similarly, only in longer relationships, women showed poor relationship quality (lower satisfaction level and tenderness) when they were high in anxiety and their male partners were high in avoidance (Kuncewicz et al., 2021). These results suggest that an anxious-avoidant combination negatively impacts satisfaction, and based on physical contact, tenderness at later stages of the relationship (Kuncewicz et al., 2021).

Partner Phubbing. One (3.03%) of the selected studies included in this systematic review examined the impact of partner phubbing on relationship/marital satisfaction. David and Roberts (2021) investigated how partner phubbing among romantic partners impacts relationship anxiety. Partner phubbing, or phone snubbing, refers to "the perceived extent to which your romantic partner uses or is distracted by his/her smartphone while in your presence" (David & Roberts, 2021, p. 3591). The results found that partner phubbing increased romantic jealousy and ultimately, reduced relationship satisfaction (David & Roberts, 2021). As such, romantic jealousy had a mediating effect on the inverse relationship between partner phubbing and relationship satisfaction (David & Roberts, 2021). However, the results of this study also revealed that the negative impact of partner phubbing on romantic jealousy was moderated by interpersonal attachment anxiety (David & Roberts, 2021).

Protective Factors

Seventeen protective factors were identified as significantly and positively associated with higher relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment. Identified protective factors were grouped into different categories: (a) individual, (b) interpersonal, and (c) contextual factors. The following sections describe how these factors were defined and analyzed.

Refer to Figure 11 for a summary table of the identified protective factors (see Appendix H Evidence Table).

Individual Factors

Of the selected studies, seven publications (21.21%) revealed individual protective factors for relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment. The individual protective factors found were: (a) perceptions, (b) religiousness, (c) self-esteem, (d) mindfulness, and (e) pornography use. This section discusses the seven individual protective factors that emerged from the review.

Perceptions. Three (9.09%) of the selected studies included in this systematic review explored the perceptions of anxious adults and their impact on relationship/marital satisfaction. These studies found that anxious adults reported greater relationship/marital satisfaction when husbands perceived their parents to have higher marital satisfaction (Jarnecke & South, 2013), when individuals perceived greater expressed gratitude from their partners (Park et al., 2019), and when individuals perceived their partners as more supportive (Kohn et al., 2012). Jarnecke and South (2013) examined the role of parent-child attachment orientations and romantic relationship attachment orientations as mediators in the intergenerational transmission of marital satisfaction. The results of this study revealed an association between perceptions of parents' marital satisfaction and husband's marital satisfaction (Jarnecke & South, 2013). In other words, reports of higher parents' marital satisfaction were positively associated with greater marital satisfaction but only for husbands (Jarnecke & South, 2013). In a second study, Park et al. (2019) examined whether receiving expressed gratitude expressions from a romantic partner can buffer insecurely attached individuals from experiencing low relationship satisfaction and commitment. The results revealed that rather than a partner's self-reported gratitude expression, perceived

gratitude expressions were critical to buffering insecurely attached individuals' daily dissatisfaction (Park et al., 2019). In a third study, Kohn et al. (2012) investigated marital satisfaction trajectories across the first 2 years of parenthood. Their results revealed that relationship/marital satisfaction for highly anxious individuals was relatively high when they perceived their partners as more supportive.

Religiousness. One (3.03%) of the selected studies included in this systematic review examined the impact of religiousness on relationship/marital satisfaction. Cirhinlioğlu et al. (2018) explored the mediating role of religiousness in the relationship between attachment and marital quality of married men and women. The results revealed a positive and significant relationship between religiousness and marital quality (Cirhinlioğlu et al., 2018). Additionally, they found that when avoidant attachment in men and anxious attachment in women increased, their levels of religiousness decreased (Cirhinlioğlu et al., 2018). When the mediating role of religiousness is examined between attachment and marital satisfaction, the results indicate that in women, when the anxious attachment decreased, the religiousness increased, whereas in men, when the avoidant attachment decreased, the religiousness increased, thus, marital quality increased (Cirhinlioğlu et al., 2018).

Self-Esteem. One (3.03%) of the selected studies included in this systematic review examined the effect of self-esteem on relationship satisfaction. Sisi et al. (2021) examined the psychological mechanism underlying the relationship between attachment style and intimate relationship satisfaction in women. In their study, the researchers explored the roles of self-esteem and flexible goal adjustment (FGA). FGA was defined as "a coping strategy that optimizes the balance of gains and losses during individual development" (Sisi et al., 2021, p. 429). As such, FGA allows an individual to adjust personal goals/preferences to any given

situation (Sisi et al., 2021). The results revealed that self-esteem mediated the relationship between attachment insecurity and relationship satisfaction (Sisi et al., 2021). Furthermore, FGA moderated the mediating effect of self-esteem. In other words, self-esteem was a significant mediator in the relationship between insecure attachment and relationship satisfaction when women also reported high FGA (Sisi et al., 2021).

Mindfulness. One (3.03%) of the selected studies included in this systematic review examined the impact of mindfulness on relationship/marital satisfaction. Saavedra et al. (2010) sought to examine self-reported hostile conflict (e.g., sharp words, mocking tone, or critical comments) and mindfulness as potential moderators of the links between attachment and relationship quality over time. The results revealed that high levels of mindfulness moderated the effects of attachment anxiety on relationship instability (Saavedra et al., 2010). Specifically, for individuals high in attachment anxiety, they found that high levels of mindfulness reduced the risk of relationship breakup over 1 year (Saavedra et al. 2010).

Pornography Use. One (3.03%) of the selected studies included in this systematic review examined the impact of pornography use on relationship/marital satisfaction. Maas et al. (2018) examined moderators in the association between pornography use and relationship satisfaction. The results revealed that for men who are more anxiously attached, more pornography use was associated with higher relationship satisfaction (Maas et al., 2018).

Interpersonal Factors

Of the selected studies, four publications (12.12%) revealed interpersonal protective factors for relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment. The interpersonal protective factors found were: (a) touch satisfaction, (b) sexual behaviors, (c) communal norms,

and (d) partner guilt. This section discusses the four interpersonal protective factors that emerged from the review.

Touch Satisfaction/Sexual Behaviors. Two (6.06%) of the selected studies included in this systematic review examined the impact of touch satisfaction and sexual behaviors on relationship/marital satisfaction. These studies found that touch satisfaction (Wagner et al., 2020) and higher frequency of sexual behavior (Roels & Janssen, 2021) impact the relationship between anxiety and relationship satisfaction. Wagner et al. (2020) explored the relationship between attachment and touch satisfaction in marriages. The results overall highlighted that attachment was relevant to touch (Wagner et al., 2020). Furthermore, the results revealed a positive association between touch satisfaction and marital quality (Wagner et al., 2020). This suggests that touch satisfaction may serve as a mediating link between anxiety and marital quality (Wagner et al., 2020). Another study examined if and to what degree attachment orientations moderate the link between sexual relationship and relationship satisfaction in the early stages of romantic attachment (Roels & Janssen, 2021). The results revealed a significant interaction between sexual behavior and actor anxious attachment, suggesting that higher frequency of sexual behavior was associated with greater self-reported relationship satisfaction in more anxiously attached adults (Roels & Janssen, 2021).

Communal Norms. One (3.03%) of the selected studies included in this systematic review examined the impact of communal norms on relationship/marital satisfaction. Clark et al. (2010) examined norm use across a group of engaged, and then married, individuals across time. Each participant was asked to indicate whether they agreed with a communal or exchange prototype for giving and receiving support (previously discussed). As previously mentioned, the communal norm was perceived as ideal and was reported to have been followed by participants

and their partners to a greater extent than an exchange norm (Clark et al., 2010). In addition, greater adherence to a communal norm was linked to relationship/marital satisfaction at Time 1 (3 to 4 weeks prior to the marriage) and only marginally significant at Time 2 (2 years into the marriage) (Clark et al., 2010). However, the data also revealed that across all participants, self-reported and perceived partner's use of communal norms dropped significantly, although slightly, across time (Clark et al., 2010). Among those high in anxious attachment, greater self-reported adherence to a communal norm at Time 2 was found to be linked with greater relationship/marital satisfaction (Clark et al., 2010).

Partner Guilt. One (3.03%) of the selected studies included in this systematic review examined the impact of partner guilt on relationship/marital satisfaction. Overall et al. (2014) examined whether individuals high in attachment anxiety react to relationship threats in ways that can help them feel secure and satisfied in their relationship. The results revealed that highly anxious individuals experienced greater hurt feelings on days when they faced relationship threats (Overall et al., 2014). These feelings triggered exaggerated expressions of hurt and, in turn, induced greater guilt in their partners (Overall et al., 2014). This partner guilt however, helped anxious individuals maintain a more positive evaluation of their relationship (Overall et al., 2014). Those higher in attachment anxiety experienced more stable perceptions of their partner's commitment when their partner felt more guilt (Overall et al., 2014). However, this was accompanied by significant declines in the partner's relationship satisfaction (Overall et al., 2014).

Contextual Factors

Of the selected studies, six publications (18.18%) revealed contextual protective factors for relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with an anxious attachment. The contextual

protective factors found were: (a) emotion focused therapy, (b) anxious-anxious combination, and (c) warm temperature cues. This section discusses the six contextual protective factors that emerged from the review.

Emotion Focused Therapy. Emotion Focused Couples Therapy (EFT) is a treatment model that addresses relationship distress by targeting couples' relationship-specific attachment insecurities (Moser et al., 2018). Four (12.12%) of the selected studies included in this systematic review examined the impact of EFT on relationship/marital satisfaction. These studies found that anxious couples who completed EFT sessions also reported an increase in secure base behavior, relationship satisfaction, forgiveness as well as, a significant decrease in relationship-specific attachment anxiety (Dalgleish et al., 2015; Makinen & Johnson, 2006; Moser et al., 2018; Wiebe et al., 2017). Wiebe et al. (2017) examined relationship satisfaction and relationship specific attachment from pre-therapy through post-therapy and four follow-up time points (6,12, 18, and 24 months after therapy had ended) in 32 couples. Overall, the results revealed increases in relationship satisfaction and secure base behavior and decreases in relationship specific attachment anxiety over the course of therapy with a gradual deceleration rate of change across follow-up. Similar findings were found in another study that tested an EFT model in 32 couples (Dalgleish et al., 2015). The results suggested that individuals who reported higher levels of anxious attachment and higher levels of emotional control, or the tendency to suppress the experience of anger, sadness, and anxiety in their current relationship, had greater change in marital satisfaction across the 21 EFT sessions (Dalgleish et al., 2015). A third study investigated whether the attachment injury resolution model discriminates resolved from nonresolved couples after receiving 13 sessions of EFT (Makinen & Johnson, 2006). The results revealed that resolved couples were found to be significantly more affiliative and achieved deeper levels of

experiencing as treatment progressed than nonresolved couples (Makinen & Johnson, 2006). Resolved couples also demonstrated significant improvement in dyadic satisfaction and forgiveness as treatment progressed than nonresolved couples (Makinen & Johnson, 2006).

The fourth study examined change in attachment and relationship satisfaction that was specifically related to the blamer-softening event of EFT (Moser et al., 2018). EFT guides couples through three major change events: cycle de-escalation, withdrawer re-engagement, and blamer-softening event (Moser et al., 2018). The blamer softening event encourages the blaming spouse to take a risk and express their own longing for security and care in the relationship (Moser et al., 2018). While the initial expression of emotional needs is vague, the blaming partner begins to express their deeper vulnerabilities when the withdrawing partner responds in an explicitly loving and responsive manner (Moser et al., 2018). This new pattern of engagement serves as a bonding moment and helps to define the relationship as a secure base (Moser et al., 2018). In their results, Moser et al., (2018) found that softened couples reported a significant increase in relationship satisfaction scores at the softening session (Moser et al., 2018). Moreover, the results revealed that softened couples reported an immediate increase in relationship-specific attachment anxiety at the softening session; however, this was followed by a significant decrease of relationship-specific attachment anxiety across post-softening sessions (Moser et al., 2018).

Anxious-Anxious Combination. One (3.03%) of the selected studies included in this systematic review examined the impact of anxious-anxious combination on relationship/marital satisfaction. Kuncewicz et al. (2021) sought to examine the role of relationship length in predicting the effects of a combination of insecure attachment patterns on different aspects of its quality. The results revealed that in longer relationships, anxious men in relationships with their

anxious partners experienced less aggressive and devaluing communications and surprisingly, experienced more physical and emotional closeness (Kuncewicz et al., 2021). As such, relationship length proved to have a buffering effect on relationship satisfaction for anxious men in a romantic relationship with their anxious partner (Kuncewicz et al., 2021).

Warm Temperature Cues. One (3.03%) of the selected studies included in this systematic review examined the impact of warm temperatures on relationship/marital satisfaction. Vess (2012) explored the relationship between anxiety and sensitivity to temperature cues. The results revealed that individuals with high levels of attachment anxiety desired physical warmth soon after reflecting on a distressing event (i.e., a recent break up) (Vess, 2012). Moreover, the data indicated that in individuals with high levels of attachment anxiety, exposure to warm-temperature cues increased their current relationship satisfaction rating (Vess, 2012). As such, the results strongly suggested that highly attached individuals engage in associations between temperature and intimacy (Vess, 2012).

In summary, the analysis uncovered twenty-two risk factors and seventeen protective factors associated with lower and higher levels, respectively, of relationship/marital satisfaction. Four factors emerged and were categorized in this systematic review as both risk and protective factors. These factors included perceptions (Campbell et al., 2005; Jarnecke & South, 2013; Kohn et al., 2012; Li et al., 2020; Park et al., 2019), touch (Wagner et al., 2020), religiousness (Cirhinlioğlu et al., 2018; Pollard et al., 2014), and pornography use (Maas et al., 2018).

Interpersonal Trauma, Relationship Satisfaction, and Anxious Attachment

Research Question 2: What are the moderating effects of interpersonal trauma on relationship satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment?

Moderating effects of interpersonal trauma on relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment were not found in the selected publications for this review. However, two articles did explore the effects of psychological interpersonal abuse on relationship satisfaction. For example, Gewirtz-Meydan and Finzi-Dottan (2021) sought to test the mediating effect of perpetrating psychological abuse between insecure attachment and relationship satisfaction among couples. Their results revealed an association between attachment anxiety and perpetration of psychological abuse such that highly anxious individuals were found to perpetrate more psychological abuse on their partners consequently, lowering their own relationship satisfaction (Gewirtz-Meydan & Finzi-Dottan, 2021). Similar results were found in another study that investigated longitudinal links between attachment insecurity, relationship dissatisfaction, and psychological intimate partner violence in a sample of couples expecting their first child (Gou & Woodin, 2017). The results indicated that both men and women who were more anxiously attached prenatally reported being less satisfied in their relationships at 1 year postpartum (Gou & Woodin, 2017). In addition, those who reported being less satisfied in their relationships also used psychological aggression against their partners more often at 2 years postpartum thus, revealing the mediating effects of relationship dissatisfaction on the link between anxious attachment and perpetration of psychological intimate partner violence (Gou & Woodin, 2017).

Figure 12

Summary of the Identified Risk and Protective Factors

Individual Risk Factors	**Individual Protective Factors**
Perceptions of partner's financial behaviors	Perceptions of parents' marital satisfaction
Perceptions of relationship-based conflict	Perceived expressed gratitude

Lack of and perceived negative behaviors	Perceived support
Pessimistic attributions	Religiousness
Unforgiveness	Self-esteem
Low trust	Mindfulness
Low self-compassion	Pornography use in anxious men
Negative religious coping	
Expressive suppression	
Goal attainment/insecurity motives for kissing	
Pornography use by women	
Depressive Masochistic Personality	
Interpersonal Risk Factors	**Interpersonal Protective Factors**
Psychological abuse	Touch satisfaction
Hostile conflict	Higher frequencies of sexual behavior
Daily conflict	Communal norm
Recent small transgressions	Successful partner guilt
Exchange norms	
Touch dissatisfaction	
Contextual Risk Factors	**Contextual Protective Factors**
Relationship duration	Emotion-Focused Therapy
Anxious-avoidant combination and eroding effect of relationship length	Anxious-anxious combination and buffering effect of relationship length
Partner phubbing	Exposure to warm temperature cues

Quality Appraisal

Figure 11 displays the results of the quality appraisal. Each included article was evaluated by the researcher and one research assistant using the Individual Study Quality Assessment Form (see Appendix G) to determine the overall quality of each publication. To minimize bias, the researcher and a research assistant separately conducted quality appraisals. Once this process was completed, both the researcher and the research assistant met to discuss and agree on the final rating of each selected article. The results indicated that most studies were scored as

"exemplary" (78.78%), while 15.15% of studies were scored as "strong" and 6.06% were scored as "good." Studies rated *strong* and *good* had one or a combination of the following: did not provide sufficient demographic details, did not report gender data, lacked consideration of culture and diversity, did not recognize their study limitations, and did not report recommendations for future research. On the other hand, 26 studies rated in the *exemplary* category had a combination of the following: provided detailed ethnic/racial participant data, provided detailed participant gender data, included culturally and ethnically diverse participants, provided detailed treatment outcomes, recognized their study limitations, and provided detailed future study recommendations.

Figure 13

Quality Appraisal

Methodological quality	N	%
Exemplary	26	78.78
Strong	5	15.15
Good	2	6.06

Chapter 4: Discussion

This systematic review sought to identify the risk and protective factors that weaken and strengthen relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment by analyzing the current literature. The findings showed that there are numerous risk and protective factors that directly and indirectly impact relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment. In addition, while this review sought to uncover moderating effects of interpersonal trauma on relationship/marital satisfaction, two studies presented the association between anxious attachment and psychological interpersonal abuse. Lastly, the two main supported findings from this review were perceptions of anxious adults and EFT. Both perceptions and EFT were examined and discussed by multiple studies included in this review. These, as well as the other independent and interrelated risk and protective factors, will be discussed in the sections below.

Perceptions

This systematic review identified perceptions as an individual risk and protective factor associated with lower relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment. In considering perception as a risk factor, anxious adults were likely to report lower/marital relationship satisfaction when they had the following perceptions: they perceived their partner to have less responsible financial behaviors (Li et al., 2020); they perceived more relationship-based conflict and a tendency for conflict to escalate in severity (Campbell et al., 2005); they perceived their partner to be less supportive and as behaving more negatively towards them, and perceived to have greater work-family conflict (Kohn et al., 2012). In addition to these findings, pessimistic attributions as individual risk factors were associated with low relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment (Kimmes et al., 2015). This finding was consistent

with previous studies that have found an association between anxious attachment and more pessimistic attributions (Collins et al., 2006; Pearce & Halford, 2008).

Per this review, Kimmes et al. (2015) reported that anxiously attached individuals develop biased attentional and perceptual processes that contribute to pessimistic attributions over time. The relationship between perceptions or pessimistic attributions and relationship satisfaction in anxious adults was supported by previous research. Hadden et al. (2014) argued that dissatisfaction in relationships stems from maladaptive relationship cognitions. Furthermore, Stackert and Bursik (2003) explored these irrational relationship beliefs and found that anxiously and avoidantly attached individuals tend to endorse some of the following beliefs: disagreements are bad for the relationship, romantic partners should be able to read each other's minds, and partners cannot change. These findings suggest that anxious individuals have a skewed perception of their partner's behaviors thus, contributing to lower levels of relationship/marital satisfaction. Anxious attachment may also increase the tendency for anxious partners to interpret their spouses' behaviors in ways that confirm their pessimistic biases that were developed in childhood. One can infer that these biased perceptions stem from the anxious partner's fears of being abandoned and rejected. It may be that anxious partners are highly sensitive to any perceived signs of separation, rejection, and/or abandonment subsequently, negatively impacting their own relationship/marital satisfaction.

Perceptions was also identified in this review as individual protective factor associated with greater relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment. For instance, anxious adults reported greater relationship satisfaction when husbands perceived their parents to have higher marital satisfaction (Jarnecke & South, 2013), when individuals perceived greater expressed gratitude from their partners (Park et al., 2019), and when individuals perceived their

partners as more supportive (Kohn et al., 2012). These findings were supported by previous literature on anxious attachment and perceptions. For instance, Donges et al. (2012) found anxiously attached individuals to be responsive to positive facial signals, and Gosnell and Gable (2013) found daily relationship satisfaction to be closely associated with their partner's positive behaviors. These findings suggest that anxious adult partners may not only be sensitive to perceived signs of rejection/separation, but they may also be sensitive to perceived signs of proximity and support. It may be that because the anxious system is on high alert scanning for any indication of threat, it is also registering behaviors from the partner that communicate proximity, support, and security. As such, it is important to consider how an individual perceives his/her partner because such perception(s) could negatively or positively influence their overall satisfaction/marital in the relationship. Moreover, it is important to explore how these negative or positive perceptions are influenced by the individual's unconscious attachment system. Concentrating on issues related to attachment would likely yield long-lasting changes in perceptions.

Emotion Focused Therapy

EFT is a contextual protective factor associated with greater relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment. The studies included in this review revealed an increase in relationship satisfaction, secure based behavior, and forgiveness as well as a decrease in relationship specific attachment anxiety after completing EFT sessions (e.g., Dalgleish et al., 2015; Makinen & Johnson, 2006; Moser et al., 2018; Wiebe et al., 2017). This was consistent with the extensive literature indicating the positive effects of EFT. According to Johnson et al. (1999), EFT has demonstrated a 70–73% recovery rate for relationship distress, with 90% improvement over controls and a mean effect size of 1.31. EFT has been found to result in

greater intimacy, relationship satisfaction, and behavioral problem-solving techniques (Denton et al., 2000; Johnson & Greenberg, 1985). In addition, these relationship/marital satisfaction gains have been found to be stable over time. Halchuk et al. (2010) found that couples maintained improvements in dyadic adjustment, trust, and forgiveness, as well as decreased in the severity of attachment injury at the three-year follow-up point. In another study, Cloutier et al. (2002) found that improvements in marital functioning were not only maintained but, in some cases, enhanced at the 2-year-follow up. Lastly, a recent meta-analysis synthesizing data from 20 studies with 332 couples found support for EFT as a robust treatment for couple distress (Spengler et al., 2022). Moreover, it revealed that the relational gains achieved at the end of treatment were maintained up to 2 years with a modest decline over time (Spengler et al., 2022). Taken together, these findings suggest that anxiously attached couples may benefit from receiving EFT sessions. It may be that EFT offers the appropriate opportunities for anxiously attached partners to have their attachment needs met. As they experience their partner as emotionally supportive and responsive as well as, consistently within physical proximity, anxious partners may experience a sense of relief about their fears of being rejected or abandoned thus, increasing their own relationship/marital satisfaction.

Unforgiveness/Low Trust

Unforgiveness and low trust were identified in this review as individual risk factors associated with low relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment. For example, when anxious partners are unable to forgive (Guzmán-González et al., 2020) or trust their partner (Fitzpatrick & Lafontaine, 2017), they are likely to experience and report lower relationship satisfaction. Such findings were supported by the existing literature on unforgiveness and trust in romantic relationships. Other research on resentment, or the inability

to forgive, has been found to be harmful in romantic relationships (e.g., Fincham, Beach, & Davila, 2004; Fincham, Paleari, & Regalia, 2002). Additionally, Chung (2014) found an association between insecure attachment and reduced marital satisfaction through the lack of forgiveness. Regarding low trust, Kim et al. (2015) found that when at least one partner reported having low trust, both partners reported feeling less close to each other. Similarly, Simpson (2007) contended that lack of trust in a relationship often leads to relationship dissolution. It is also important to note that the literature on attachment theory revealed that anxious adults experience constant worry and rumination about being rejected or abandoned by their partner (e.g., Campbell & Marshall, 2011; Fitzpatrick & Lafontaine, 2017). As such, an inability to forgive or trust a partner is likely to exacerbate these fears in anxious attached adults and consequently, lead to lower relationship/marital satisfaction. Focusing on ways to improve forgiveness and trust between anxiously distressed couples may produce higher levels of relationship/marital satisfaction.

Low Self-Compassion vs. Self-Esteem

Low self-compassion was identified as an individual risk factor associated with low relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment. Bolt et al. (2019) found that high attachment anxiety predicted a low compassionate attitude toward the self, which, in turn, predicted low relationship quality. This is consistent with Neff and McGehee's (2010) study that found preoccupied and fearful attachment styles (i.e., anxious attachment) to be linked to lower self-compassion. While there are limited studies focusing on the impact of self-compassion on relationship satisfaction, Neff and Beretvas (2013) found that individuals with lower levels of self-compassion were described by their partners as being more detached from the relationship. These findings were also consistent with the literature on attachment theory suggesting that

individuals with an anxious attachment are likely to develop a negative view of the self (Campbell & Marshall, 2011; Lowyck et al., 2008), to be critical (Cantazaro & Wei, 2010), and to require validation from others (Wei et al., 2005). One can infer that anxiously attached adults seek security and reassurance from their partner, sometimes to their own demise, because they are unable to hold positive views of themselves. In addition, because anxious adults tend to be highly self-critical, they have emotional dependency needs that can only be satisfied by their partners.

Though low self-compassion was identified as an individual risk factor associated with low relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment, *self-esteem* was identified as an individual protective factor associated with greater relationship/marital satisfaction. Sisi et al. (2021) found that self-esteem mediated the relationship between attachment insecurity and relationship satisfaction. This was consistent with previous research indicating that self-esteem was associated with more relationship enhancing behaviors (Orth et al., 2012) and with having a positive perception of the relationship (Bellavia & Murray, 2003). Orth et al. (2012) also found self-esteem to be predictive of higher levels of relationship satisfaction as well as, job satisfaction, occupational status, salary, and physical health. These findings highlight the positive impact that self-esteem can have on different aspects of a person's life. As such, when working with anxious couples, it may be beneficial to promote the development and maintenance of a positive self-esteem to help improve relationship/marital satisfaction.

Expressive Suppression vs Partner Guilt

Expressive suppression was an individual risk factor associated with low relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment. In other words, suppressing or hiding one's emotions was found to have a negative effect on an individual's relationship/marital

satisfaction (Girme et al., 2021). This was consistent with previous research that found expressive suppression to be associated with greater negative affect, fatigue, negative memory biases, and lower self-esteem, competence, personal success, life satisfaction, and worse relational outcomes, including lower feelings of acceptance, perceptions of support, closeness to partner, and relationship satisfaction (e.g., Cameron & Overall, 2018; Impett et al., 2012; Low et al., 2017; Velotti et al., 2016). Similar findings were reported by Chervonsky and Hunt's (2017) systematic review on the relationships between levels of emotion expression and suppression, and social and interpersonal outcomes revealed that expressive suppression was associated with individuals reporting lower social support, and lower satisfaction with social interactions and romantic partners.

Though expressive suppression was identified as an individual risk factor associated with low relationship satisfaction in anxious adults, this exaggerated expression of emotions is likely to have the effect of inducing partner guilt, which was identified as an interpersonal protective factor in this review. According to Overall et al. (2014), when anxious individuals experience feelings of hurt, they are likely to exaggerate their expressions and in turn, induce greater guilt in their partner. As their partner experiences more guilt, anxious individuals experience more stable perceptions of their partner's commitment to them (Overall et al., 2014). This finding was supported by the literature suggesting that guilt motivates people to make amends, apologize, cease hurtful behavior, change subsequent behaviors, confess transgressions, and comply with goals/desires (e.g., Baumeister et al., 1994, 1995; Vangelisti et al., 1991).

In considering expressive suppression as an individual risk factor and partner guilt as an individual protective factor, it is also important to reflect on the literature on anxious attachment, particularly the model introduced by Mikulciner and Shaver (2003, 2007) that explains the

activation of secondary strategies, also known as hyperactivating strategies, that aim to elicit care, support, and proximity from an attachment figure when experienced as unresponsive (as cited in Campbell & Marshall, 2011). Though these strategies typically involve clinging and controlling behaviors, Fitzpatrick and Lafontaine (2017) argue that for a short period of time, these secondary strategies may be effective in achieving physical closeness to the partner. It is, thus, expected that expressive suppression would be a risk factor for low relationship/marital satisfaction because inhibiting one's emotions would then prevent the anxious individual from activating the secondary strategies that could provide immediate, yet short-term, relief. On the other hand, exaggerating one's hurt feelings is likely to guilt the partner into being more responsive thus, alleviating one's anxious distress. Perhaps, finding a balance between emotional expression and constructive feedback between anxious partners may help decrease fears of being abandoned or rejected, and help increase overall relationship/marital satisfaction.

Religiousness

Similar to perception, religiousness was identified in this systematic review as both a risk and protective factor. Negative religious coping was an individual risk factor associated with low relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment. Pollard et al. (2014) found that partner attachment anxiety was more detrimental to the relationship when negative religious coping was low. In contrast, when negative religious coping was high, the influence of the partner's attachment anxiety on the relationship was somehow buffered (Pollard et al., 2014). While there are limited studies exploring the association between anxious attachment and negative religious coping, Byrd and Boe (2001) found that attachment anxiety was related to more clinging behaviors towards God. These behaviors can be viewed as a way to cope with fears of being rejected/abandoned and as a sign of a hyperactivated attachment system that

anxious adults typically experience when distressed (Pollard et al., 2014). As such, anxious individuals may experience God as unsupportive and as a projection of their attachment models.

Religiousness was also identified as an individual protective factor associated with greater relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment. Cirhinlioğlu et al. (2018) found that in women, when the anxious attachment decreased, the religiousness increased, thus, marital quality increased (Cirhinlioğlu et al., 2018). Previous studies have also found religiousness to positively impact marital stability (Call & Heaton, 1997), marital adjustment (Schramm et al., 2012), and marital satisfaction (Hünler & Gençöz, 2005; Sullivan, 2001). Perhaps, in some cases, anxious women begin to experience God or their higher power as a consistent and supportive resource that then translates to how they see their partner and the overall quality of the romantic relationship. If this is not the case, then anxious partners may consider working on establishing a more secure and stable relationship with their higher power as it may improve the way their perceive their romantic partner as well as, the overall quality of the relationship. Thus, it is important to consider not only the religiosity of an anxious individual, but also whether they consider their higher power to be a source of security, support, and stability.

Kissing, Physical Touch, and Sexual Behaviors

Specific kissing motives were identified as individual risk factors associated with low relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment. Kulibert et al. (2019) found that anxiously attached adults who kiss more often for goal attainment/insecurity motives, or to avoid undesirable outcomes, to boost one's self-esteem, or to mate guard, were less satisfied in their current relationship than those who kissed less frequently for these motives. Several studies have found kissing to have a positive effect on relationship satisfaction particularly, frequency of

kissing has been found to predict relationship satisfaction (e.g., Welsh et al., 2005). However, when looking at motives for engaging in any type of intimate behaviors, engaging in sexual behaviors to promote intimacy or closeness (i.e., sexual/relational motives) was likely to yield higher levels of relationship/sexual satisfaction, life satisfaction, and more positive emotions than those who engage in sexual behaviors to avoid conflict or disappointing a partner (Impett et al., 2005; Muise et al., 2013). Thus, for anxious adults, kissing for a purpose other than to achieve intimacy or closeness with a romantic partner is detrimental for their overall relationship/marital satisfaction.

Similar to perception and religiousness, touch was identified in this systematic review as both a risk and protective factor. Touch dissatisfaction was identified as an interpersonal risk factor associated with low/marital relationship satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment. Wagner et al. (2020) found that greater attachment anxiety was linked with less touch satisfaction when controlling for routine affection. However, the results of this study also revealed a positive association between touch satisfaction and marital quality suggesting that touch satisfaction may serve as a mediating link between anxiety and marital quality (Wagner et al., 2020). As such, touch satisfaction as an interpersonal protective factor was associated with greater relationship/marital satisfaction. Another study selected in this review (Roels & Janssen, 2021) found that higher frequency of sexual behavior was associated with greater self-reported relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with an anxious attachment, making higher frequency of sexual behaviors another interpersonal protective factor identified in this systematic review. Previous literature (e.g., Burke & Young, 2012; Gulledge et al., 2003, Muise et al., 2014) supported these findings suggesting that both physical touch and sexual behaviors serve to enhance overall relationship satisfaction. For instance, intimate touch (Burke & Young, 2012;

Gulledge et al., 2003) and post-sex affection (Muise et al., 2014) were associated with higher satisfaction in intimate relationships. Moreover, Jakubiak and Feeney (2016) found that simply imagining touch from a partner can increase willingness to take on difficult situations. Butzer and Campbell (2008) found that anxious individuals, and individuals with anxious partners, showed higher levels of marital satisfaction when they also reported high levels of sexual satisfaction. Anxious individuals may use their sexual experiences with their partners as indicators of overall relationship quality, to foster or maintain closeness to their partners, or to gain relational reassurance (e.g., Birnbaum & Reis, 2019; Birnbaum et al., 2006; Butzer & Campbell, 2008). Thus, greater intimate touch and frequency of sexual behaviors may be a way to fulfill the attachment needs of anxious adults therefore, resulting in greater relationship/marital satisfaction.

An interesting finding from this review was that of pornography use among anxiously attached men and women. Maas et al. (2018) found that for men who are more anxiously attached, more pornography use was associated with higher relationship satisfaction. On the other hand, for women who are more anxiously attached, more pornography use was associated with lower relationship satisfaction (Maas et al., 2018). Thus, similar to perception, religiousness, and touch, pornography use was identified as both a risk and protective factor associated with low and greater relationship satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment. Previous studies have found pornography use to be associated with less sexual satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, and lower levels of commitment as well as, with more infidelity and negative communication between partners (e.g., Bridges & Morokoff, 2011; Brown et al., 2017; Lambert et al., 2012; Maddox et al., 2011; Morgan, 2011). On the other hand, pornography use has also been associated with greater sexual satisfaction (Poulsen et al.,

2013) and relationship satisfaction among partnered women (Huntington et al., 2020) as well as with greater sexual knowledge, sexual openness, and sexual excitement (Campbell & Kohut, 2017; Daneback et al., 2009, Weinberg et al., 2010). Interestingly, Willoughby et al. (2016) found that when patterns of pornography use differ significantly between partners, pornography use was associated with lower relationship satisfaction and stability. For example, Huntington et al. (2020) found that people who reported watching pornography with their partner reported having more interpersonal and sexual intimacy. These contradictory studies regarding pornography use may suggest that the way that an anxious individual perceives sexual behaviors may impact their own relationship/marital satisfaction. It may be that pornography use negatively impacts relationship satisfaction for anxious women because their attachment needs are only met with intimate physical touch and greater frequency of sexual behaviors with their partner as previously discussed. On the other hand, anxious men may have a different perception of pornography use and it may be that to some extent, their attachment needs are met through personal use of pornography.

Psychological Abuse/Hostile Conflict

Psychological abuse, hostile conflict, daily conflict, and recent small transgressions were identified as interpersonal risk factors associated with lower relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment. Gewirtz-Meydan and Finzi-Dottan (2021) found that both men and women higher in anxious attachment perpetrated more psychological abuse, which in turn, lead to their low personal relationship/marital satisfaction. Gou and Woodin (2017), however, found that the perpetration of psychological aggression by anxious partners is mediated by relationship dissatisfaction. Saavedra et al. (2010) found that hostile conflict intensified the negative relationship between anxious attachment and current relationship satisfaction. When

examining daily conflict and relationship quality, Cooper et al. (2018) found that on days when conflict was reported, individuals also reported lower relationship quality, with this association being much greater for those with a highly anxious partner. Furthermore, Feeney (2002) found that insecure partners have greater reactivity to recent spouse behavior.

These findings were consistent with previous literature on psychological abuse, hostility, and daily conflict (e.g., Henderson et al., 2005; Kim et al. 2008; Taft et al., 2006; Yoon & Lawrence, 2013). For instance, psychological abuse was found to be negatively associated with personal and partner's relationship satisfaction, relationship adjustment, and overall marital satisfaction (e.g., Kim et al. 2008; Taft et al., 2006; Yoon & Lawrence, 2013). Regarding why anxious individuals perpetrate more psychological abuse, Henderson et al. (2005) suggested that because anxious individuals are torn between the need for love and support and the fear of not having such need met, he/she may become increasingly demanding and potentially aggressive when such attachment needs are not being met. Previous studies have also linked hostile conflict to lower levels of relationship satisfaction and declines in relationship satisfaction over time (Karney & Bradbury, 1995; Rogge & Bradbury, 1999). Regarding anxious attachment, Simpson et al. (2006) found perceived hostile conflict to be strongly associated with lower relationship satisfaction for couples with high levels of attachment anxiety. According to Campbell et al. (2005), anxious individuals perceived more conflict and were likely to escalate this conflict with their partner thus, resulting in lower relationship quality. Regarding daily conflict and recent small transgressions, Totenhagen et al. (2016) argued that most of the variance in daily conflict was due to day-to-day variations within the individual versus differences between partners. Previous research (e.g., Collins, 1996) suggests that insecure individuals are more sensitive to their partner's negative behaviors because such behavior is attributed to stable and internal

representations of undependable and untrustworthy attachment figures. As such, anxiously attached individuals may engage in aggressive/hostile behaviors or intensify conflict with their partner when their attachment needs are not being met and they fear being rejected/abandoned by their partner. As such, perhaps improving the couples' ability to effectively communicate and satisfy each other's' attachment needs may result in less aggressive/hostile behaviors, and greater overall relationship/marital satisfaction.

Communal vs Exchange Norms

This review identified exchange norms as interpersonal risk factors associated with lower relationship/marital satisfaction in anxiously attached adults. Clark et al. (2010) found that anxious adults who reported greater adherence to an exchange norm and greater perceptions of their partner's adherence to an exchange norm were also more likely to report lower levels of relationship satisfaction. On the other hand, this review identified *communal norms* as an interpersonal protective factor associated with greater relationship satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment. Clark et al. (2010) found that highly attached adults who reported greater adherence to a communal norm were also found to be linked with greater relationship satisfaction. These findings are supported by previous research (e.g., Clark & Waddell, 1985) suggesting that behaviors that conform to a communal norm are linked to greater liking and attraction by partners compared with behaviors that conform to an exchange norm. In addition, prior studies have also linked higher individual scores on measures of exchange norms with lower levels of relationship satisfaction (e.g., Buunk & Van Yperen, 1991; Murstein et al., 1977; Murstein & MacDonald, 1983). Thus, behaviors that conform to communal norms communicate support that best matches the needs of an anxious partner and, thus, promotes relationship/marital security. On the other hand, behaviors that conform to exchange norms may

be perceived by the anxious partner as a repayment and not as behaviors stemming from genuine care and support from the partner thus, leaving the anxious partner with unmet needs subsequently, resulting in lower levels of relationship/marital satisfaction. Promoting greater adherence to communal norms, rather than exchange norms, among couples may yield long-term relationship benefits.

Anxious-Avoidant/Anxious-Anxious Combination

Anxious-avoidant combination as a contextual risk factor was associated with lower relationship/marital satisfaction. Kuncewicz et al. (2021) found that in longer relationships, an anxious-avoidant combination negatively impacted relationship quality (lower satisfaction level and tenderness). This was consistent with previous research that found the combination of anxious and avoidant patterns to weaken relationship satisfaction (e.g., Feeney, 1994), intensify physiological stress response to conflict (e.g., Beck et al., 2013; Taylor et al., 2018), limit support to the partner (e.g., Feeney, 2003; Taylor et al., 2018), and encourage negative emotional language (Seedall & Lachmar, 2016) including violence (Allison et al., 2008). One can infer from these findings that as the relationship progresses, there is unsolvable and growing conflict between two individuals with opposing needs. For instance, the anxious partner seeks physical and emotional closeness while the avoidant one rejects it and tries to increase his/her independence. Over time, this conflict may result in violent behaviors stemming from two frustrated individuals with unmet attachment needs.

Anxious-anxious combination as a contextual protective factor was associated with greater relationship/marital satisfaction. Kuncewicz et al. (2021) found that in longer relationships, anxious men in relationships with their anxious partners (i.e., anxious-anxious combination) experienced less aggressive and devaluing communications and surprisingly,

experienced more physical and emotional closeness. As such, relationship length proved to have a buffering effect on relationship satisfaction for anxious men in a romantic relationship with their anxious partner (Kuncewicz et al., 2021). This was inconsistent with previous studies that have found the combination of anxious patterns to be associated with lower levels of relationship satisfaction (e.g., Feeney, 1994; Gallo & Smith, 2001), high marital conflict and less marital support (Gallo & Smith, 2001), emotional and physical withdrawal from the relationship (Feeney, 2003), and intensification of violence (e.g., Allison et al., 2008; Bartholomew & Allison, 2006). However, relationship length has been explored as a moderator impacting different relational constructs. Totenhagen et al. (2016) found that relationship satisfaction, commitment, closeness, and maintenance showed decreased variability in longer relationships. Thus, newer couples experience greater variability in their feelings about their relational/marital quality compared to longer term couples who may be more stable in how they perceive their partners and their relationships. Regarding anxious attachment, it may be that when two anxious individuals are committed to one another and have been together for an extended period of time, they may perceive clingy behavior stemming from relational conflict as a testament of their partner's love, support, and commitment.

Relationship Length

Relationship duration as a risk factor was associated with low relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment. Hadden et al. (2014) revealed that insecure attachment (anxious and avoidant) was linked with lower reports of relationship satisfaction and commitment, with this effect being stronger for couples with longer average relationship duration. While there are limited studies focusing on the effect of relationship length on relationship satisfaction in anxiously attached adults, prior research has reported that even in

couples whose relationships remain intact, over time there are decreases in relationship satisfaction (e.g., Johnson et al., 2005; Kurdek, 2008), love and affection (Huston et al., 2001), sexual interest (Huston & Vangelisti, 1991), as well as increases in relational conflict (Stafford et al., 2004). Moreover, Clements et al. (1997) proposed the Erosion Theory, where many romantic couples begin with high positive factors, such as relationship satisfaction, followed by a period of moderate to steep decline, which is then followed by a long period of shallower decline (assuming couples are still together) (as cited in Hadden et al., 2014). As such, it may be that anxious partners are more sensitive to changes, or erosion, in the romantic bond as their relationship progresses consequently, resulting in lower levels of relationship/marital satisfaction.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness as an individual protective factor was associated with greater relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment. Saavedra et al. (2010) found that high levels of mindfulness moderated the effects of attachment anxiety on relationship instability. This was consistent with prior research that has linked mindfulness to higher levels of current satisfaction and to increases in relationship satisfaction over time (Barnes et al., 2007). Moreover, Carson et al. (2004) found a mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) program to be effective in improving relationship quality over time. Furthermore, Brown and Ryan (2003) reported that individuals that practiced mindfulness were more open and receptive to life experiences, aiming to experience each moment deeply without judging it as "good" or "bad." In the context of attachment, mindfulness may help anxious individuals experience each moment in their relationship, including potential threats, without automatically reacting to them by encouraging them to accept the partner's behaviors while also living in the present moment.

Thus, mindfulness may prevent an anxious partner from activating the attachment system as well as, the secondary strategies that have been found to be detrimental to the overall functioning of the relationship.

Warm Temperature Cues

Warm temperature cues were identified as contextual protective factors associated with greater relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment. Vess (2012) found that in individuals with high levels of attachment anxiety, exposure to warm-temperature cues increased their current relationship satisfaction rating. This is supported by previous studies suggesting that holding warm beverages enables perceptions of social proximity (IJzerman & Semin, 2009) while social isolation enables perceptions of colder temperatures (Zhong & Leonardelli, 2008). In another study, Williams and Bargh (2008) asked participants to hold a cup of hot or cold coffee before assessing the traits of another person. The results revealed that contact with a cup of hot coffee led participants to rate a random person as friendlier and warmer than when they came into contact with a cup of cold coffee (Williams & Bargh, 2008). For an anxious person, holding a warm beverage is likely to enable feelings of warmth as well as feelings of security and proximity, and these feelings are likely to satisfy their attachment needs thus, resulting in higher rating of personal relationship/marital satisfaction.

Phubbing

Phone phubbing was identified as a contextual risk factor associated with low relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment. David and Roberts (2021) found that partner phubbing increased romantic jealousy and ultimately, reduced relationship satisfaction. Moreover, the negative impact of partner phubbing on romantic jealousy was moderated by interpersonal attachment anxiety (David & Roberts, 2021). This was consistent

with prior research indicating that partner phubbing has been found to negatively affect relationship satisfaction among romantic partners (e.g., Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2018; Cizmeci, 2017; Roberts & David, 2016). Moreover, Przybylski & Weinstein (2013) found that the presence of smartphone use during the interaction of two people led to lower levels of perceived closeness, connection and conversation quality. Similarly, Vanden Abeele et al. (2019) found partner's phone use was associated with lower conversation intimacy. As such, anxious partners are likely to be sensitive to their partners' phone use because it may cause them to feel less connected and intimate consequently, triggering their fears of rejection and abandonment thus, resulting in lower levels of relationship/marital satisfaction.

Depressive Masochistic Personality

DMP was an individual risk factor associated with low relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment. Naud et al. (2013) found that the actor's DMP was negatively associated with relationship satisfaction and significantly added to the explained variance even after controlling for attachment insecurities, thus, highlighting the importance of assessing DMP traits when examining factors that are detrimental to relationship satisfaction. According to Kernberg's theory, individuals with DMP are likely to sacrifice themselves and their interests in order to obtain love and approval from loved ones because of their high emotional dependency needs (Naud et al., 2013). As such, previous studies exploring the effect of self-sacrificing behaviors partly supported the findings from this review regarding DMP as an individual risk factor (e.g., Whitton et al., 2007). For instance, Whitton et al. (2007) found that when sacrificing was seen as harmful for the self, partners also reported lower relationship commitment and poorer couple functioning as well as, higher symptoms of depression. On the other hand, Van Lange et al. (1997) found that willingness to sacrifice was associated with strong commitment,

high satisfaction, and high investment particularly, when there were greater feelings of commitment between partners. As such, it is important to consider the personality organization of individuals with anxious attachment as it may impact the way they operate in the relationship, self-sacrificing or not, and thus, impact their overall relationship/marital satisfaction.

Interpersonal Trauma, Relationship Satisfaction, and Anxious Attachment

Though this review sought to identify the moderating effects of interpersonal trauma on relationship/marital satisfaction by analyzing the current literature, a moderating effect of interpersonal trauma on relationship/marital satisfaction was not found in the selected literature for this study. Nevertheless, two studies examined the effects of interpersonal psychological abuse on relationship satisfaction in adults with an anxious attachment. Gewirtz-Meydan and Finzi-Dottan (2021) found that highly anxious individuals perpetuated more psychological abuse on their partner consequently, lowering their own relationship satisfaction. Similarly, Gou and Woodin (2017) found that anxious partners who reported being less satisfied in their relationships also used psychological aggression against their partners more frequently at two years after the birth of their first child. These findings suggest that individuals who are high on anxious attachment experience constant fears of abandonment and rejection and may use abusive anger to gain proximity and reassurance from their partner. This notion is supported by previous research on perpetration of psychological abuse (e.g., Carroll et al., 2010; Murphy & Hoover, 1999). Murphy and Hoover (1999) found psychological abuse to be associated with attachment-related proximity seeking behaviors, separation protest, feared loss, and compulsive care-seeking behaviors. However, research has found that psychological abuse was associated with lower levels of marital quality and greater instability for both partners (Carroll et al., 2010). Perpetrating psychological abuse may serve to satisfy the short-term attachment needs of an

anxious adult as it increases the partner's responsive behaviors and subsequently, decreases fears of abandonment and rejection; however, in the long run, this is detrimental to the overall functioning of the relationship.

Clinical Implications

This review had two major supported findings: (a) perceptions of an anxious adult as both an individual risk and protective factor for relationship/marital satisfaction and (b) EFT as a contextual protective factor for relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with an anxious attachment. These findings not only add to the existing literature on anxious attachment and EFT, but also help to inform clinical treatment with anxious couples experiencing relationship/marital distress. It may be beneficial for clinicians to explore the perceptions of anxious partners to determine how they are serving to strengthen and/or hinder relationship/marital satisfaction. Exploring, deconstructing, and understanding what shapes their perception may be useful. The benefits of EFT was uncovered and, therefore, EFT is encouraged when working with anxious couples.

This review identified specific individual, interpersonal, and contextual risk and protective factors associated with anxious attachment and relationship/marital satisfaction. It may be beneficial for clinicians to explore the presence of the risk and protective factors identified in this review when working with distressed couples. Having an awareness of these factors may help guide clinicians in implementing specific interventions aimed at increasing relationship/marital intimacy, stability, and overall satisfaction. Furthermore, adapting the initial EFT sessions to examine the presence of the risk and protective factors identified in this review can yield substantial results. Lastly, the risk and protective factors identified in this review may contribute to the development of an assessment tool for anxious couples in distress.

Strengths and Limitations

This review adds to the existing literature on anxious attachment and relationship/marital satisfaction. One important contribution is that this review synthesizes and provides an overview of the risk and protective factors that impact relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with an anxious attachment. Another strength is that most of the selected studies for this review included samples that consisted of couples. As such, information was gathered from both partners thus, providing a more accurate description of not only the relationship dynamic, but also of how an anxious partner experiences, and is experienced, in the context of a relationship. Moreover, 26 studies selected for this review were rated as *exemplary* as they included a combination of the following: provided detailed ethnic/racial participant data, provided detailed participant gender data, included culturally and ethnically diverse participants, provided detailed treatment outcomes, recognized their study limitations, and provided detailed future study recommendations. Lastly, the major findings of this review, perceptions and EFT, add to the existing literature and also help to inform future research and treatment of anxious adults and couples.

Though this systematic review did not thoroughly capture the moderating effects of interpersonal trauma on relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with an anxious attachment, the narrow focus of this review allowed the writer to capture the literature on the perpetration of intimate partner violence by anxiously attached adults. This finding provided a greater understanding of the maladaptive secondary strategies that the attachment system of the anxious partner resorts to when they are feeling threatened in their relationship. It is noteworthy to mention that the samples of the included studies that were rated *strong* and *good* consisted of mainly White/Caucasian identifying participants. Perhaps there are cultural factors, language

barriers, or geographical barriers limiting individuals from different cultural backgrounds from accessing community resources. Moreover, there may be stigmas or misconceptions around research that may be preventing them from volunteering in studies related to relationship functioning. As such, it may be that some of the risk and protective factors identified in this review are not generalizable to individuals from other ethnic/cultural groups. In addition, though most of selected studies gathered data from both partners in a relationship/marriage, there were nine studies that only gathered data from one partner. Thus, it is important to consider that some of the risk and protective factors identified in this review are not reflective of all couples and therefore, are not generalizable to all coupled partners. Furthermore, it is important to consider that this review did not factor in the effects of interpersonal physical or sexual abuse on relationship satisfaction, as such, some of the risk and protective factors identified by this review may not apply to such couples. Lastly, this systematic review only included quantitative studies therefore, perhaps limiting important information regarding anxious attachment that qualitative studies may have previously reported.

Directions for Future Research

Future research can examine and include qualitative studies. Qualitative data is likely to provide a deeper understanding of anxious adults and their experiences in the context of romantic relationships that may not be easily put into numbers. Future studies may also explore the experiences of anxious adults from diverse cultural groups. Doing so will help researchers gain a better understanding of how cultural factors play a role in the development, maintenance, and even extinction of romantic relationships. Furthermore, future research can more closely examine the moderating effects of interpersonal trauma by including more electronic databases, expanding the search terms, and including qualitative data. Lastly, future studies can utilize the

information gathered by this review to develop an assessment tool to help identify and minimize the risk factors that contribute to couples' distress.

Conclusion

This systematic review aimed to identify the risk and protective factors that strengthen and/or hinder relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with an anxious attachment. In addition, this review aimed to explore the moderating effects of interpersonal trauma on relationship/marital satisfaction in adults with anxious attachment. The results from this review revealed 22 risk factors and 17 protective factors for relationship/marital satisfaction. In addition, this review found that anxious partners perpetrate more psychological abuse against their partners. This data provides a deeper understanding of the experiences of anxious adults as well as, the factors that negatively and positively impact their relationship/marital satisfaction. Moreover, the studies included in this review, once synthesized, help depict a better picture of the attachment system of anxious adults. One of the main findings from this systematic review highlights the importance of examining the perceptions of anxious adults as they can serve to strengthen and/or weaken their own relationship/marital satisfaction. Moreover, this systematic review highlights the benefits of EFT when working with distressed couples. Overall, this review contributes to the existing literature on anxious attachment and opens the door for future research.

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APPENDIX A

Search Terms

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Comprehensive List of Search Terms				
2					
3	**Search Term ID#**	**Primary Term**	**Synonyms/ Alternate Forms**	**Notes**	
4	01	anxious attachment	"insecure attachment," "attachment anxiety," "attachment styles"		
5	02	anxious romantic attachment	"adult anxious attachment," "adult romantic attachment," "romantic bond," "attachment anxiety in adulthood," "romantic attachment"		
6	03	interpersonal trauma	"attachment trauma," "traumatic bond," "betrayal trauma"		
7	04	relationship satisfaction	"relationship dissatisfaction," "marital satisfaction," "marital dissatisfaction"		
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					

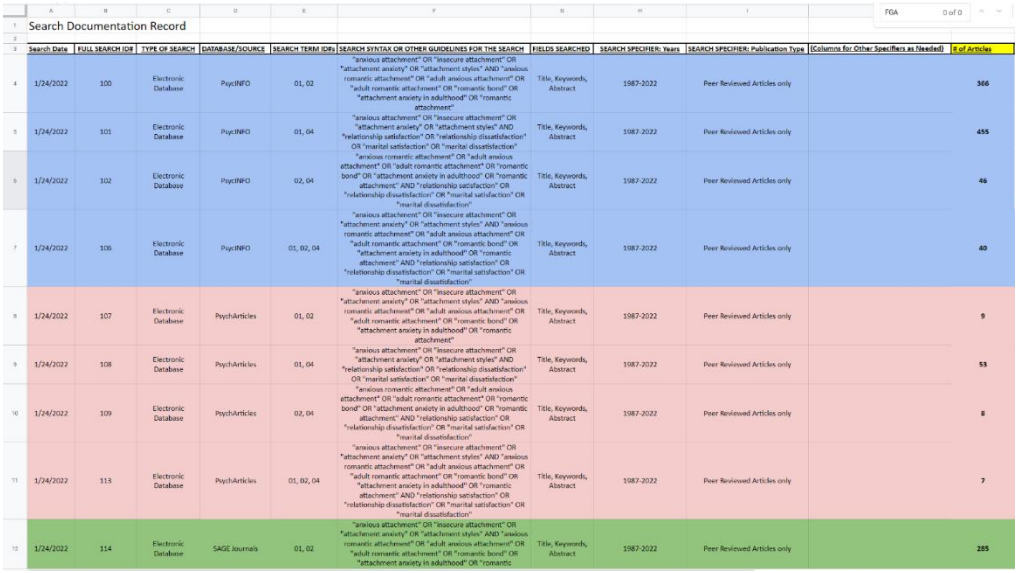
APPENDIX B

Comprehensive Search Plan

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1	Comprehensive Search Plan							
2								
3	**Search Type**	**Databases or Sources**	**Search Term ID(s)**	**Search Syntax or Instructions**	**Fields to Search**	**Specifiers**	**Plan Notes**	
4	Electronic Database	PsycINFO	01, 02	"anxious attachment" OR "insecure attachment" OR "attachment anxiety" OR "attachment styles" AND "anxious romantic attachment" OR "adult anxious attachment" OR "adult romantic attachment" OR "romantic bond" OR "attachment anxiety in adulthood" OR "romantic attachment"	Title, Keywords, Abstract	*Years 1987-2022 *Peer reviewed articles only		
5	Electronic Database	PsycINFO	01, 04	"anxious attachment" OR "insecure attachment" OR "attachment anxiety" OR "attachment styles" AND "relationship satisfaction" OR "relationship dissatisfaction" OR "marital satisfaction" OR "marital dissatisfaction"	Title, Keywords, Abstract	*Years 1987-2022 *Peer reviewed articles only		
6	Electronic Database	PsycINFO	02, 04	"anxious romantic attachment" OR "adult anxious attachment" OR "adult romantic attachment" OR "romantic bond" OR "attachment anxiety in adulthood" OR "romantic attachment" AND "relationship satisfaction" OR "relationship dissatisfaction" OR "marital satisfaction" OR "marital dissatisfaction"	Title, Keywords, Abstract	*Years 1987-2022 *Peer reviewed articles only		
7	Electronic Database	PsycINFO	03, 04	"interpersonal trauma" OR "attachment trauma" OR "traumatic bond" OR "betrayal trauma" AND "relationship satisfaction" OR "relationship dissatisfaction" OR "marital satisfaction" OR "marital dissatisfaction"	Title, Keywords, Abstract	*Years 1987-2022 *Peer reviewed articles only		
8	Electronic Database	PsycINFO	01, 03, 04	"anxious attachment" OR "insecure attachment" OR "attachment anxiety" OR "attachment styles" AND "interpersonal trauma" OR "attachment trauma" OR "traumatic bond" OR "betrayal trauma" AND "relationship satisfaction" OR "relationship dissatisfaction" OR "marital satisfaction" OR "marital dissatisfaction"	Title, Keywords, Abstract	*Years 1987-2022 *Peer reviewed articles only		
9	Electronic Database	PsycINFO	02, 03, 04	"anxious romantic attachment" OR "adult anxious attachment" OR "adult romantic attachment" OR "romantic bond" OR "attachment anxiety in adulthood" OR "romantic attachment" AND "interpersonal trauma" OR "attachment trauma" OR "traumatic bond" OR "betrayal trauma" AND "relationship satisfaction" OR "relationship	Title, Keywords, Abstract	*Years 1987-2022 *Peer reviewed articles only		

APPENDIX C

Search Documentation Record



Search Documentation Record

Search Date	FULL SEARCH ID#	TYPE OF SEARCH	DATABASE/SOURCE	SEARCH TERM ID#s	SEARCH SYNTAX OR OTHER GUIDELINES FOR THE SEARCH	FIELDS SEARCHED	SEARCH SPECIFIER: Years	SEARCH SPECIFIER: Publication Type	(Columns for Other Specifiers as Needed)	# of Articles
1/24/2022	100	Electronic Database	PsycINFO	01, 02	"anxious attachment" OR "insecure attachment" OR "attachment anxiety" OR "attachment styles" AND "anxious romantic attachment" OR "adult anxious attachment" OR "adult romantic attachment" OR "romantic bond" OR "attachment anxiety in adulthood" OR "romantic attachment"	Title, Keywords, Abstract	1987-2022	Peer Reviewed Articles only		366
1/24/2022	101	Electronic Database	PsycINFO	01, 04	"anxious attachment" OR "insecure attachment" OR "attachment anxiety" OR "attachment styles" AND "relationship satisfaction" OR "relationship dissatisfaction" OR "marital satisfaction" OR "marital dissatisfaction"	Title, Keywords, Abstract	1987-2022	Peer Reviewed Articles only		455
1/24/2022	102	Electronic Database	PsycINFO	02, 04	"anxious romantic attachment" OR "adult anxious attachment" OR "adult romantic attachment" OR "romantic bond" OR "attachment anxiety in adulthood" OR "romantic attachment" AND "relationship satisfaction" OR "relationship dissatisfaction" OR "marital satisfaction" OR "marital dissatisfaction"	Title, Keywords, Abstract	1987-2022	Peer Reviewed Articles only		46
1/24/2022	106	Electronic Database	PsycINFO	01, 02, 04	"anxious attachment" OR "insecure attachment" OR "attachment anxiety" OR "attachment styles" AND "anxious romantic attachment" OR "adult anxious attachment" OR "adult romantic attachment" OR "romantic bond" OR "attachment anxiety in adulthood" OR "romantic attachment" AND "relationship satisfaction" OR "relationship dissatisfaction" OR "marital satisfaction" OR "marital dissatisfaction"	Title, Keywords, Abstract	1987-2022	Peer Reviewed Articles only		40
1/24/2022	107	Electronic Database	PsychArticles	01, 02	"anxious attachment" OR "insecure attachment" OR "attachment anxiety" OR "attachment styles" AND "anxious romantic attachment" OR "adult anxious attachment" OR "adult romantic attachment" OR "romantic bond" OR "attachment anxiety in adulthood" OR "romantic attachment"	Title, Keywords, Abstract	1987-2022	Peer Reviewed Articles only		9
1/24/2022	108	Electronic Database	PsychArticles	01, 04	"anxious attachment" OR "insecure attachment" OR "attachment anxiety" OR "attachment styles" AND "relationship satisfaction" OR "relationship dissatisfaction" OR "marital satisfaction" OR "marital dissatisfaction"	Title, Keywords, Abstract	1987-2022	Peer Reviewed Articles only		53
1/24/2022	109	Electronic Database	PsychArticles	02, 04	"anxious romantic attachment" OR "adult anxious attachment" OR "adult romantic attachment" OR "romantic bond" OR "attachment anxiety in adulthood" OR "romantic attachment" AND "relationship satisfaction" OR "relationship dissatisfaction" OR "marital satisfaction" OR "marital dissatisfaction"	Title, Keywords, Abstract	1987-2022	Peer Reviewed Articles only		8
1/24/2022	113	Electronic Database	PsychArticles	01, 02, 04	"anxious attachment" OR "insecure attachment" OR "attachment anxiety" OR "attachment styles" AND "anxious romantic attachment" OR "adult anxious attachment" OR "adult romantic attachment" OR "romantic bond" OR "attachment anxiety in adulthood" OR "romantic attachment" AND "relationship satisfaction" OR "relationship dissatisfaction" OR "marital satisfaction" OR "marital dissatisfaction"	Title, Keywords, Abstract	1987-2022	Peer Reviewed Articles only		7
1/24/2022	114	Electronic Database	SAGE Journals	01, 02	"anxious attachment" OR "insecure attachment" OR "attachment anxiety" OR "attachment styles" AND "anxious romantic attachment" OR "adult anxious attachment" OR "adult romantic attachment" OR "romantic bond" OR "attachment anxiety in adulthood" OR "romantic	Title, Keywords, Abstract	1987-2022	Peer Reviewed Articles only		285

APPENDIX D

Screening and Selection Record

Screening and Selection Record

Search Terms Used	Authors	YEAR	ABBREVIATED TITLE	DATABASES/ SOURCES	TITLE AND/OR KEYWORD SCREEN: DECISION - DATE	ABSTRACT SCREEN: DECISION - DATE	FULL-TEXT SCREEN?	INCL (SO): Published Study	INCL (SO): Peer Reviewed Journal	INCL (SO): Language English	INCL (SO): Publication Year 1987-2022	INCL (RV): Anxious Attachment	INCL (RV): Anxious Romantic Attachment	INCL (RV): Relationship Satisfaction
"anxious attachment" OR "insecure attachment" OR "attachment anxiety" OR "attachment styles" AND "anxious romantic attachment" OR "adult anxious attachment" OR "adult romantic attachment" OR "romantic bond" OR "attachment anxiety in adulthood" OR "romantic attachment"	Mohd Hasim, M. J., Hashim, N. H., & Mustafa, H.	2021	Married life: Measuring adult romantic attachment and satisfaction.	PsycINFO	02/14/22	02/14/22	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
"anxious attachment" OR "insecure attachment" OR "attachment anxiety" OR "attachment styles" AND "anxious romantic attachment" OR "adult anxious attachment" OR "adult romantic attachment" OR "romantic bond" OR "attachment anxiety in adulthood" OR "romantic attachment"	Barbaro, N., & Shackelford, T. K.	2019	Environmental unpredictability in childhood is associated with anxious romantic attachment and intimate partner violence perpetration	PsycINFO	02/14/22	02/14/22	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
"anxious attachment" OR "insecure attachment" OR "attachment anxiety" OR "attachment styles" AND "anxious romantic attachment" OR "adult anxious attachment" OR "adult romantic attachment" OR "romantic bond" OR "attachment anxiety in adulthood" OR "romantic attachment"	Li, X., Curran, M. A., LeBaron, A. B., Serido, J., & Shim, S.	2020	Romantic attachment orientations, financial behaviors, and life outcomes among young adults: A mediating analysis of a college cohort	PsycINFO	02/14/22	02/14/22	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
"anxious attachment" OR "insecure attachment" OR "attachment anxiety" OR "attachment styles" AND "anxious romantic attachment" OR "adult anxious attachment" OR "adult romantic attachment" OR "romantic bond" OR "attachment anxiety in adulthood" OR "romantic attachment"	Guzmán-González, M., Barrientos, J., Gómez, F., Meyer, I. H., Bahamondes, J., & Cárdenas, M.	2020	Romantic attachment and relationship satisfaction in gay men and lesbians in Chile	PsycINFO	02/14/22	02/14/22	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
"anxious attachment" OR "insecure attachment" OR "attachment anxiety" OR "attachment styles" AND "anxious romantic attachment" OR "adult anxious attachment" OR "adult romantic attachment" OR "romantic bond" OR "attachment anxiety in adulthood" OR "romantic attachment"	Bleske-Rechek, A., Nuck, G., & Gunseor, M. M.	2021	Individual differences in romantic attachment: Shared environment does not predict shared attachment style	PsycINFO	02/14/22	02/14/22	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
"anxious attachment" OR "insecure attachment" OR "attachment anxiety" OR "attachment styles" AND "anxious romantic attachment" OR "adult anxious attachment" OR "adult romantic attachment" OR "romantic bond" OR "attachment anxiety in adulthood" OR "romantic attachment"	Kobayashi, J. E., Levendosky, A. A., Bogat, G. A., & Weatherill, R. P.	2021	Romantic attachment as a mediator of the relationships between interpersonal trauma and prenatal representations	PsycINFO	02/14/22	02/14/22	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
"anxious attachment" OR "insecure attachment" OR "attachment anxiety" OR "attachment styles" AND "anxious romantic attachment" OR "adult anxious attachment" OR "adult romantic attachment" OR "romantic bond" OR "attachment anxiety in adulthood" OR "romantic attachment"	Guzmán-González, M., Contreras, P., & Cassu, G.	2020	Romantic attachment, unforgiveness and relationship satisfaction in couples: A dyadic mediation analysis	PsycINFO	02/14/22	02/14/22	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
"anxious attachment" OR "insecure attachment" OR "attachment anxiety" OR "attachment styles" AND "anxious romantic attachment" OR "adult anxious attachment" OR "adult romantic attachment" OR "romantic bond" OR	Mohd. Hasim, M. J., Mustafa, H., & Hashim, N. H.	2018	From middle childhood to adulthood attachment: Measuring attachment stability in the context of married individuals in Penang, Malaysia	PsycINFO	02/14/22	02/14/22	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N

INCL (RV): Relationship Satisfaction	INCL (RV): Interpersonal Trauma	INCl (RV) Risk or Protective Factor	INCL(PAR): Age 18+	INCL (M): Quantitative	INCL (SQ): Primary or secondary data analysis?	INCL (SQ): Sample Size? (NO LIMIT)	INCL (SQ): Measures strong validity & reliability	EXCL: Study Conducted in Inpatient Settings	EXCL: Participants with Severe Psychopathology	EXCL: Participants with Developmental Disabilities	REVIEWER DECISION - DATE	NOTES	DOI	SECONDARY/ CONFIMATORY DECISION	FINAL DECISION	FINAL DECISION DATE	DECISION NOTES	YES or NO? Why not?
Y	N		Y	Y	Primary	400	Y	N	N	N	02/14/22		http://dx.doi.org.lib.pepperdine.edu/10.1037/fp0000188		Laura: 08/05:NO; study had mostly secured attached adults and did not specify factors that strengthen or hinder relationship satisfaction			Laura: 08/05:NO; study had mostly secured attached adults and did not specify factors that strengthen or hinder relationship satisfaction
N	Y		Y	Y	Primary	128	Y	N	N	N	02/14/22		http://dx.doi.org.lib.pepperdine.edu/10.1177/0886260515644548		Laura: 08/14: No, study did not address relationship satisfaction			Laura: 08/14: No, study did not address relationship satisfaction
Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Primary	635	Y	N	N	N	02/14/22		http://dx.doi.org.lib.pepperdine.edu/10.1007/s10826-020-02000647-1		Laura: 08/14: Yes, study focused on life outcome and relationship satisfaction and identifies perceived financial behaviors as an important factor: "high attachment anxiety and high attachment avoidance were associated with low relationship satisfaction via perceived partners' less responsible financial behavior"			Laura: 08/14: Yes, study focused on life outcome and relationship satisfaction and identifies perceived financial behaviors as an important factor: "high attachment anxiety and high attachment avoidance were associated with low relationship satisfaction via perceived partners' less responsible financial behavior"
Y	N		Y	Y	Primary	259	Y	N	N	N	02/14/22	Gay men; Chile	http://dx.doi.org.lib.pepperdine.edu/10.1080/00224499.2018.1571949		Laura: 08/14: No, study only focuses on the association between attachment anxiety and relationship satisfaction but does not explore additional factors.			Laura: 08/14: No, study only focuses on the association between attachment anxiety and relationship satisfaction but does not explore additional factors.
N	N		Y	Y	Secondary	Multiple Groups	Y	N	N	N	02/14/22	Longitudinal Study	http://dx.doi.org.lib.pepperdine.edu/10.1027/1614-0001/a000347		Laura: 08/14: No, article only focuses on the notion that environmental factors, shared or not shared within siblings, affect relationship attachment development			Laura: 08/14: No, article only focuses on the notion that environmental factors, shared or not shared within siblings, affect relationship attachment development
N	Y		Y	Y	Primary	206	Y	N	N	N	02/14/22		http://dx.doi.org.lib.pepperdine.edu/10.1037/vio0000361		Laura: 08/14: No, articles focuses on development of attachment to unborn child based on attachment to caregiver and important romantic partners			Laura: 08/14: No, articles focuses on development of attachment to unborn child based on attachment to caregiver and important romantic partners
Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Primary	104 Couples	Y	N	N	N	02/14/22		http://dx.doi.org.lib.pepperdine.edu/10.1177/0265407520940203		Laura: 08/14: Yes, articles explores unforgiveness as an important factor regarding anxious attachment and lower relationship satisfaction: "As hypothesized, actors' attachment anxiety was associated with greater revenge motivation, and thus with lower relationship satisfaction"			Laura: 08/14: Yes, articles explores unforgiveness as an important factor regarding anxious attachment and lower relationship satisfaction: "As hypothesized, actors' attachment anxiety was associated with greater revenge motivation, and thus with lower relationship satisfaction"
N	N		Y	Y	Primary	400	Y	N	N	N	02/14/22		http://dx.doi.org.lib.pepperdine.edu/10.1177/1084864		Laura: 08/14:No; article only focuses on			Laura; 08/14;No; article only focuses on the continuity of relationship style across one's lifespan

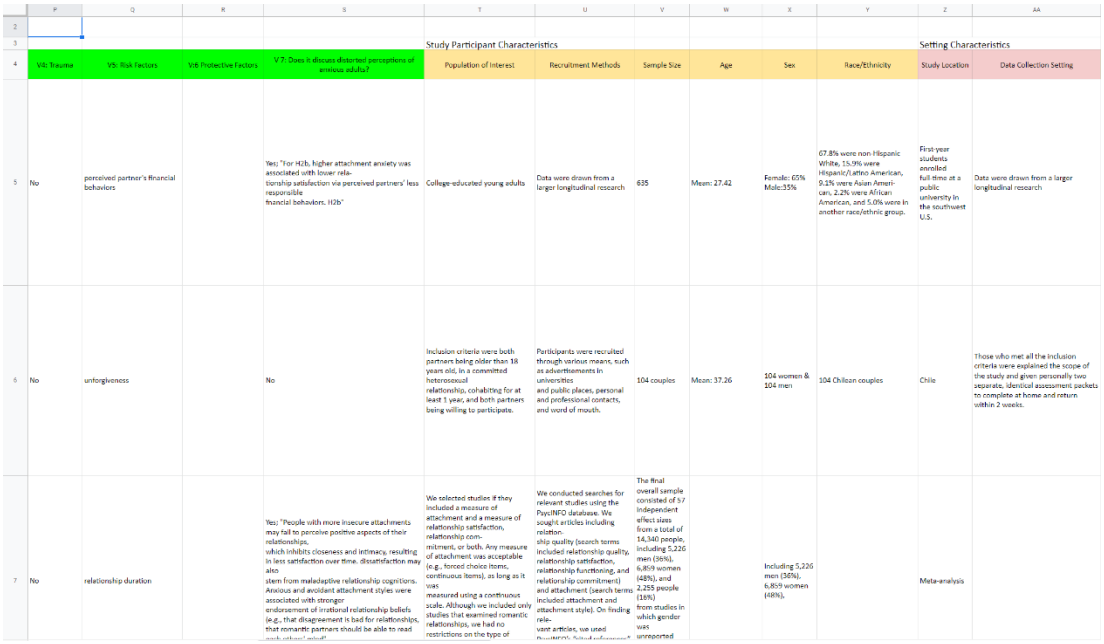
APPENDIX E

Data Collection and Extraction Form

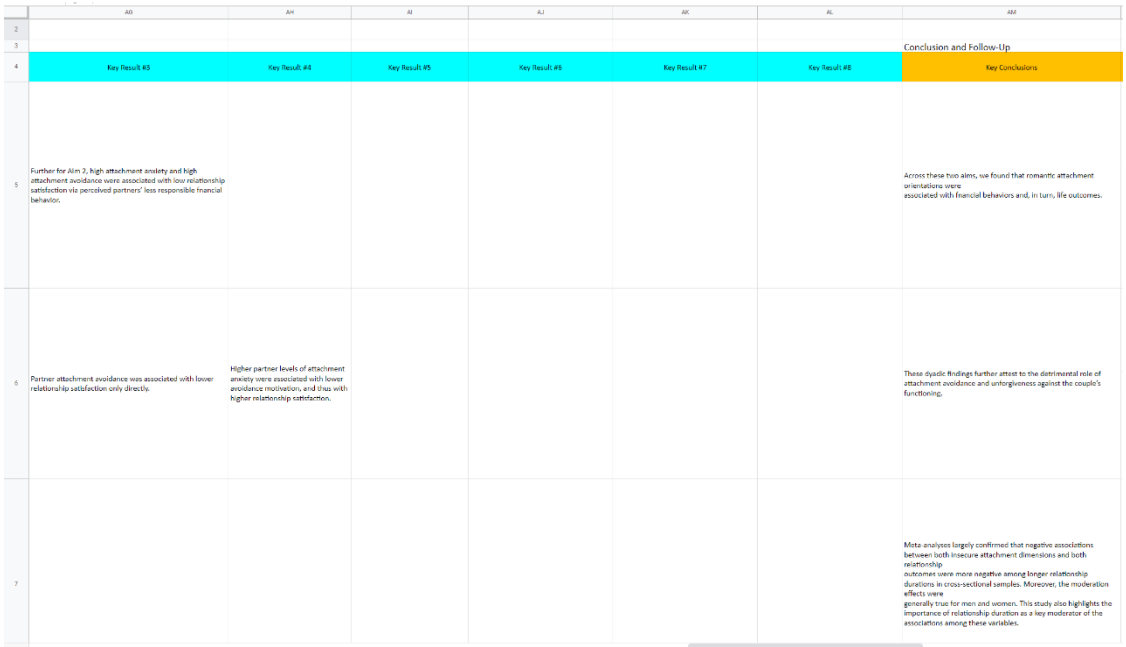
DATA EXTRACTION FORM

					General Information					Design Characteristics & Methodological Features		Assessment of Research Variables		
Document ID#	Authors	Year	Full Document Title	Research Variables	Date Form Completed	Initials of person extracting data	Source/Publication Type	Source Name	Publication Status	Aim of study	Study Design or Specific Research Approach	VI: Anxious Attachment	VI: Romantic Anxious Attachment	VI: Relationship Satisfaction
5	Li, X., Curran, M. A., LeBaron, A. B., Serido, J., & Shim, S.	2020	Romantic attachment orientations, financial behaviors, and life outcomes among young adults: A mediating analysis of a college cohort	Attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance, own financial behaviors, perceived partners' financial behaviors, financial satisfactions, life satisfaction, relationship satisfaction	10/10/2022	LM	Electronic Database	PsycINFO	Published	Guided by the Vulnerability Adaption Stress model (Karney and Bradbury 1995), we used data from 635 college-educated young adults to examine associations between romantic attachment orientations (i.e., attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance) and young adults' life outcomes (i.e., financial satisfaction, life satisfaction, and relationship satisfaction; Aim 1). We also conducted a mediating model to examine indirect associations from romantic attachment orientations to life outcomes via young adult's own financial behaviors and perceived partners' financial behavior (i.e., each young adult's perception of their partner's financial behaviors; Aim 2).	The data used in this study were drawn from a larger, longitudinal research project that sought to understand factors that contribute to the formation of financial behaviors and associations between financial behaviors and well-being. We conducted a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to examine differences in key study constructs and covariates between the 635 young adults in the relationship subsample (Table 1) and the 220 young adults excluded from the present study as they were not in a romantic relationship.	Yes	Yes	Yes
6	Guzmán-González, M., Contreras, P., & Casu, G.	2020	Romantic attachment, unforgiveness and relationship satisfaction in couples: A dyadic mediation analysis	Romantic attachment, relationship satisfaction, unforgiveness	10/10/2022	LM	Electronic Database	PsycINFO	Published	We used the actor–partner interdependence mediation model to explore the associations between romantic attachment and relationship satisfaction as mediated by unforgiveness (i.e., avoidance and revenge motivations) in a convenience sample of 104 Chilean couples.	Cross-sectional design: Preliminary bivariate correlations between study variables were computed separately for women and men and within couples. Differences between dyad members' mean scores in the study variables were examined using repeated-measures analysis of variance (ANOVA). To test for the need to include covariates or confounding variables in the dyadic models, women's and men's avoidance and revenge motivations and relationship satisfaction were correlated (Pearson's correlation) with age and relationship length and compared (ANOVA) among groups based on being married or not and having children or not.	Yes	Yes	Yes
7	Hadden, B. W., Smith, C. V., & Webster, G. D.	2014	Relationship duration moderates associations between attachment and relationship quality: Meta-analytic support for the temporal adult romantic	Insecure attachment (anxious or avoidant), relationship duration, relationship satisfaction or commitment	10/16/2022	LM	Electronic Database	PsycINFO	Published	The purpose of the pres ent research is threefold. First, we develop the Temporal Adult Romantic Attachment (TARA) model that describes how the links between insecure attachment dimensions and relationship quality might change over time. Second, using meta-analysis, we describe the simple associations between attachment dimensions and relationship quality. Third, we use meta-analysis to test the TARA model by assessing the extent to which the associations between insecure attachment dimensions and relationship satisfaction are moderated by relationship duration.	We focused our meta-nalysis specifically on the associations among continuous measures of the two main attachment dimensions (anxious, avoidant)—as well as studies that examined secure attach- ment as an independent dimension—and relationship satisfaction/commitment.	Yes	Yes	Yes

	Analyses Conducted and Measures Used			Results	
	Descriptive Statistics Used	Inferential Statistics Used	Measures Used	Key Result #1	Key Result #2
5	The median age of the participants in the present study (i.e., the relationship subsample and at Wave 4; N=635) was 27 years old. The average relationship length was 5.17 years (SD =4.01). For relationship status, 60.2% were married, 28.3% were unmarried and cohabiting, and 3.5% were in a serious dating relationship (not married, not cohabiting). For parental status, 13.5% had at least one child and 86.5% had no children. For gender, 65.0% were female and 35.0% were male. For employment status at Wave 4, 79.1% were employed full time, 9.0% were employed part-time, 4.3% were self-employed, 7.0% were unemployed, and .6%		12-item, short-form Experiences in Close Relationship Scale; Young adults' own financial behaviors were assessed using 6 items; Perceived partners' financial behaviors were assessed using the same 6 items as the young adult's own financial behaviors; Financial satisfaction was assessed using 3 items; Life satisfaction was assessed using the 5-item, unidi- mensional Satisfaction with Life Scale; Relationship satisfaction was assessed using the 3-item, unidimensional Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale	For Aim 1, high attachment anxiety and/or high attachment avoidance was associ- ated with low life satisfaction and low relationship satisfaction.	For Aim 2, high attachment anxiety was associated with low financial satisfaction and low life satisfaction via young adults' own less responsible financial behaviors.
6	Thus, the final sample included 104 couples (104 women and 104 men). Mean age was 37.26 years for women (SD ¼ 8.75; range 20–54 years) and 39.95 years for men (SD ¼ 9.54; range 20–60 years). Thirty-two percent of women (n ¼ 33) and 33.65% of men (n ¼ 35) had tertiary education, and 61.54% of women (n ¼ 64) and 91.35% of men (n ¼ 95) were employed. More than half of the couples (n ¼ 62, 59.62%) were married and 80.77% (n ¼ 84) had children. Mean relationship length was 13.13 years (SD ¼ 9.53; range 1–37 years). 21.15% of couples (n ¼ 22) had been together for more than 20 years, and 30.77% (n ¼ 32) for more than 10 years.		A sociodemographic questionnaire was developed for this study that assessed gender, age, educational level, job status, and relationship history (being married, having chil- dren, and relationship length); A 34-item Chilean validated version (Guzmán, 2010) of the Experiences in Close Relationships (ECR) scale (Brennan et al., 1998) was used to assess romantic attachment; The 12- item Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM-12; McCullough et al., 1998) is one of the most widely used measures of unforgiveness; The 48-item Marital Satisfaction Scale (MSS; Roach et al., 1981) was used to assess relationship satisfaction.	Actor insecure attachment was associated with lower rela- tionship satisfaction directly and indirectly.	Indirectly, higher actor levels of attachment anxiety and avoidance were linked, respectively, to greater revenge and avoidance motivations, and thus to lower relationship satisfaction.
7	Of the 57 effect sizes, 27 (47%) included dyadic, couples-based data, and 33 (58%) included a measure of average relationship duration of their respective samples, which ranged from 1.76 to 287 months (median = 22.8, M = 53.9, SD = 67.4).		We selected studies if they included a measure of attachment and a measure of relationship satisfaction, relationship commitment, or both. Any measure of attachment was acceptable (e.g., forced choice items, continuous items), as long as it was measured using a continuous scale.	As predicted, and consistent with prior research, insecure attachment (anxious and avoid- ant) was negatively associated with relationship satisfaction and commitment (Prediction 1).	The negative associations between insecure attachment dimensions (anxious and avoidant) and relationship satisfaction were more negative in samples with longer average relationship durations. One possible explanation for these moderation effects is that the negative properties of insecure attachment on relationship satisfaction gradually develop or accumulate over time. Another possible explanation for the moderating effect of relationship duration is that it may relate to well-documented decreases in relationship quality over time. Even in couples whose relationships remain intact, over time there are decreases in relationship satisfaction, love and affection, and sexual interest, as well as increases in conflict. People who are higher in avoidant or anxious attachment may be more sensitive to these changes as their relationships progress. Alternatively, perhaps dispositional attachment styles impede the healthy, natural development of a relationship. That is, when relationships begin, attachment styles are simply not as important due to the initial lack of closeness and intimacy in fledgling relationships. For example, Fastwick



	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	AA
2												
3					Study Participant Characteristics						Setting Characteristics	
4	V4: Trauma	V5: Risk Factors	V6: Protective Factors	V 7: Does it discuss distorted perceptions of anxious adults?	Population of Interest	Recruitment Methods	Sample Size	Age	Sex	Race/Ethnicity	Study Location	Data Collection Setting
5	No	perceived partner's financial behaviors		Yes; "For H2b, higher attachment anxiety was associated with lower rela- tionship satisfaction via perceived partners' less responsible financial behaviors. H2b"	College-educated young adults	Data were drawn from a larger longitudinal research	635	Mean: 27.42	Female: 65% Male:35%	67.8% were non-Hispanic White, 15.9% were Hispanic/Latino American, 9.1% were Asian Ameri- can, 2.2% were African American, and 5.0% were in another race/ethnic group.	First-year students enrolled full-time at a public university in the southwest U.S.	Data were drawn from a larger longitudinal research
6	No	unforgiveness		No	Inclusion criteria were both partners being older than 18 years old, in a committed heterosexual relationship, cohabiting for at least 1 year, and both partners being willing to participate.	Participants were recruited through various means, such as advertisements in universities and public places, personal and professional contacts, and word of mouth.	104 couples	Mean: 37.26	104 women & 104 men	104 Chilean couples	Chile	Those who met all the inclusion criteria were explained the scope of the study and given personally two separate, identical assessment packets to complete at home and return within 2 weeks.
7	No	relationship duration		Yes; "People with more insecure attachments may fail to perceive positive aspects of their relationships, which inhibits closeness and intimacy, resulting in less satisfaction over time. dissatisfaction may also stem from maladaptive relationship cognitions. Anxious and avoidant attachment styles were associated with stronger endorsement of irrational relationship beliefs (e.g., that disagreement is bad for relationships, that romantic partners should be able to read	We selected studies if they included a measure of attachment and a measure of relationship satisfaction, relationship com- mitment, or both. Any measure of attachment was acceptable (e.g., forced choice items, continuous items), as long as it was measured using a continuous scale. Although we included only studies that examined romantic relationships, we had no restrictions on the type of	We conducted searches for relevant studies using the PsycINFO database. We sought articles including relation- ship quality (search terms included relationship quality, relationship satisfaction, relationship functioning, and relationship commitment) and attachment (search terms included attachment and attachment style). On finding rele- vant articles, we used	The final overall sample consisted of 57 independent effect sizes from a total of 14,340 people, including 5,226 men (36%), 6,859 women (48%), and 2,255 people (16%) from studies in which gender was unreported		Including 5,226 men (36%), 6,859 women (48%),		Meta-analysis	



	AG	AH	AI	AJ	AK	AL	AM
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3							Conclusion and Follow-Up
4	Key Result #3	Key Result #4	Key Result #5	Key Result #6	Key Result #7	Key Result #8	Key Conclusions
5	Further for Aim 2, high attachment anxiety and high attachment avoidance were associated with low relationship satisfaction via perceived partners' less responsible financial behavior.						Across these two aims, we found that romantic attachment orientations were associated with financial behaviors and, in turn, life outcomes.
6	Partner attachment avoidance was associated with lower relationship satisfaction only directly.	Higher partner levels of attachment anxiety were associated with lower avoidance motivation, and thus with higher relationship satisfaction.					These dyadic findings further attest to the detrimental role of attachment avoidance and unforgiveness against the couple's functioning.
7							Meta-analyses largely confirmed that negative associations between both insecure attachment dimensions and both relationship outcomes were more negative among longer relationship durations in cross-sectional samples. Moreover, the moderation effects were generally true for men and women. This study also highlights the importance of relationship duration as a key moderator of the associations among these variables.

	AN	AO	AP	AQ	AR	AS	AT	AU	AV
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4	Recommendations for Future Research	Does the study directly address your review question?	Your Take-Aways: General	Your Take-Aways: Implications for Practice	Study Limitations	References to other relevant studies	Other publications from this dataset	Further study information needed?	NOTES
5	We suggest researchers and practitioners consider romantic attachment orientations when seeking to understand and improve financial behaviors and life outcomes among young adults.	Yes	"PERCEIVED PARTNER'S FINANCIAL BEHAVIORS MATTER FOR RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION" (P. 667)	Anxious individuals are hypervigilant to their partners' behaviors which affects relationship satisfaction	data used were originally collected from a college cohort sample				PERCEIVED PARTNER'S FINANCIAL BEHAVIORS MATTER FOR RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION
6	The novel finding that attachment anxiety may indirectly promote a couple's relationship satisfaction deserves further investigation.	Yes	They tend to respond to partner transgressions with intense resentment and excessive rumination (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016) and exhibit more desires for revenge (Guzmán et al., 2015), which, in turn, might have detrimental effects on their relationship satisfaction (Malouin & Johnson, 2006). P. 2834	Partner transgressions can lead to unforgiveness and greater resentment and need to avenge which then, impacts relationship satisfaction.	We did not control for the number, severity or type (e.g., criticism, infidelity, or deception) of the transgressions recalled, which has been linked to unforgiveness. Cross-cultural studies are also needed to clarify whether the dyadic associations found in this study represent a common pattern across countries/cultures.				Attachment trauma leads to resentment, desire to avenge, and therefore, weakens realationship satisfaction
7	Future research would benefit from taking a longitudinal approach to studying attachment and relationship quality, as well as collecting data from both partners; doing so could allow for the possible expansion of the TARA model to include partner paths.	Yes	The negative associations between insecure attachment dimensions (anxious and avoidant) and relationship satisfaction were more negative in samples with longer average relationship duration		The studies reviewed relied on self-report measures of attachment styles, and research (found that three commonly used measures of attachment — the Attachment Styles Questionnaire (ASQ), the Adult Attachment Scale (AAS), and the Relationship Questionnaire (RQ)—are correlated with impression management. Specifically, results suggested that participants gave socially desirable responses, being more likely to endorse secure items than insecure ones. In addition, some scales of the ASQ and the AAS were positively associated with unconscious self-deception. Researchers				

APPENDIX F

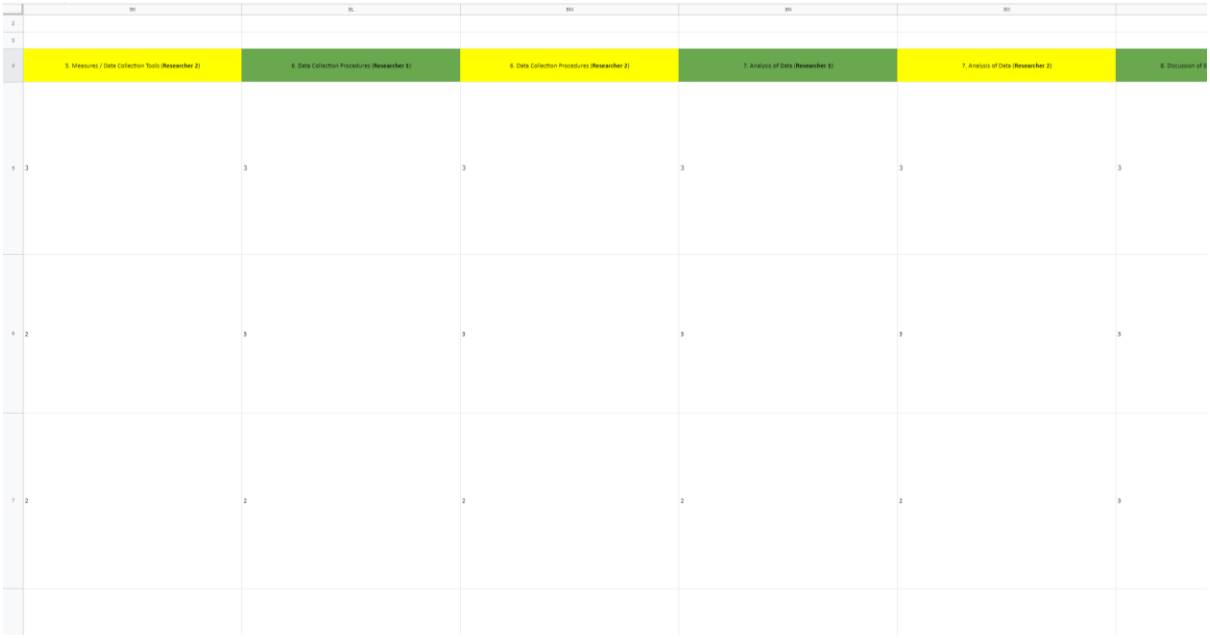
Individual Study Quality Assessment Form

Individual Study Quality Assessment

Rating Scale: Strong=3 Good/Adequate=2 Weak=1 Missing=0 N/A

Document ID#	Authors	Year	Full Document Title	1. Strength of Literature Foundation and Rationale for Study (Researcher 1)	1. Strength of Literature Foundation and Rationale for Study (Researcher 2)	2. Clarity and Specificity of Research Aims/Objectives/Questions (Researcher 1)	2. Clarity and Specificity of Research Aims/Objectives/Questions (Researcher
3	Li, X., Curran, M. A., LeBaron, A. B., Serido, J., & Shim, S.	2020	Romantic attachment orientations, financial behaviors, and life outcomes among young adults: A mediating analysis of a college cohort	3	3	3	3
7	Guzmán-González, M., Contreras, P., & Casu, G.	2020	Romantic attachment, unforgiveness and relationship satisfaction in couples: A dyadic mediation analysis	3	3	3	3
9	Hadden, B. W., Smith, C. V., & Webster, G. D.	2014	Relationship duration moderates associations between attachment and relationship quality: Meta-analytic support for the temporal adult romantic attachment model.	3	2	3	3

3. Quality of Research Design or Methodological Approach (Researcher 1)	3. Quality of Research Design or Methodological Approach (Researcher 2)	4. Sample Selection and Characteristics (Researcher 1)	4. Sample Selection and Characteristics (Researcher 2)	5. Measures / Data Collection Tools (Researcher 1)	5. Measures / Data
3	3	3	3	3	3
3	3	3	2	3	2
3	2	2	1	2	2



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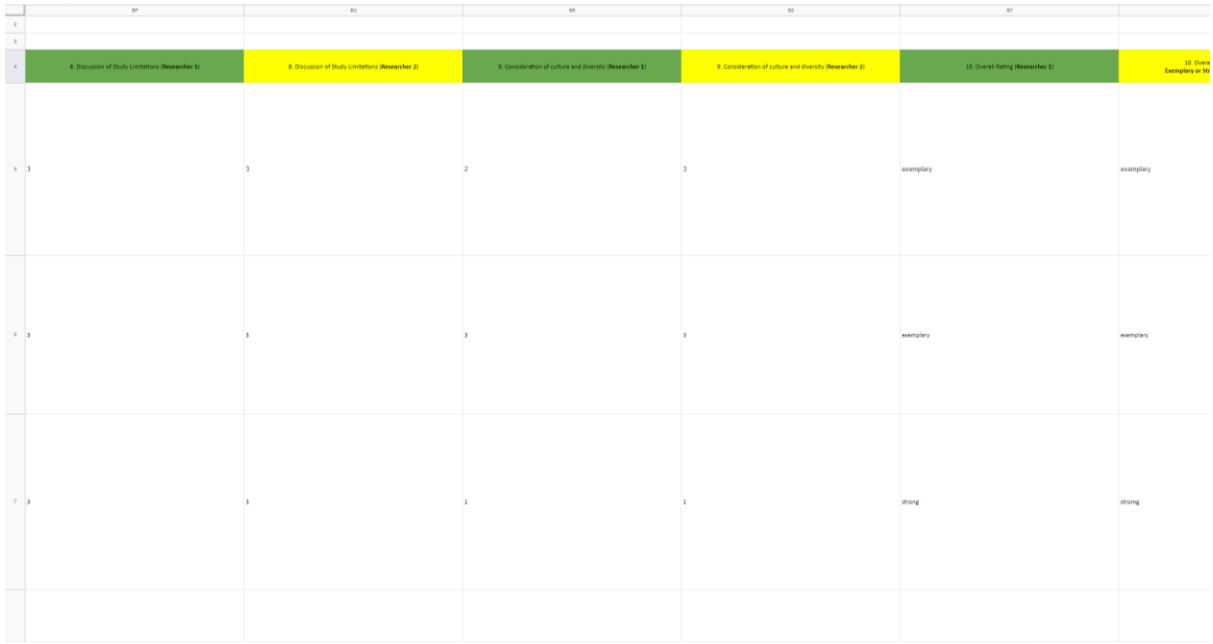
4	5. Measures / Data Collection Tools (Researcher 2)	6. Data Collection Procedures (Researcher 1)	6. Data Collection Procedures (Researcher 2)	7. Analysis of Data (Researcher 1)	7. Analysis of Data (Researcher 2)	8. Discussion of I
5	3	3	3	3	3	3
6	2	3	3	3	3	3
7	2	2	2	2	2	3



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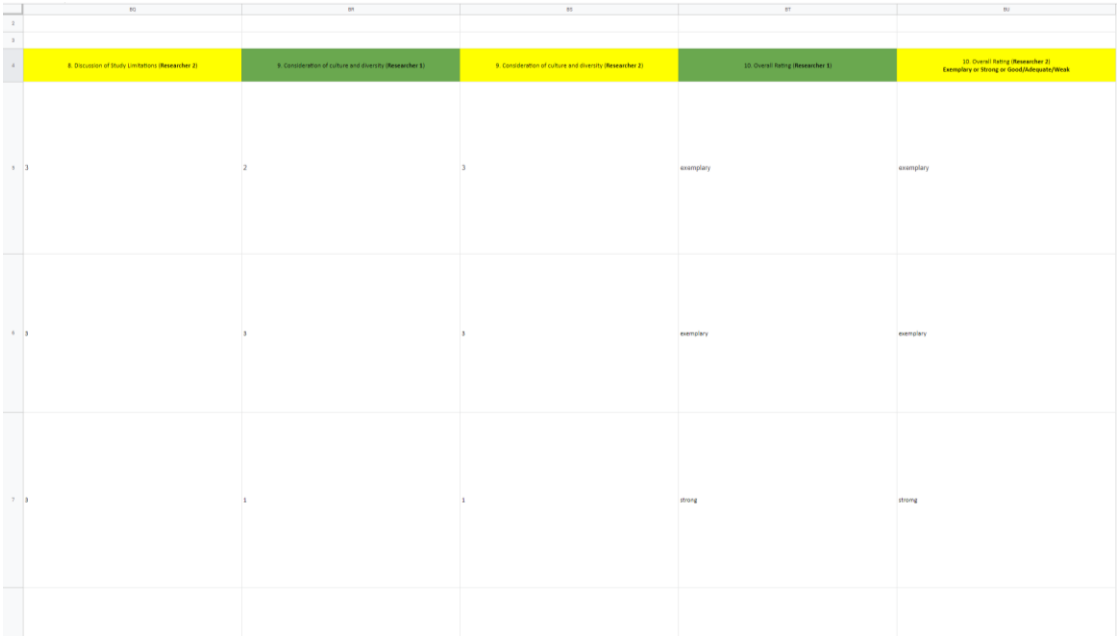
4	8. Discussion of Study Limitations (Researcher 1)	8. Discussion of Study Limitations (Researcher 2)	9. Consideration of culture and diversity (Researcher 1)	9. Consideration of culture and diversity (Researcher 2)	10. Overall Rating (Researcher 1)	10. Overa Exemplary or St
5	3	3	2	3	exemplary	exemplary
6	3	3	3	3	exemplary	exemplary
7	3	3	1	1	strong	strong



	BQ	BR	BS	BT	BU
2					
3					
4	8. Discussion of Study Limitations (Researcher 2)	9. Consideration of culture and diversity (Researcher 1)	9. Consideration of culture and diversity (Researcher 2)	10. Overall Rating (Researcher 1)	10. Overall Rating (Researcher 2) Exemplary or Strong or Good/Adequate/Weak
5	3	2	3	exemplary	exemplary
6	3	3	3	exemplary	exemplary
7	3	1	1	strong	strong

APPENDIX G

Evidence Table of Included Studies

Evidence Table

#	Author(s)		Title	Study Aim	Methods Design	Research Variables	Risk Factor(s)	Protective Factor(s)	Sample Size	Participant Characteristics	Study Location	Key Findings
1	Bolt et al.	2019	Self-compassion and compassion towards one's partner mediate the negative association between insecure attachment and relationship quality	Investigated whether self-compassion and compassion for one's partner mediated the association between attachment insecurity and relationship quality	cross-sectional	adult attachment, compassionate and uncompassionate attitude towards self and towards one's partner, and relationship quality and satisfaction	Low self-compassion		342	Mean age: 27.1; Female: 214; Male 128; White 242 70.8%; Black 27 7.9%; Asian 29 8.5%; Mixed 17 5.0%; Other 26 7.6%	UK & US	Low compassionate attitude towards self was a statistical mediator between attachment anxiety and relationship quality
2	Campbell et al.	2005	Perceptions of Conflict and Support in Romantic Relationships: The Role of Attachment Anxiety	A two-part study was conducted to test how perceptions of relationship-based conflict and support are associated with relationship satisfaction/closeness and future quality	N/A	attachment styles, perceptions, relationship satisfaction/closeness and future quality	Perceptions of relationship-based conflict		Study 1: 206 Study 2: 196 TOTAL: 402	Mean age: Part 1: M: 19.63 & F: 18.90; Part 2: M: 19.63 & F: 18.90; heterosexual couples ; Study 1: 103 males & 103 females: Study 2: 98 males and 98 females	US	More anxiously attached individuals do perceive greater conflict in their relationships; these perceptions of daily relationship-based conflicts negatively impacted the perceived satisfaction, closeness, and future of the relationship
3	Cirhinlioğlu et al.	2018	The mediating role of religiousness in the relationship between the attachment style and marital quality	Explored the mediating role of religiousness in the relationship between the attachment and marital quality	cross-sectional	Attachment style, marital quality, religiousness		Religiousness	510 married individuals	The mean age of the women was 34.63 years (df = 10.29, range = 19–78), and the mean age of the men was 38.26 years (df = 10.53, range = 22–84). Gender: 255 women and 255 men	Turkey	In women, when the anxious attachment decreases, the religiousness level increases consequently, leading to an increase in marital quality
4	Clark et al.	2010	Ways of giving benefits in marriage: Norm use, relationship satisfaction, and attachment-related variability	Examined norm use among a group of engaged, and then married, individuals across time	N/A	attachment, communal/exchange norms, relationship satisfaction	Exchange norm	Communal norm	108 dyads	the men's average age was 27.19 years; the women's average age was 25.98 years; dyads (male & female) 92% Caucasian	N/A	Among individuals high in anxiety, greater self-reported own adherence to an exchange norm at Time 1 and greater perceptions of the partner's adherence to an exchange norm at Time 2 were linked with lower satisfaction; among those high in anxiety greater self-reported adherence to a communal norm at Time 2 was linked with higher satisfaction
5	Cooper et al.	2017	Volatility in daily relationship quality	Analyzed the associations between actor and partner reports of attachment anxiety and avoidance and gender in associations with both general levels of relationship quality and volatility in daily relationship quality	N/A	Attachment orientation, Daily relationship quality, Daily conflict.	Daily Conflict		157 heterosexual couples (N = 314 individuals)	Participant ages ranging from 18 to 66 years (M = 25.87, SD =10.57); 157 women and 157 men; Participants were primarily Caucasian (68.2%) and Hispanic (13.4%), with 4.5% of participants reporting Asian or Pacific Islander, 3.8% African American, 1.3% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 7.0% mixed race/ethnicity.	US	Attachment anxiety was predictive of volatility in daily perceptions of relationship quality; when women were higher in attachment anxiety, both they and their partners had greater volatility in daily reports of relationship quality
6	Dalgleish et al.	2015	Predicting change in marital satisfaction throughout emotionally focused couple therapy	This study tested an EFT model	experimental	marital satisfaction, attachment security, relationship trust, and emotional control		Emotion-Focused Therapy	32 couples	*Partner ages ranged from 28 to 64 years (M = 44.62, SD = 7.46). The majority of partners were Caucasian (95.2%), with three individuals of minority origins.	N/A	Results of this study indicated that couples' marital satisfaction continued to increase over the course of EFT
#	Author(s)		Title	Study Aim	Methods Design	Research Variables	Risk Factor(s)	Protective Factor(s)	Sample Size	Participant Characteristics	Study Location	Key Findings
7	David & Roberts	2021	Investigating the impact of partner phubbing on romantic jealousy and relationship satisfaction: The moderating role of attachment anxiety	Investigated how partner phubbing (phone snubbing) among romantic partners impacts relationship satisfaction	experimental	partner phubbing, relationship satisfaction, romantic jelousy, attachment anxiety	Phubbing		Sample size: Study 1: 191; Study 2: 120; STudy 3: 300; TOTAL 611	Gender: Study 1: 50% M; Study 2: 53% M; Study 3: 50% M; Study 1: Caucasian: 81%; African American: 8%; Asian: 7%; Hispanic: 4%; Study 2: Caucasian: 83%; African American: 8%; Asian: 6%; Hispanic: 2%; Study 3: Caucasian: 77%; African American: 12%; Hispanic: 10%; Asian: 6%	US	Partner phubbing increases romantic jealousy and ultimately, reduces relationship satisfaction; interpersonal attachment anxiety bolsters the negative impact of partner phubbing on romantic jealousy
8	Feeney	2002	Attachment, marital interaction, and relationship satisfaction: A diary study	Explored the links among measures of attachment, spouse behavior, and marital satisfaction	cross-sectional design	attachment styles, spousal behavior, marital satisfaction	Recent small transgressions		193 couples	age of participants ranged from 20 to 61 years (M = 39.26, SD = 9.03)	Australia	One of the most important findings from this study, in terms of the prediction of marital satisfaction, concerned insecure individuals' greater reactivity to recent spouse behavior

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
13	9	Fitzpatrick & Lafontaine	2017	Attachment, trust, and satisfaction in relationships: Investigating actor, partner, and mediating effects	Assessed dyadic trust as a possible mediator of the relation between insecure romantic attachment and relationship satisfaction	cross-sectional design	attachment, trust, and relationship satisfaction	Low trust		The final sample consisted of 199 Canadian heterosexual couples (N =398 individuals) from the community.	Actual age was: M =31.02 years, SD =10.25 years; 199 heterosexual couples; 354 (83.9%) of the participants self-identified as Caucasian, 12 (3.0%) identified as Black, 20 (5.0%) identified as Asian, 8 (2.0%) identified as Latino/Hispanic, 6 (1.5%) identified as Middle Eastern, 3 (0.8%) identified as First Nations, 13 (3.3%) identified as having another racial or ethnic background, and 2 (0.5%) of the participants chose not to disclose this information	Canada	Low dyadic trust did serve as a mediator between insecure romantic attachment and low relationship satisfaction for both actor and partner effects
14	10	Gewirtz-Meydan & Finzi-Dottan	2021	Psychological abuse as a mediator between insecure attachment orientations and relationship satisfaction	Tested the mediating effect of perpetrating psychological abuse between insecure attachment orientations and relationship satisfaction among couples	Cross-sectional design	psychological abuse, insecure attachment, relationship satisfaction	Psychological abuse		128 heterosexual couples (N = 256).	Participants' average age was 34.38 years; 128 men; 128 women; Most participants were native Israelis (87%); the remaining participants were immigrants from Europe, the Unites States, Canada, South America, and South Africa (10.2%) and places defined as other (2.4%).	Israel	Both men's and women's high attachment anxiety led to perpetration of more psychological abuse and their own low relationship satisfaction
15	11	Girme et al.	2021	Attachment anxiety and the curvilinear effects of expressive suppression on individuals' and partners' outcomes	Examined whether the curvilinear effect of individuals' expressive suppression on individuals' and partners' outcomes is moderated by individuals' attachment anxiety	experimental	expressive suppression, anxious attachment, individuals' and partners' outcomes (relationship satisfaction during daily life, responsiveness and discussion success, and managing relationship-thr	Expressive suppression		Study 1: 146 Study 2: 200 Study 3: 201 TOTAL: 547	Study 1: NZ European: 82.1% Non-NZ European: 9% Asian 2.1% Maori: 0.7% Pacific Islander: 0.7% Other/multi: .5% Study 2: NZ European: 59.2% Non-NZ European: 10.2% Asian: 10.2% Maori: 5.6% Indian: 4.6% Pacific Islander: 2% Other/multi: 8.2% Study 3: Caucasian: 53.7% Asian: 26.4%	New Zealand	Individuals' greater expressive suppression is associated with lower relationship satisfaction during daily life

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
16	12	Gou & Woodin	2017	Relationship dissatisfaction as a mediator for the link between attachment insecurity and psychological aggression over the transition to parenthood	Investigated longitudinal links between attachment insecurity, relationship dissatisfaction, and psychological IPV	longitudinal	attachment styles, psychological IPV, relationship dissatisfaction	Relationship dissatisfaction		98 couples; At time two (one year postnatal follow-up), 75 men and 85 women participated, and at Time 3 (two years postnatal follow-up), 69 men and 71 women participated	Mean age: T1: 32.03; T2: 33.92; T3: 34.71; heterosexual couples; T1: Caucasian: 87; Asian: 4; First Nations: 3; Latino: 1; Other: 3; T2: Caucasian: 66; Asian: 4; First Nations: 2; Latino: 1; Other: 2 T3: Caucasian: 60; Asian: 4; First Nations: 3; Latino: 0; Other: 2	N/A	Specifically, men and women who were more anxiously attached prenatally were less satisfied with their relationships at one year postpartum, and subsequently used psychological aggression against their partners more frequently at two years postpartum
17	**#**	**Author(s)**		**Title**	**Study Aim**	**Methods Design**	**Research Variables**	**Risk Factor(s)**	**Protective Factor(s)**	**Sample Size**	**Participant Characteristics**	**Study Location**	**Key Findings**
18	13	Guzmán-González et al.	2020	Romantic attachment, unforgiveness and relationship satisfaction in couples: A dyadic mediation analysis	Explored the associations between romantic attachment and relationship satisfaction as mediated by unforgiveness (i.e., avoidance and revenge motivations)	Cross-sectional design	Romantic attachment, relationship satisfaction, unforgivenes	Unforgiveness		104 couples	Mean: 37.26 104 women & 104 men 104 Chilean couples	Chile	Indirectly, higher actor levels of attachment anxiety were linked to greater revenge motivations, and thus to lower relationship satisfaction
19	14	Hadden et al.	2014	Relationship duration moderates associations between attachment and relationship quality: Meta-analytic support for the temporal adult romantic attachment model.	Assessed the extent to which the associations between insecure attachment dimensions and relationship satisfaction are moderated by relationship duration	meta-analysis	Insecure attachment (anxious or avoidant), relationship duration, relationship satisfaction or commitment	Relationship duration		The final overall sample consisted of 57 independent effect sizes from a total of 14,340 people	5,226 men (36%), 6,859 women (48%), and 2,255 people (16%) from studies in which gender was unreported (Sample sizes: median = 180.0, M = 251.6, SD = 196.0).	N/A	The negative associations between insecure attachment dimensions (anxious and avoidant) and relationship satisfaction were more negative in samples with longer average relationship durations
20	15	Jarnecke & South	2013	Attachment orientations as mediators in the intergenerational transmission of marital satisfaction	Examined the role of parent– child attachment orientations and romantic relationship attachment orientations as mediators in the intergenerational transmission of marital satisfaction	N/A	own marital satisfaction, attachment orientations to romantic partners, attachment orientations to rearing parents, and perceptions of parents' marital satisfaction		Perceptions of parents' marital satisfaction	a final sample of 100 couples (99 men, 100 women) was analyzed.	Mean age for husbands was 27.79 years; Mean age for wives was 26.88 years; 99 men and 100 women 83.8% of husbands were Caucasian, 7.1% were Asian, 3.0% were Latin/Hispanic, 1.0% were Native American, and the remaining 4.0% classified themselves as "Multiracial" or "Other." Seventy percent of wives were Caucasian, 2% were African American, 11% were Asian, 2% were Latin/Hispanic, and 7%	US	There was an association between perceptions of parents' marital satisfaction and husbands' marital satisfaction

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
21	16	Kimmes et al.	2015	The role of pessimistic attributions in the association between anxious attachment and relationship satisfaction	Examined the relationships among pessimistic attributions, anxious attachment, and relationship satisfaction	longitudinal data	anxious attachment, pessimistic attributions, marital satisfaction	Pessimistic attributions		767 married couples	The wives in the present sample were age 33.10 years (SD =4.69), and the husbands were 35.85 (SD =5.14); German participants	Germany	Higher levels of anxious attachment were related to higher levels of their own pessimistic attributions; higher levels of pessimistic attributions predicted lower levels of relationship satisfaction
22	17	Kohn et al.	2012	Changes in Marital Satisfaction Across the Transition to Parenthood: The Role of Adult Attachment Orientations	Investigated marital satisfaction trajectories across the first 2 years of parenthood	longitudinal	Relationship satisfaction., Attachment orientations, Perceived social support available from partner., Negative social exchange received, Family demand and work–family conflict, Work–family conflict	Lack of perceived support and perceived negative behaviors	Perceived support & less perceived negative behaviors	We recruited 192 couples (at Time 1) who lived in a southwestern U.S. city. There were 165 couples at Time 2, 153 couples at Time 3, 151 couples at Time 4, and 137 couples at Time 5 (24 months after childbirth). Fifty-five couples dropped out during the study.	At Time 1, the mean ages of women and men were 26.7 (SD = 4.1) and 28.4 (SD = 4.4) years, respectively; 96 women and 96 men at the beginning; 55 couples dropped out; Ethnic backgrounds were Caucasian (82%), Asian (9%), and Hispanic (9%).	US	Perceived support moderated the link between attachment anxiety and satisfaction among actors
23	18	Kulibert et al.	2019	Attached at the lips: The influence of romantic kissing motives and romantic attachment styles on relationship satisfaction	To understand how romantic kissing impacts romantic relationship functioning	N/A	romantic kissing motives, romantic attachment styles, and relationship satisfaction	Goal attainment/insecurity motives		286 adults	ranging in age from 18 years to 70 years ; 119 men and 167 women; 76.10% Caucasian	US	Results demonstrated a negative relationship between goal attainment/insecurity motives and relationship satisfaction
24	**#**	**Author(s)**		**Title**	**Study Aim**	**Methods Design**	**Research Variables**	**Risk Factor(s)**	**Protective Factor(s)**	**Sample Size**	**Participant Characteristics**	**Study Location**	**Key Findings**
25	19	Kuncewicz et al.	2021	A combination of insecure attachment patterns in a relationship and its quality: The role of relationship length	Examined the role of relationship length in predicting the effects of a combination of insecure attachment patterns on different aspects of its quality	cross-sectional	attachment patterns, relationship length, relationship quality, couples	Anxious-avoidant combination and eroding effect of relationship length	Anxious-anxious combination and buffering effect of relationship length	200 couples - 400 participants	Ages from 21 to 45 (M ¼ 29.4 years; SD ¼ 5.40) 200 women and 200 men; All the participants were of Polish nationality and lived in Poland.	Poland	Only in longer relationships, men demonstrated less satisfaction and tenderness when they were higher in avoidance and their female partners were higher in anxiety; only in longer relationships, women showed less satisfaction and tenderness when they were higher in anxiety and their male partners were higher in avoidance; in longer ones, anxious men in relationships with their anxious partners experienced relatively less aggressive and devaluing communications and more physical and emotional closeness

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
26	20	Li et al.	2020	Romantic attachment orientations, financial behaviors, and life outcomes among young adults: A mediating analysis of a college cohort	Examined the associations between romantic attachment orientations and young adults' life outcomes (i.e., financial satisfaction, life satisfaction, and relationship satisfaction)	cross-sectional	Attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance, own financial behaviors, perceived partners' financial behaviors, financial satisfactions, life satisfaction, relationship satisfaction	Perceived partner's financial behavior		635	Mean age: 27.42 Female: 65% Male:35% 67.8% were non-Hispanic White, 15.9% were Hispanic/Latino American, 9.1% were Asian American, 2.2% were African American, and 5.0% were in another race/ethnic group	US	High attachment anxiety was associated with low relationship satisfaction via perceived partners' less responsible financial behavior
27	21	Maas et al.	2018	A dyadic approach to pornography use and relationship satisfaction among heterosexual couples: The role of pornography acceptance and anxious attachment	Examine moderators in the association between pornography use and relationship satisfaction	cross-sectional	Anxious attachment, relationship satisfaction, pornography use/acceptance	Pornography use in anxious women	pornography use in anxious men	6,626 individuals	The average age of the sample was 32.78 years (SD = 6.79) for males and 30.75 years (SD = 7.98) for females. The largest racial group was White (male: 74.6%; female: 75.8%), followed by Asian (male: 7.3%; female: 7.1%), Black (male: 5.3%; female: 5.9%), and Hispanic (male: 4.7%; female: 4.8%) participants.	US	Women who are more anxiously attached, more pornography use is associated with lower relationship satisfaction; men who are more anxiously attached, more pornography use is associated with higher relationship satisfaction
28	22	Makinen & Johnson	2006	Resolving attachment injuries in couples using emotionally focused therapy: Steps toward forgiveness and reconciliation	Aimed to verify that the attachment injury resolution model described in this article discriminates resolved from nonresolved couples	quasi-experimental	attachment styles, attachment injury, marital satisfacitons, interpersonal trust,		Emotion-Focused Therapy	24 couples	Their ages ranged from 25 to 52 years (M 39.79 years, SD 7.87); the majority of couples were Caucasian with 1 East Indian and 1 couple of European descent.	Canada	For the resolved couples, both the injured and offending partners' dyadic adjustment scores significantly increased from moderately distressed to the nondistressed range; similarly, resolved couples made significant gains in their reported level of forgiveness, whereas no change was noted for the nonresolved couples
29	23	Moser et al.	2018	The impact of blamer-softening on romantic attachment in Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy	Examined intercept and slope discontinuities in softened couples' trajectories of change in relationship satisfaction and relationship-specific attachment over the course of therapy	longitudinal	attachment styles (anxious and avoidant), relationship satisfaction, blamer softening event		Emotion-Focused Therapy	32 couples	The mean age of women and men was 44.1 (SD = 6.7) and 45.3 (SD = 8.2), respectively. White (93.8%)	Canada	Softened couples reported a significant increase in relationship satisfaction and a significant decrease in attachment avoidance at the softening session; although softened couples displayed an initial increase in relationship-specific attachment anxiety at the softening session, their scores significantly decreased across post-softening sessions

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
30	24	Naud et al.	2013	How attachment and excessive self-sacrificing depressive dynamics are related to couple relationship satisfaction over time	Examined within a dyadic perspective how romantic attachment and depressive-masochistic personality (DMP) predicted initial and long-term relationship satisfaction	longitudinal	romantic attachment, personality organization, and relationship satisfaction questionnaires.	DMP		299 married or cohabiting heterosexual French–Canadian couples residing in Quebec	Mean age was 28 (SD 3.8) for women and 30 (SD 5.5) for men. French–Canadian couples residing in Quebec	Quebec	The actor's DMP had a direct negative relation with relationship satisfaction and significantly added to the explained variance after controlling for attachment insecurities
31	**#**	**Author(s)**		**Title**	**Study Aim**	**Methods Design**	**Research Variables**	**Risk Factor(s)**	**Protective Factor(s)**	**Sample Size**	**Participant Characteristics**	**Study Location**	**Key Findings**
32	25	Overall et al.	2014	Attachment anxiety and reactions to relationship threat: The benefits and costs of inducing guilt in romantic partners	Tested whether individuals high in attachment anxiety react to relationship threats in ways that can help them feel secure and satisfied in their relationship	longitudinal	Attachment anxiety, reactions, relationship satisfaction		Successful partner guilt	Study 1: 156; Study 2: 360; TOTAL: 516	Gender: Study 1: 78 M & 78 F; Study 2: 180 M and 180 F; Mean age: Study 1: 22.44 ; Study 2: 23.07	New Zealand	Partner's guilt was associated with more positive outcomes for intimates high versus low in attachment anxiety
33	26	Park et al.	2019	Saying "thank you": Partners' expressions of gratitude protect relationship satisfaction and commitment from the harmful effects of attachment insecurity	Examined whether receiving gratitude expressions from a romantic partner can buffer insecurely attached individuals from experiencing low relationship satisfaction and commitment	meta-analysis	attachment avoidance, attachment anxiety, gratitude expression, relationship satisfaction and comittment		Perceived expressed gratitude	Study 1: N= 104; Study 2: N=290; Study 3&4: 94 couples	Study 1: mean age 38.8; Study 2: mean age 33.1; Study 3&4: mean age23.3; Study 1: 41 men & 63 women; Study 2: 117 men & 171 women & 1 trans & 1 unidentified; Study 1: 84 White; 8 Asian; 7 Black; 7 Latin; 3 other; Study 2: 206 Western Euro; 36 Eastern Euro; 10 Asian; 9 Hispanic; 9 SOuth American; 6 Caribbean; 4 Native American; 4 Middle Eastern; 3 African; 16 other;	N/A	Perceiving high levels of partner's gratitude expression also attenuated the negative effects of attachment anxiety on daily satisfaction
34	27	Pollard et al.	2014	Mutual influences in adult romantic attachment, religious coping, and marital adjustment	Examined associations among romantic attachment anxiety and avoidance, positive and negative religious coping, and marital adjustment	cross-sectional	romantic attachment anxiety and avoidance, positive and negative religious coping, and marital adjustment	Negative religious coping		81 heterosexual couples	The mean age for husbands was 38.5 years (SD 5.6; range: 26 –51): the mean age for wives was 36.6 (SD 5.2; range: 26 –50); The majority of participants (127) identified themselves as White/European American. Fourteen self-identified as Hispanic/Latino/Mexican American, 13 as African American, 3 as Asian, and 3 as Bi-/Multiracial.	US	High attachment anxiety was associated with more negative religious coping; partner attachment anxiety appears to be more detrimental to marital adjustment when negative religious coping is low
35					Examined if and to								

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
35	28	Roels & Janssen,	2021	Attachment orientations, sexual behavior, and relationship satisfaction in young, mixed-sex couples: A dyadic approach	Examined if and to what degree attachment orientations of both partners moderate the link between different behavioral characteristics of the sexual relationship and relationship satisfaction in the early stages of romantic attachment	N/A	attachment anxiety and avoidance, a range of intimate and sexual couple behaviors, and relationship satisfaction.		Higher frequencies of sexual behavior	126 young, mixed-sex couples	Female-male dyads; N=252; age M = 23.29 years, SD = 2.40); 98% White	Europe	Found a significant interaction between sexual behavior and actor anxious attachment, indicating a positive effect of sexual behavior on relationship satisfaction for more anxiously attached individuals
36	29	Saavedra et al.	2010	Clarifying links between attachment and relationship quality: Hostile conflict and mindfulness as moderators	Examined self-reported hostile conflict and mindfulness as potential moderators of the links between attachment and relationship quality over time	longitudinal	hostile conflict, mindfulness, attachment styles, relationship satisfaction	Hostile conflict	Mindfulness	1702	The mean age was 28.5 years (SD: 9.3); 79% Women; White (82%) with 3% African American, 4% Latino, and 5% Asian"	US	Hostile conflict might serve to intensify the negative associations between attachment anxiety and satisfaction specifically when predicting current relationship satisfaction; high levels of mindfulness might serve to buffer the associations between attachment anxiety and relationship instability
37	30	Sisi et al.	2021	Attachment styles, self-esteem, flexible goal adjustment, and intimate relationship satisfaction in women: A moderated mediation model	Examined the psychological mechanism underlying the relationship between attachment style and intimate relationship satisfaction in women	cross-sectional research design	Attachment styles, relationship satisfaction, self-esteem, flexible goal adjustment (FGA)		Self-esteem	233 women	Mean age: 28.16 years; SD: 3.75; Range: 21–38 years; only female participants	China	Self-esteem played a mediating role between attachment and satisfaction in romantic relationship
38	**#**	**Author(s)**		**Title**	**Study Aim**	**Methods Design**	**Research Variables**	**Risk Factor(s)**	**Protective Factor(s)**	**Sample Size**	**Participant Characteristics**	**Study Location**	**Key Findings**
39	31	Vess, M.	2012	Warm Thoughts: Attachment Anxiety and Sensitivity to Temperature Cues	Tested the hypothesis that attachment anxiety positively predicts sensitivity to temperature cues	N/A	attachment anxiety, relationship satisfaction, temperature		Exposure to warm temperature cues	Study 1: 56 individuals Study 2: 112 TOTAL 168	Study 1: mean age = 33.50 years, SD = 11.09 years; Study 2: mean age = 35.39 years, SD = 12.55 years; Study 1: 32 females and 24 males; Study 2: 58 females and 54 males	US	Individuals with high levels of attachment anxiety desire physical warmth soon after reflecting on a distressing event; individuals with high levels of attachment anxiety, exposure to warm-temperature cues increases their current relationship satisfaction rating
40	32	Wagner et al.	2020	Touch me just enough: The intersection of adult attachment, intimate touch, and marital satisfaction	To understand how satisfaction with intimate touch in marriage is associated with adult attachment within an actor–partner inter-dependence framework	cross-sectional	Adult attachment (insecure and avoidant), intimate touch, and marital satisfaction	Touch dissatisfaction	Touch satisfaction	184 different-sex couples	On average, husbands were 34.05 years old and wives were 32.50 years old; Within couples, 83.2% of wives and 81.1% of husbands were Caucasian.	US	Husbands with greater attachment anxiety were less satisfied with touch, except when engagement in routine affection was relatively high; the results also revealed a positive association between touch satisfaction and marital quality
41	33	Wiebe et al.	2017	Two-year follow-up outcomes in emotionally focused couple therapy: An investigation of relationship satisfaction and attachment trajectories	Couples' relationship satisfaction and relationship-specific attachment will be modelled from pre therapy through post-therapy and four follow-up time points	longiudinal	relationship satisfaction; attachment styles (anxious and avoidant); EFT; secure base behaviors		Emotion-Focused Therapy	initial sample size of 32 couples; A total of 18 couples attended the final session at the 2 year time point	Participants were aged on average 44.1 (SD = 6.7) and 45.3 (SD = 8.2), for women and men respectively; 32 heterosexual couples; majority of participants identified as Caucasian (95.2%, n = 60)	N/A	Results confirmed a significant growth pattern demonstrating increases in relationship satisfaction and secure base behavior and decreases in relationship-specific attachment anxiety over the course of therapy and across follow-up at a decelerated rate

APPENDIX H

IRB Non-Human Subjects Notification Form

PEPPERDINE IRB NON-HUMAN SUBJECTS NOTIFICATION FORM FOR RESEARCH THAT DOES NOT INVOLVE HUMAN SUBJECTS

Investigator Name: Laura Mendez
Status (Check One): ☐ Faculty ☒ Graduate Student ☐ Undergraduate Student
Faculty Chair (if applicable): Dr. Amy Tuttle Guerrero
Proposal Research Title: A Systematic Review of Anxious Attachment and Relationship Satisfaction

Per Pepperdine University Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines all proposed research that does not involve direct contact with human subjects requires this notification form (with signatures) and an abstract or draft of the research project to be submitted for review.

Research that requires IRB review must meet the definition of human subject's research. The code of federal regulations provides the following definitions:

- **For the purposes of the IRB, research is defined as a systematic investigation designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge.**
- **Human subject means a living individual about whom an investigator (whether professional or graduate student) conducting research obtains**

  (1) Data through intervention or interaction with the individual, or
  (2) Identifiable private information.

If your research does not involve the participation of human subjects **and** you are not using/collecting any data that has been obtained from individual participants, your research is not subject to IRB review and approval but does require the submission and filing of this non-human subjects notification form in the IRB office.

Please submit 1) this completed notification form along with 2) either a one page abstract (outlining the study's research design and methodology) or a draft of your research project (does not need to be finalized) by email to andrea.quintero@pepperdine.edu and copy gpsirb@pepperdine.edu.

We may reach out with clarification questions as needed; otherwise, the IRB office will issue a confirmation of non-human subjects verification back to your email within a few days.

I verify that this proposed research does not involve the use of human subjects, either directly or indirectly.

Laura Mendez — 12/18/2022
Principal Investigator(s)/Student Signature — Date

PhD, LMFT — 12/19/2022
Faculty Chairperson Signature — Date

Revised 09/03/2020