

“Helping You, Help Me!” Poor Support Provision in Highly Anxious Individuals and Partner's Expressive Suppression

**by
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Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

in the
Department of Psychology
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
Summer 2023

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Abstract

Although people with higher attachment anxiety desire to be supportive partners, they tend to provide lower-quality support. Highly anxious partners struggle to provide effective support because when individuals express negative emotions when seeking support, it tends to trigger highly anxious partners' concerns about their relational value and thus undermine their support provision. How might individuals seek support in order to encourage highly anxious partners to provide better support? This study utilized an observational study of dyads (N = 100 mixed-sex couples) and examined support seekers' expressive suppression (i.e., concealing negative emotions) as a means to reduce the relational threat that highly anxious support providers typically experience during challenging support-relevant situations and elicit better support provision from highly anxious support providers. The results demonstrated that while support seekers with highly anxious partners engaged in marginally more expressive suppression, such engagement did not yield positive effects on highly anxious providers' felt value, support provision, or relationship satisfaction and commitment in the following 6 months. The results illustrate that while expressive suppression may be a commonly used emotion regulation strategy among individuals with highly anxious partners, it may not yield positive effects.

Keywords: attachment anxiety; expressive suppression; support provision; support seeking

Acknowledgements

Thank you to my supervisor, Dr. Yuthika Girme. You have been the greatest inspiration and a pillar of knowledge and guidance over the past 2 years. I am appreciative of your time, honesty, and constructive feedback, all of which have helped me grow as a researcher. I am eternally grateful for the constant support and kindness you have given me throughout my graduate career and transition.

Thank you to my committee member, Dr. Marlene Moretti, for your encouragement and greatly insightful feedback on my thesis work. Thank you to my external examiner, Dr. Bonnie Le, for the great questions and insights on my thesis and potential future questions.

Thank you to my dear friends, in and out of SFU, for all of your emotional and practical support, and sharing, as well as your willingness to be there for me.

Thank you to my partner and family for always standing behind and supporting me whenever needed. I would not be here without all of you.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Social support is one of the great benefits of being in an intimate relationship. Receiving support from partners buffers individuals from stressful circumstances, enhances relationship resilience in difficult times for both partners, and helps individuals achieve personal goals and contribute to personal growth (Berli et al., 2018; Bolger & Eckenrode, 1991; Conger et al., 1999; Feeney & Collins, 2015; Feeney et al., 2014). Unfortunately, providing support can at times be difficult and challenging. One individual characteristic that has been documented to hinder responsive support provision is attachment anxiety (Collins & Feeney, 2000; Feeney et al., 2013). Specifically, people with higher attachment anxiety tend to provide more negative support, which can undermine their and their partners' ability to have a healthy and stable relationship (Collins & Feeney, 2000; Shaver et al., 2019). Growing evidence suggests that when individuals seek support, highly anxious partners perceive the support seekers' emotions as threatening their relational value, which prompts highly anxious partners to react destructively and provide less effective support to the individual in need of comfort or help (Jayamaha et al., 2017; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005; Millings & Walsh, 2009).

One possible way that *support seekers* with highly anxious partners might be able to help highly anxious partners feel comfortable and valued in social support contexts, and thus facilitate more supportive responses, is by engaging in expressive suppression. Expressive suppression involves consciously inhibiting one's outward expression of negative emotions (Gross, 1998). Several studies have demonstrated that muting emotional expressions can be costly for personal and interpersonal well-being (Gross & John, 2003; Sasaki et al., 2021; for meta-analytic reviews see Aldao et al., 2010; Chervonsky & Hunt, 2017). However, the costs associated with expressive suppression may be context-dependent given that other studies provide evidence that expressive suppression is an important regulation strategy or social lubricant for facilitating and maintaining social connections (English et al., 2017; Girme et al., 2021; Greenaway & Kalokerinos, 2017). Thus, given that *support seekers'* expression of negative emotions poses a threat to highly anxious support providers' relational value, this study examined whether *support seekers'* expressive suppression may reduce highly anxious providers' relational threat and be more likely to encourage support behaviors. I also examined whether *support seekers'* expressive suppression may help

highly anxious providers feel more satisfied and committed in their relationships over time. I tested this question using existing data from a couples' behavioral observational study that involved video-recorded discussions about each couple member's personal goals and monthly follow-ups across the subsequent 6 months.

1.1. Attachment Anxiety and Relational Threat

According to attachment theory, people high in attachment anxiety tend to have a history of receiving inconsistent care from caregivers during childhood (Bowlby, 1969; Cassidy & Berlin, 1994; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016). Given this developmental history, individuals high in anxious attachment crave closeness with their attachment figures, yet constantly doubt their value to the attachment figures and worry whether their partners truly love and care for them (Collins & Read, 1990; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016). As a result, highly anxious individuals tend to be hypervigilant and hyperreactive to cues of rejection from their romantic partners (Collins & Read, 1990; Campbell & Marshall, 2011; Fraley et al., 2006; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). For example, highly anxious individuals tend to react more destructively during attachment-threatening situations (Gaines Jr. et al., 1997; Winterheld, 2016). Highly anxious individuals also engage in more intense expressions of negative emotion and prolonged rumination about stressful events (Campbell et al., 2005; Gaines Jr. et al., 1997; Mikulincer & Florian, 1998; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003; Winterheld, 2016). In fact, these intense and exaggerated emotional and behavioral reactions are enacted to evoke responses from partners that communicate their love and commitment (Jayamaha et al., 2016; Overall et al., 2014).

Besides failing to behave constructively in situations involving a more direct threat to the relationship such as relationship conflict, highly anxious people also react more negatively in situations where the partner's distress is not relationship-relevant (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). During support-relevant interactions where individuals are in need, highly anxious partners tend to fail to provide effective support (Collins & Feeney, 2000; Feeney & Collins, 2001; Kane et al., 2007). Instead, highly anxious support providers tend to engage in more negative support provisions such as blaming, dismissing, or criticizing the support (Millings & Walsh, 2009). This, however, does not mean that highly anxious partners are not motivated to provide effective support. On the contrary, highly anxious partners acknowledge that successful provision of support would bring about many advantages. For example, highly anxious partners want to

provide support as a means to connect with their partners, gain acceptance or get a reward, and avoid negative consequences (Feeney et al., 2013; Feeney & Collins, 2003). Taken together, this failure to react constructively during support-relevant interactions ironically contradicts the yearning need of highly anxious people to obtain acceptance from their partners and value in the relationship (Overall & Simpson, 2013).

While highly anxious people are motivated to provide good support, their underlying reasons to do so tend to be self-oriented as they desire to be seen as good partners (to uphold their relational value) and to avoid rejection (Feeney et al., 2013; Feeney & Collins, 2003). Thus, during support interactions, support seekers' expression of negative emotions or distress could be a direct threat to the highly anxious support providers' concerns regarding their relational value (Jayamaha et al., 2017). In other words, highly anxious people interpret the relationship-irrelevant distress from support seekers as a signal of dissatisfaction that makes more anxious support providers feel underappreciated and unvalued, activating their attachment concerns (Jayamaha et al., 2017; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). In addition, Feeney and colleagues (2013) also showed that some of the motivations of highly anxious support providers for providing insufficient support include perceiving support seekers as being unreceptive and unappreciative of the help. This is also consistent with previous work showing that the highly anxious support providers are overwhelmed with support seekers' attempts to garner support as highly anxious people lack the ability to differentiate between others' and their own welfare, which then hinders them from reacting with functional empathy (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005; Mikulincer & Horesh, 1999). Indeed, highly anxious peoples' hyper-activating strategies fixate their focus on their personal threats, which prevents more anxious support providers from altruistically attending to support seekers' needs (Girme et al., 2021; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). Supporting this perspective, when support seekers report low levels of distress, highly anxious support providers engage in less negative support behaviors than typical (Jayamaha et al., 2017).

1.2. The Buffering Effect of Support Seekers' Expressive Suppression for Highly Anxious Individuals

Although highly anxious people tend to be reactive during threatening or challenging situations, a growing body of work demonstrates that individuals with highly anxious partners can play an active role in *buffering* the negativity of attachment

insecurity (see Simpson & Overall, 2014 for an overview on partner buffering). While extant research has predominately focused on buffering acts that involve positive emotions and behavior (e.g., emotional support, commitment, and affection; Kim et al., 2018; Lemay & Dudley, 2011; Simpson et al., 2007; Tran & Simpson, 2009), minimizing negative emotions may also be highly relevant for managing highly anxious partners' concerns (Kim et al., 2018; Lemay & Dudley, 2011; Simpson et al., 2007; Tran & Simpson, 2009). One regulation strategy that may be helpful when dealing with highly anxious partners is expressive suppression – the inhibition of outward expressions of negative emotions (Gross, 1998). On the one hand, studies have demonstrated a variety of social and interpersonal costs of expressive emotion suppression. For example, research shows that those who engage in expressive suppression tend to have lower social satisfaction, undermined conflict resolution, and lower relationship closeness as well as lower relationship satisfaction (Butler et al., 2001; Gross & John, 2003; Parkinson et al., 2016; Sasaki et al., 2021; Thomson et al., 2018; for meta-analytic reviews see Aldao et al., 2010; Chervonsky & Hunt, 2017).

On the other hand, there is also evidence that expressive suppression can be important for fostering better connections and relationships. Indeed, the costs associated with expressive suppression often depend on individual and contextual factors, including the goal or purpose of using expressive emotion suppression or how much expressive suppression is employed (Consedine et al., 2002; Girme et al., 2021; Greenaway & Kalokerinos, 2017; Matsumoto, 2006). Demonstrating the benefits of expression suppression, when employed to avoid conflict expression suppression can help facilitate social connection (English et al., 2017). Suppressing emotionally expressive behaviors for the sake of partners also shows positive outcomes. Le and Impett (2013) found that for people who are higher in interdependence (prioritize maintaining social harmony over one's interests), suppressing negative emotions during sacrifice for their partners feels more authentic and thus yields higher personal and relationship well-being. Similarly, for those who are primed with self-transcendent orientation (the tendency to focus on other people and the world more than one's own needs), engagement in expressive emotion suppression results in lower negative emotions as well as higher perceived relational quality (Kao et al., 2017). When highly anxious individuals suppress their (typically heightened) negativity, their partners felt more satisfied in the relationship and were

more likely to perceive the highly anxious partner as supportive and responsive to their needs (Girme et al., 2021).

Expressive suppression can be a particularly helpful regulation strategy for support seekers to use during support interaction contexts with highly anxious support providers. Specifically, given that support seekers' personal distress can be interpreted by highly anxious support providers as a threat to their relational value, which leads to them providing less responsive support (Jayamaha et al., 2017), support seekers with highly anxious partners who engage in expressive suppression may avoid these relational threats. Providing some support for this idea, individuals are more likely to engage in expressive suppression when they have highly anxious partners (Brandão et al., 2020). While this could mean that highly anxious people end up with partners who generally engage in more expressive suppression, there is also a possibility that highly anxious people have partners who have learned to engage in expressive suppression as a way to regulate the highly anxious person. Taken together, support seekers who have highly anxious partners may engage in expressive suppression to reduce their outward display of distress when seeking support, creating a more secure and comfortable situation for highly anxious support providers to be supportive.

1.3. Current Research

Support seekers' distress during support-relevant discussions tends to threaten highly anxious support providers and inhibit them from providing good support (Campbell et al., 2005; Jayamaha et al., 2017; Winterheld, 2016). However, little is known about what support seekers might do to encourage highly anxious support providers to provide better support. In this study, I examined if (RQ 1) support seekers are more likely to engage in expressive suppression if they have highly anxious partners, and (RQ 2) whether support seekers' expressive suppression may help highly anxious support providers feel more valued/appreciated and provide greater support during support-relevant discussions and feel more satisfied and committed in their relationship over time (see Figure 1).

Chapter 2. Method

2.1. Participants

Participants were 100 mixed-sex couples¹. The original target sample size of 100 couples was determined to ensure adequate power to detect the typical size of dyadic effects shown in prior research at the time the study was designed (Kenny et al., 2006). Participants responded to advertising at a city-based university in New Zealand. Participants were paid NZ\$210 for their participation in the laboratory session and follow-up surveys. Recruited couples were involved in long-term ($M = 3.28$ years, $SD = 4.16$) and committed (13% married, 36% cohabiting, 47% serious dating) relationships. On average, participants were 22.64 years old ($SD = 6.51$). Participants identified as NZ European (59.2%), Non-NZ European (10.2%), Asian (10.2%), Maori (5.6%), Indian (4.6%), Pacific Islander (2%), and other ethnicities, including multiracial identities (8.2%).

¹ This dataset has previously been used to examine the curvilinear effects of expressive suppression from highly anxious support providers (Girme et al., 2021, Study 2); attachment avoidance and perception of received support (Girme et al., 2015, Study 2); invisible support and autonomy (Girme et al., 2019); the effect of support recipients' expressive suppression on recipients (Low et al., 2017, Study 2); and the relational value in support provision of highly anxious support providers (Jayamaha et al., 2017, Study 2). However, the effect of support seekers' expressive suppression on highly anxious support providers has not been examined. Thus, this project will test the novel hypotheses that have not been tested before.

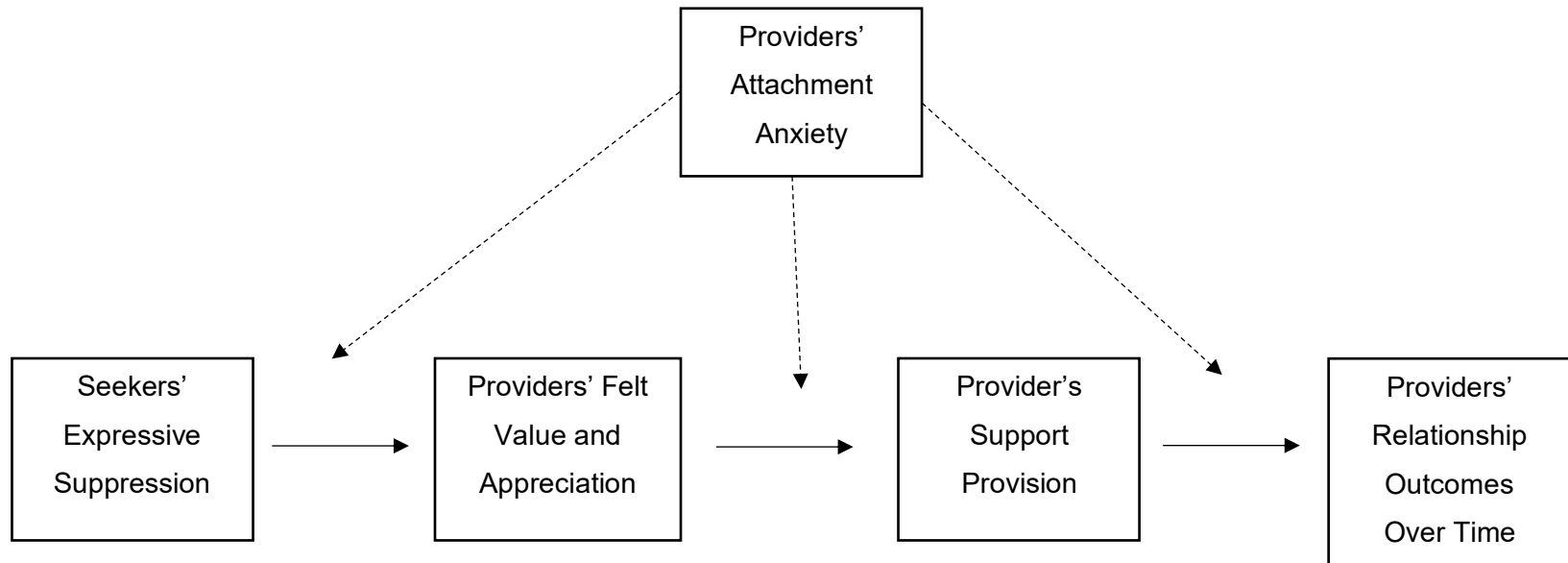


Figure 1. An illustration of the hypothesized model showing the effect of seekers' expressive suppression and providers' attachment anxiety on support providers' felt value, support provision, and relationship outcomes over time.

2.2. Procedure and Materials

Participants first completed a baseline questionnaire to assess their demographic details, attachment orientation, relationship satisfaction, and commitment. Participants were then asked to identify and rank order three personal goals, which they were told might be chosen later as topics to discuss with their partners. The top-ranked goal that was not shared between couple members was chosen for discussion. Each couple was instructed to discuss the issue in their usual manner and engaged in two 7-minute discussions about each of the partner's chosen goals. In half of the couples, the woman-identified partner discussed their goals first, and in the other half, the man-identified partner took the first turn. Following each discussion, participants completed a post-discussion survey about the discussion they just had. Support seekers were asked to report on their expressive suppression. Support providers reported on felt value/appreciation and provided practical and emotional support. Following the discussion in the lab and baseline measures, participants were asked to fill out a follow-up questionnaire measuring relationship satisfaction and commitment once every month for the following 6 months.

Attachment Orientation. Participants completed the Adult Attachment Orientation Scale (Simpson et al., 1996) which included 9 items measuring attachment anxiety (example item included "I often worry that my romantic partners don't really love me") and 8 items measuring attachment avoidance (example item included "I don't like my romantic partners getting too close to me"; 1 = *Strongly disagree*, 7 = *Strongly agree*)

Baseline Relationship Satisfaction. Participants were asked to complete the validated Global Investment Model scale assessing relationship satisfaction (Rusbult et al., 1998). Items included "I feel satisfied with our relationship," "Our relationship is close to ideal," "Our relationship makes me very happy," "Our relationship is much better than others' relationships," and "Our relationship does a good job of fulfilling my needs for intimacy, companionship, etc." (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 7 = *Strongly agree*).

Baseline Relationship Commitment. Participants also completed the baseline commitment scale. Items included "I want our relationship to last a very long time," "I would feel very upset if our relationship were to end in the near future" [reverse-scored], "It is likely that I will date someone other than my partner within the next year," "I want

our relationship to last forever,” “I am oriented toward the long-term future of my relationship (for example, I imagine being with my partner several years from now,” and “I am committed to maintaining my relationship with my partner” (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 7 = *Strongly agree*).

Support Seekers’ Expressive Suppression. Support seekers were asked to which extent they engaged in expressive suppression when discussing their personal goals using a 3-item scale derived from the emotion suppression scale (Gross & John, 2003, also see Cameron & Overall, 2018; Girme et al., 2021; Low et al., 2017 for previously used applications). Items include: “I tried to control or suppress any negative emotions,” “I tried to hide my thoughts and feelings from my partner,” and “I kept my negative emotions to myself” (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 7 = *Strongly agree*).

Support Providers’ Felt Relational Value. Support providers were asked to think of their own and their partner’s thoughts, feelings, and behaviors and rate the extent to which they felt valued during the discussion. Items included “Do you think your partner valued your input during the discussion?” and “Do you think your partner appreciated your input during the discussion?” (1 = *Not at all*, 7 = *Very*).

Support Providers’ Provided Practical Support. Support providers were asked to think about their own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors regarding their partner’s goal and rate the extent to which they provided practical support. Items included “I offered suggestions and advice about how to achieve their goal,” “I gave my partner guidance and direction about how to pursue their goal,” “I did something to try to help my partner pursue their goal,” “I provided practical assistance to help my partner achieve their goal” (1 = *Not at all*, 7 = *Very*).

Support Providers’ Provided Emotional Support. Support providers were asked to think about their own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors regarding their partner’s goal and rate the extent to which they provided emotional support. Items included “I listened to my partner,” “I reassured and comforted my partner,” “I was warm and affectionate toward my partner,” “I was understanding about my partner’s efforts or difficulties in achieving their goal,” “I complimented my partner’s goal-related efforts and achievements,” “I was interested about my partner’s goal” (1 = *Not at all*, 7 = *Very*).

Longitudinal Relationship Satisfaction. To alleviate the burden on participants and increase retention, a reduced 3-item relationship satisfaction scale derived from the baseline measure was used every month for 6 months.

Longitudinal Relationship Commitment. Participants completed a similar 6-item scale assessing relationship commitment as the baseline every month for 6 months.

Chapter 3. Results

Tables 1 and 2 display the descriptive statistics, scales reliabilities, and the correlation matrix for all variables. I ran a series of models to test the hypothesized process displayed in Figure 1. Given the dyadic and longitudinal nature of the study, I employed multilevel modeling to account for the nested structure and dependencies in the data (i.e., each partner nested within a dyad, and monthly follow-ups nested within dyads). All analyses were run using the MIXED procedure in SPSS 27. Hypotheses and analysis plans were pre-registered on the Open Science Framework: <https://osf.io/erb3m>.

3.1. The Effect of Support Providers' High Attachment Anxiety on Support Seekers' Expressive Suppression

To explore whether support providers' high attachment anxiety predicts support seekers' expressive suppression, I regressed *support seekers' expressive suppression* on the support providers' attachment anxiety. To control for the shared variance between attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance, I also controlled for providers' attachment avoidance. The effect of seekers' gender and associated interaction terms were also included to explore potential gender effects. All predictors were grand-mean centered. The results are displayed in Table 3. When support providers had high levels of attachment anxiety, support seekers engaged in marginally greater expressive suppression. No gender interaction was found.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of All Measures.

Variables	Mean (SD)	Reliability (α)	Range
Initial Session Measures			
Attachment Anxiety	3.07 (1.05)	.78	1.00-7.00
Attachment Avoidance	2.86 (1.02)	.76	1.00-7.00
Baseline Satisfaction	5.92 (.76)	.81	1.00-7.00
Baseline Commitment	6.48 (.65)	.84	3.57-7.00
Seeker's Expressive Suppression	2.24 (1.45)	.88	1.00 - 7.00
Provider's Felt Valued/Appreciated	5.12 (1.28)	.92	1.00-7.00
Provider's Practical Support	5.07 (1.29)	.82	1.00-7.00
Provider's Emotional Support	5.85 (.86)	.82	2.83-7.00
Longitudinal Measures			
Longitudinal Satisfaction	5.95 (.76)	.81	1.00-7.00
Longitudinal Commitment	6.47 (.65)	.84	1.00-7.00

Note. Longitudinal satisfaction and commitment descriptive statistics are reported across the 6 follow-up waves.

Table 2. Correlations of All Measures.

Variables	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
1. Attachment Anxiety	-									
2. Attachment Avoidance	.13**	-								
3. Baseline Satisfaction	-.15**	-.09**	-							
4. Baseline Commitment	-.20**	-0.01	.46**	-						
5. Seeker's Expressive Suppression	.18**	.20**	-.17**	-.09**	-					
6. Provider's Felt Valued/Appreciated	-.07*	0.02	.33**	.20**	-.18**	-				
7. Provider's Practical Support	-0.01	0.04	0.04	.08**	0.02	.32**	-			
8. Provider's Emotional Support	-.08**	0.02	.27**	.28**	-.09**	.52**	.40**	-		
9. Longitudinal Satisfaction	-.15**	-.10**	.55**	.25**	-.16**	.33**	.08*	.19**	-	
10. Longitudinal Commitment	-.23**	-0.01	.36**	.43**	-.12**	.30**	.09**	.23**	.70**	-

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. Please see Appendix A for a correlation matrix including all exploratory variables.

3.2. The Effect of Seeker's Expressive Suppression on Highly Anxious Providers

Next, I tested whether support seekers' expressive suppression would help highly anxious providers feel more valued/appreciated, provide more practical and emotional support, and report greater relationship satisfaction and commitment over the following 6 months.

Providers' Felt Value and Appreciation. First, I regressed *providers' felt valued/appreciated* on (a) support seekers' expressive suppression (ES), (b) providers' attachment anxiety, and (c) the interaction between the seekers' ES and providers' attachment anxiety. To control for the shared variance between providers' attachment anxiety and avoidance, I also included (d) providers' attachment avoidance and the interaction between support seekers' ES and providers' attachment avoidance. All predictors were grand-mean centered. Finally, I also included the main and interaction terms of seekers' gender to test for potential differences between men and women (coded as women = -1, men = 1).

Table 3. Effect of Support Providers' Attachment Anxiety on Support Seekers' Expressive Suppression.

Model Associations	<i>B</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	95% CI		<i>r</i>	Gender
				Low	High		Intx <i>t</i>
Provider's Attachment Anxiety	.19	.10	1.93 [†]	.00	.38	.20	-1.03
Provider's Attachment Avoidance	-.06	.10	-.62	-.26	.13	.07	2.22*

Note. †*p* < .06. **p* < .05. ***p* < .001. CI = confidence interval. Gender Intx = Gender interaction. Effect sizes (*r*) were computed using Rosenthal and Rosnow's (2007) formula:

$$r = \sqrt{\frac{t^2}{t^2 + df}}. df \text{ of intercept was used.}$$

The results are presented in Table 4. While I did not find any statistically significant interaction between seekers' expressive suppression and providers' attachment anxiety, a significant interaction of Seekers' Expressive Suppression x Providers' Attachment Anxiety x Gender emerged, indicating a significant Seekers' Expressive Suppression x Providers' Attachment Anxiety interaction for women seekers ($b = -.25, t = -3.08, p = .003$) but not for men seekers ($b = .06, t = .94, p = .349$). This interaction is displayed in Figure 2. I decomposed the interaction at the standard cutoffs of ± 1 SD to represent high and low levels of support seekers' expressive suppression and high and low levels of support providers' attachment anxiety. There was no significant association between female seekers' expressive suppression and male support providers' felt value for male providers low in attachment anxiety ($slope = .19, t = 1.36, p = .176$). However, contrary to our prediction, highly anxious male support providers felt *less* valued and appreciated as female seekers engaged in greater expressive suppression ($slope = -.33, t = -2.75, p = .007$). Examining the differences between male providers with lower versus higher in attachment anxiety, the results indicate that at a low level of female seekers' ES (left side of Figure 2), there were no significant differences between male providers with high and low attachment anxiety appeared ($diff = .158, t = .91, p = .364$). However, at high levels of female seekers' expressive suppression (right side of Figure 2), male providers high in attachment anxiety reported lower felt valued/appreciated than male providers low in attachment anxiety ($diff = -.564, t = -3.208, p = .002$).

Table 4. Effect of Support Seekers' Expressive Suppression and Provider's Attachment Anxiety on Providers' Felt Value and Appreciation.

Model Associations	B	t	95%CI		r	Gender Intx t
			Low	High		
Seeker's Expressive Suppression (ES)	-.08	-1.28	-.21	.05	.13	-.24
Provider's Attachment Anxiety	-.18	-2.22*	-.34	-.02	.22	.25
Seeker's ES x Provider's Attachment Anxiety	-.09	-1.79	-.20	.01	.18	2.99**
Provider's Attachment Avoidance	-.27	-3.17**	-.44	-.10	.31	.87
Seeker's ES x Provider's Attachment Avoidance	.03	.52	-.09	.16	.05	-1.18

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$. CI = confidence interval. Gender Intx = Gender interaction. Effect sizes (r) were computed using Rosenthal and Rosnow's (2007) formula:

$$r = \frac{\sqrt{t^2}}{\sqrt{t^2 + df}}. df \text{ of intercept was used.}$$



Figure 2. Interaction between male providers' attachment anxiety and female seekers' engagement in expressive suppression on male providers' feeling of being valued/appreciated.

Provision of Practical and Emotional Support. Next, I ran analogous models as above to test the effect of Seekers' Expressive Suppression x Providers' Attachment Anxiety on the provision of (a) practical support and (b) emotional support. The results are presented in Table 5.

The interaction between seekers' expressive suppression and providers' attachment anxiety on providers' practical support was statistically significant ($b = .12$, $t = 2.12$, $p = .035$). This interaction is displayed in Figure 3. I decomposed the interaction at the standard cutoffs of ± 1 SD to represent high and low levels of expressive suppression engagement by seekers of support as well as high and low levels of support providers' attachment anxiety. As predicted, highly anxious providers reported providing more practical support when support seekers engaged in higher compared to lower expressive suppression ($diff = .153$, $t = 1.283$, $p = .201$).

Table 5. Effect of Support Seeker’s Expressive Suppression and Provider’s Attachment Anxiety on Provider’s Practical and Emotional Support Provision.

Model Associations	Practical Support Provision						Emotional Support Provision					
	B	t	95%CI		r	Gender Intx t	B	t	95%CI		r	Gender Intx t
			Low	High					Low	High		
Seeker’s Expressive Suppression (ES)	-.01	-.20	-.15	.13	.02	-.08	-.07	-1.55	-1.55	.12	.15	1.30
Provider’s Attachment Anxiety	-.02	-.19	-.2	.16	.02	-.81	-.01	-.13	-.13	.89	.01	-.20
Seeker’s ES x Provider’s Attachment Anxiety	.12	2.13*	.01	.23	.21	-.61	-.02	-.67	-.67	.50	.07	.46
Provider’s Attachment Avoidance	-.12	-1.30	-.31	.06	.13	1.52	-.28	-4.78**	-.40	-.16	.43	-.34
Seeker’s ES x Provider’s Attachment Avoidance	.02	.29	-.11	.15	.03	-.23	-.02	-.46	-.46	.65	.05	1.61

Note. *p < .05. **p < .001. CI = confidence interval. Gender Intx = Gender Interaction. Effect sizes (r) were computed using Rosenthal and Rosnow’s (2007) formula:

$$r = \sqrt{\frac{t^2}{t^2 + df}}. df \text{ of intercept was used.}$$

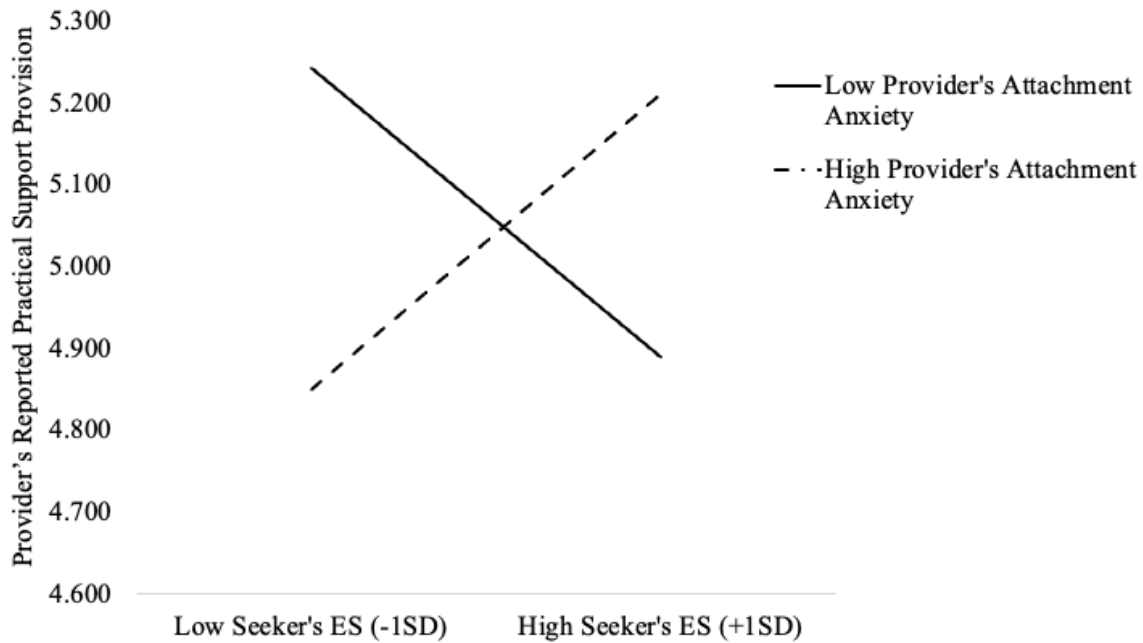


Figure 3. Interaction between support providers' attachment anxiety and support seekers' engagement in expressive suppression on providers' reported provision of practical support.

At seekers' higher level of expressive suppression, providers with high (compared to low) attachment anxiety provided more practical support (*slope* = .124, *t* = 1.584, *p* = .115). However, no simple slope was significant. The interaction between seekers' expressive suppression and providers' attachment anxiety on providers' emotional support was not significant.

Longitudinal Satisfaction and Commitment. Next, I ran analogous models as above but conducted cross-level multilevel models to account for the repeated assessments of relationship satisfaction and commitment over time (i.e., time points nested within dyads). The results are demonstrated in Table 6. There were no statistically significant interactions between seekers' expressive suppression and providers' attachment anxiety on providers' longitudinal satisfaction and commitment.

Table 6. Effect of Seekers' Expressive Suppression and Provider's Attachment Anxiety on Providers' Satisfaction & Commitment over Time.

Model Associations	Longitudinal Satisfaction						Longitudinal Commitment					
	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>	95%CI		<i>r</i>	Gender Intx <i>t</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>	95%CI		<i>r</i>	Gender Intx <i>t</i>
			Low	High					Low	High		
Seeker's Expressive Suppression (ES)	-.03	-.75	-.11	.05	.08	-.01	-.04	-1.13	-.12	.03	.12	.93
Provider's Attachment Anxiety	-.002	-.05	-.10	.09	.01	-.54	.02	.33	-.08	.11	.04	.30
Seeker's ES x Provider's Attachment Anxiety	-.06	-1.93	-.12	.001	.20	-.88	-.02	-.60	-.08	.04	.07	.82
Provider's Attachment Avoidance	-.02	-.43	-.12	.08	.05	-.29	-.08	-1.60	-.18	.02	.17	.22
Seeker's ES x Provider's Attachment Avoidance	.05	1.45	-.02	.13	.15	-2.00*	.01	.38	-.06	.09	.04	-1.98*

Note. **p* < .05. ***p* < .001. CI = confidence interval. Gender Intx = Gender Interaction. Effect sizes (*r*) were computed using Rosenthal and Rosnow's (2007) formula:

$$r = \sqrt{\frac{t^2}{t^2 + df}}. df \text{ of intercept was used.}$$

3.3. Controlling for Relationship Length and Support Seekers' Attachment Avoidance

I also conducted additional analyses to exclude alternative explanations. People in longer relationships may have learned to regulate their emotions or manage their partners' insecurities more effectively over time. Thus I re-ran the original models controlling for relationship length. The results remained the same, including (1) the marginal effect of support providers' attachment anxiety on support seekers' expressive suppression ($t = 1.79, p = .075$), (2) the Gender x Seekers' ES x Providers' Attachment Anxiety interaction on Providers' Felt Value ($b = .12, t = 2.23, p = .027$) and (3) Seekers' ES x Provider's Attachment Anxiety interaction on Providers' Practical Support Provision ($b = .13, t = 2.27, p = .024$). No new interaction effects between Seekers' ES and Providers' Attachment Anxiety emerged.

Furthermore, suppressing the outward expression of emotions is a regulation strategy associated with attachment avoidance (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016). My results did indicate that there was a statistically significant correlation between support seekers' attachment avoidance and seekers' expressive suppression ($r = .20, p < .01$). Thus, I re-ran original models controlling *support seekers'* attachment avoidance. The effect of Seekers' Expressive Suppression x Providers' Attachment Anxiety x Gender on Providers' Felt Value remained the same ($b = .12, t = 2.15, p = .03$). The effect of providers' attachment anxiety on seekers' expressive suppression was no longer statistically significant ($t = 1.544, p = .124$). The effect of Seekers' Expressive Suppression x Providers' Attachment Anxiety on Providers' Practical Support was also no longer statistically significant ($b = .10, t = 1.64, p = .103$). No new interaction effects between Seekers' ES and Providers' Attachment Anxiety emerged.

3.4. Secondary Analyses for Support Seekers' Outcomes and Observer-Rated Support Provision

I also pre-registered whether the interaction between support seekers' expressive suppression and providers' attachment anxiety predicted *support seekers'* perceptions of the providers' felt value, the seekers' perceived practical and emotional support, and the seekers' longitudinal relationship satisfaction and commitment (using analogous or identical measures assessed in support providers). Overall, no significant

interaction effects were found, except that seekers with higher expressive suppression who had highly anxious partners reported lower relationship commitment over time ($b = -.069$, $t = -2.430$, $p = .016$).

I also examined the same models predicting observer-coded ratings of support providers' practical and emotional support provision, which did not show any statistically significant interactions. For more information regarding the secondary analyses please see Appendices A–C

Chapter 4. General Discussion

People high in attachment anxiety find it difficult to provide good support to their partners because support seekers' negative emotions can threaten highly anxious providers' feelings of being valued and appreciated (Collins & Feeney, 2000; Jayamaha et al., 2017; Shaver et al., 2019). The current research investigated whether support seekers' suppression of outward displays of negativity would increase highly anxious support providers' felt value and thus facilitate better support provision and relationship outcomes across time (see Figure 1). Partly consistent with my first hypothesis, support seekers with highly anxious partners engaged in marginally more expressive suppression during support-seeking interactions. The provider outcomes were somewhat mixed: Contrary to my second hypothesis, female support seekers' high (vs. low) expressive suppression was associated with *lower* felt value/appreciation in highly anxious male support providers. However, partially supporting my hypothesis regarding support provision, greater support seekers' expressive suppression was associated with highly anxious providers' more practical support provision (however, the decomposed interaction was not significant). There was no effect of seekers' expressive suppression on highly anxious providers' emotional support provision or providers' long-term relationship satisfaction and commitment. In the sections that follow, I discuss the implications of these findings.

4.1. Support Seekers Engage in Expressive Suppression When They Have Highly Anxious Partners

The results provide (marginal) evidence that support seekers with highly anxious partners tend to suppress their negative emotions during support-relevant discussions. This is in line with prior research showing that people with highly anxious partners tend to conceal negative emotions during relationship conflict (Lemay & Dudley, 2011). In addition, previous correlational research has also shown an association between partners' attachment anxiety and individuals' engagement in expressive suppression of negative and positive emotions (Brandão et al., 2020). My research moved beyond conflict and general contexts to provide evidence that individuals with highly anxious partners may also engage in expressive suppression during support interactions where seekers are in need of support from highly anxious support providers. This suggests that

expressive suppression may be an emotion regulation strategy that people with highly anxious partners adopt across interaction contexts.

It is also possible that as highly anxious individuals tend to be hyper-vigilant as well as over-reactive to the signs of rejection (Cassidy & Berlin, 1994; Shaver et al., 2005), they prompt their partners to adopt ES out of annoyance and dissatisfaction in order to avoid activating highly anxious individuals' defensive reactions. As such, support seekers may have been engaging in expressive suppression not to elicit support, but to avoid disagreements or conflict. In addition, as highly anxious partners constantly need to seek reassurance and responses to their own needs, support seekers may have been restrained in their ability to regulate their own emotions and hence resort to suppressing their emotions (Brandão et al., 2020). That said, the reason that support seekers with highly anxious partners engaged in expressive suppression was not measured or examined. Future research examining the possible reasons that people with highly anxious partners may engage in expressive suppression would help facilitate understanding (Brandão et al., 2020).

4.2. Support Seekers' Expressive Suppression Leaves Highly Anxious Male Support Providers Feeling Less Valued and Appreciated

Contrary to my hypothesis that expressive suppression may help alleviate highly anxious providers' relational threat (e.g., Jayamaha et al., 2017), my results demonstrated that support seekers' greater expressive suppression was associated with highly anxious support providers feeling *less* valued and appreciated. Notably, this effect only occurred for highly anxious male providers; when *female* support seekers engaged in expressive suppression, highly anxious *male* providers felt less valued and appreciated. The costly result demonstrated here is consistent with the broader documented costs of expressive suppression in the interpersonal relationships (Impett et al., 2014; Sasaki et al., 2021). Particularly, expressive suppression is associated with lower conflict resolution as it interferes with the process of cooperation needed during conflict resolution as well as lower relationship closeness (Low et al., 2019; Thomson et al., 2018). In addition, interacting with emotionally suppressing partners is also linked with feeling less rapport and more difficulties in expressing emotions (Butler et al., 2001).

Why was this effect particularly salient for highly anxious men? Previous studies indicated that stressed male support providers tend to provide lower-quality support in response to female seekers but only when female seekers are also distressed (Bodenmann et al., 2015). Given this, the gender interaction found here was somewhat surprising as the female seekers concealed their expression of stress, but male partners still felt less valued. Of course, given that highly anxious individuals are hypervigilant to signs of rejection and attentive to signs of approval or acceptance (Murray et al., 2000), the absence of negative emotion expression might have been interpreted by the highly anxious (male) partners as a sign of rejection itself. Previous research shows that highly anxious individuals perceive their partners' negative emotions as indicators of commitment to the relationship. Specifically, highly anxious individuals were seen attempting to evoke guilt from their partners during conflicts as they perceived such guilt to be assuring of their partners' commitment to the relationship (Jayamaha et al., 2016; Overall et al., 2014). While a support interaction context does not necessarily involve a direct threat to the relationship, the vagueness or absence of emotional expression here might be perceived as a sign of lower commitment, and thus, a threat to the relationship security that highly anxious individuals dearly uphold. Thus, support seekers' concealment of negative emotions might not be sufficient to buffer highly anxious support providers' concerns and may even exacerbate them.

Rather than trying to reduce signs of rejection, it may be more visible signs of appreciation and love that help anxious support providers feel more comfortable in support contexts (particularly male providers). Supporting this perspective, previous research has demonstrated that highly anxious individuals feel more valued and appreciated when their partners exaggerate their displays of affection (Lemay & Dudley, 2011). Thus, it is possible that in this context where the highly anxious individuals are making an effort to provide support, the absence of negative emotions (due to seekers' expressive suppression) does not satisfy the highly anxious individuals' need for validation. In other words, it is possible that as highly anxious individuals make the effort to provide support for their partners, as a means to secure their value, highly anxious individuals expect to receive explicit signs of appreciation and love.

4.3. Support Seekers' Expressive Suppression Predicted Greater Practical (But Not Emotional) Support by Highly Anxious Support Providers

Notably, while support seekers' expressive suppression made highly anxious male providers feel less valued, support seekers' greater expressive suppression was associated with highly anxious support providers providing *more* practical (but not emotional) support. Particularly, when seekers engaged in a high level of expressive suppression, support providers high in attachment anxiety reported providing more practical support compared to those low in attachment anxiety. It is possible that as a response to seekers' expressive suppression, highly anxious partners provided more practical support in an attempt to garner the support-seeking partners' validation and love. This might be the reason why there was an effect for practical but not emotional support, as practical support can be considered more valuable and explicit if the goal is to present themselves as good support providers. In addition, such an attempt to seek validation might also explain highly anxious (male) providers' lower felt value as their attachment insecurity was activated. In addition, since support provision was reported by the highly anxious providers, it does not necessarily mean that they provided support that was perceived by the seekers. In fact, when I explored perceived support by seekers, I did not find any significant effects of seekers' expressive suppression x providers' attachment anxiety in predicting seekers' perceived practical and emotional support (see Appendix B).

4.4. Support Seekers' Expressive Suppression Was Not Associated with Highly Anxious Providers' Longitudinal Relational Outcomes

Moreover, I also did not find any significant effect of support seekers' expressive suppression on highly anxious providers' longitudinal relationship satisfaction and commitment. In other words, support seekers' expressive suppression during support interaction with highly anxious partners did not predict highly anxious partners' relationship satisfaction or outcomes in the following 6 months. It is possible that the inconsistent effect of expressive suppression on highly anxious providers (they felt less valued but also provided more practical support) yielded an unclear effect on providers' long-term relationship satisfaction and commitment. It is also possible that the outcomes

that occurred during these specific support interactions did not have a large enough effect on the relationship outcomes. In addition, given that expressive suppression appears to be a common strategy of use in relationships with highly anxious partners, it might be that expressive suppression as a routine regulation strategy does not affect highly anxious providers' relational outcomes over time and instead salient and exaggerated strategies may be required to help highly anxious partners feel more satisfied (Lemay & Dudley, 2011).

4.5. Caveats and Future Directions

There were many strengths of this study. First, while previous research has examined expressive suppression and attachment anxiety in conflict or general relationship contexts (Brandão et al., 2020, Lemay & Dudley, 2011), my study examines these processes within a social support context. Thus, my study provides starting evidence that support seekers may commonly use expressive suppression when they have highly anxious partners, as well as insights into the effect of such regulation strategy on highly anxious partners during support interactions. Secondly, by examining couples in long-term, committed relationships (average relationship length = 39 months), I am able to draw insights from relationships that persist for a longer period of time. In addition, this study also utilizes multiple methods for measuring the partners' support behaviors, specifically both self-reported data as well as observationally coded data (see Overall et al., 2010 for full coding manual). Moreover, by using the longitudinal design, my study also provides an understanding of not just the cross-sectional effect of expressive suppression on highly anxious partners' felt value but also the long-term effect on partners' relationship satisfaction and commitment in the following 6 months.

Nevertheless, this study is also subject to some limitations and caveats. First, my results were subject to many statistical artifacts, such as marginal effects, gendered effects, and significant interactions that had non-significant simple slopes. Although this study was sufficiently powered to detect two-way interactions, other statistical issues might have led to such statistical inconsistencies. For example, there may have been other important variables not examined here that may have led to a great amount of variability in the observed effects.

It is also worth pointing out that prior research on expressive suppression has shown that the benefits of expressive suppression could be dependent on *why* people are engaging in expressive suppression. For example, in interpersonal contexts, expressive suppression is often employed to avoid conflict and thus can help facilitate social connection. Similarly, when highly avoidant individuals engage in expressive suppression for self-protection reasons, it leads to worse mental health outcomes for both partners; however, when they engage in expressive suppression for their partners' sake, expressive suppression is not related to negative outcomes for both partners (Winterheld, 2017). Thus, engaging in expressive suppression for own self-protection or for the sake of partners might influence whether expressive suppression yields positive or negative outcomes for support seekers and highly anxious providers. For example, support seekers with highly anxious partners may engage in more expressive suppression out of annoyance and thus as a means to avoid facing the heightened need for validation from their highly anxious partners. On the other hand, it is also possible that support seekers engage in expressive suppression to not concern their partners. Future research may therefore benefit from examining the differing motivations towards engaging in expressive suppression.

Finally, it is also possible that there is a discrepancy between seekers' reported expressive suppression and the actual quality of expressive suppression. In other words, as we only had self-reported data on seekers' expressive suppression, it is unclear whether their expressive suppression was conveyed well as they intended. Moreover, while expressive suppression was found to be beneficial in a conflict context (Geisler & Schröder-Abé, 2015), it might not be as effective in this support interaction context. When support seekers engage in expressive suppression, they have to suppress their emotional expression on top of trying to convey their needs, which might impose more work on them while they are the ones in need of support. It would also be interesting to examine how support providers perceive the support seekers' expressive suppression and whether discrepancies in seekers' versus providers' perceptions of expressive suppression may lead to challenges. Indeed, highly anxious individuals tend to be more sensitive to the offset point of partners' emotional expression while also prone to more mistakes in perceiving facial expressions (Fraleley et al., 2006).

4.6. Conclusion

In sum, the current study provides evidence that expressive suppression may be a commonly used emotion regulation strategy by support seekers with highly anxious partners. However, such a strategy does not yield consistent effects, with highly anxious (male) providers reporting feeling less valued but also providing more practical (but not emotional) support. Nonetheless, this research provides insight into the emotion regulation strategies people may use to maintain functional relationships with highly anxious partners.

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Appendix A. Seeker's Outcomes

In my thesis, I was interested in examining strategies that support seekers can employ to encourage highly anxious providers to provide support. In this section, I illustrate the effect that seekers' expressive suppression had on seekers' outcomes. I reran the models displayed in Tables 4 – 6 of my thesis but examined seekers' perceived providers' felt value, perceived practical and emotional support, as well as satisfaction and commitment over time. Overall, I did not find any significant effects, except that seekers' who engaged in expressive suppression and had highly anxious partners reported lower relationship commitment over time. Please see below for more information regarding specific measures and results.

Measures

Support Seekers' Perceived Providers' Felt Valued/Appreciated. Support seekers were asked to think of their own and their partner's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors and rate the extent to which they valued and appreciated their partners during the discussion. Items included "Did you value your partner's input during the discussion?" and "Did you appreciate your partner's input during the discussion?" (1 = *Not at all*, 7 = *Very*).

Support Seeker's Perceived Practical Support. Support seekers were asked to think about their partners' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors and rate the extent to which their partners provided practical support. Items included "My partner offered suggestions and advice about how to achieve my goal," "My partner gave me guidance and direction about how to pursue my goal," "My partner didn't try to help me pursue my goal" [reverse-scored], "My partner provided practical assistance to help me achieve my goal" (1 = *Not at all*, 7 = *Very*).

Support Seeker's Perceived Emotional Support. Support seekers were also asked to think about their partners' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors as responding to participants' goals and rate the extent to which their partners provided emotional support. Items included "My partner didn't care about my goal" [reverse-scored], "My partner reassured and comforted me," "My partner was warm and affectionate toward me," "My partner was understanding about my goal-related efforts or difficulties," "My

partner complimented my goal-related efforts and achievements,” “My partner was interested about my goal” (1 = *Not at all*, 7 = *Very*).

Baseline and Longitudinal Relationship Satisfaction and Commitment.

Participants completed identical measures as support providers.

The effect of seekers' expressive suppression on the seekers

Table 1 describes the descriptive statistics. As part of the additional analysis, we also conducted analyses on the effect of Seekers' Expressive Suppression x Providers' Attachment Anxiety on a) seekers' valuing/appreciating highly anxious providers, b) seekers' perceived practical and emotional support, as well as seekers' c) ratings of relationship satisfaction and commitment over the following 6 months. We found no significant effect of seekers' expressive suppression on the seekers' valuing providers' inputs as well as on their perceived support (See Appendix A, Tables 3 and 4).

For the longitudinal relationship outcomes, I found no significant effect on the support seekers' reported relationship satisfaction over the following 6 months ($p = .413$). However, we found a significant effect of Seekers' Expressive Suppression x Providers' Attachment Anxiety on seekers' commitment over the following 6 months ($b = -.069$, $t = -2.430$, $p = .016$) (see Appendix A, Table 5). Inconsistent with our initial prediction, as Figure 1 demonstrates, at the high level of support seekers' expressive suppression, seekers with highly anxious support providers reported significantly lower commitment over the following 6 months ($b = -.218$, $t = -3.747$, $p < .001$).

Table A.1. Descriptive Statistics of Seekers' Measures.

Variables	Mean (SD)	Reliability (α)	Range
Seeker's Expressive Suppression	2.24 (1.45)	.88	1.00 - 7.00
Seeker's Input Value /Appreciate	5.91 (1.13)	.91	1.00 - 7.00
Perceived Partner's Practical Support	5.27 (1.24)	.81	1.00 - 7.00
Perceived Partner's Emotional Support	5.81 (1.03)	.89	1.00 - 7.00
Baseline Satisfaction	5.92 (.76)	.81	1.00-7.00
Baseline Commitment	6.48 (.65)	.84	3.57-7.00
Longitudinal Satisfaction	5.95 (.76)	.81	1.00 - 7.00
Longitudinal Commitment	6.47(.65)	.84	1.00 - 7.00

Table A.2. Correlations of All Measures in the Initial Session

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.
1. Attachment Anxiety	-														
2. Attachment Avoidance	.13**	-													
3. Providers' Felt Value	-.07*	.02	-												
4. Providers' Practical Support Provision	-.01	.04	.32**	-											
5. Providers' Emotional Support Provision	-.08**	.02	.52**	.40**	-										
6. Seekers' Expressive Suppression	.18**	.20**	-.18**	.02	-.09**	-									
7. Seekers' Valuing Partners' Inputs	-.07*	-.15**	.32**	.09**	.16**	-.24**	-								
8. Perceived Practical Support	-0.02	-.17**	.30**	.27**	.09**	-.20**	.58**	-							
9. Perceived Emotional Support	-.18**	-.23**	.31**	.09**	.32**	-.31**	.57**	.46**	-						
10. Baseline Satisfaction	-.10**	-.31**	.28**	.03	.19**	-.19**	.28**	.23**	.36**	-					
11. Baseline Commitment	.02	-.32**	.14**	.07*	.21**	-.15**	.18**	.11**	.33**	.46**	-				
12. Longitudinal Satisfaction	-.13**	-.21**	.25**	.05	.21**	-.11**	.17**	.20**	.26**	.55**	.25**	-			
13. Longitudinal Commitment	-.05	-.22**	.18**	.02	.20**	-.15**	.20**	.13**	.29**	.36**	.43**	.70**	-		
14. Coded Practical Support	-.06*	-.10**	.06*	.28**	.07*	.03	.16**	.29**	.09**	.05	-.06*	.07*	.04	-	
15. Coded Emotional Support	.01	-.04	.12**	-.03	.22**	-.03	.08**	.08**	.18**	.14**	.02	.09**	.07*	.22**	-

Note. * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$.

Table A.3. Effect of Seeker’s Expressive Suppression and Provider’s Attachment Anxiety on Seeker’s Perceived Felt Valued/Appreciated.

Model Associations	B	t	95% CI		r	Gender t
			Low	High		
Seeker's Expressive Suppression (ES)	-.15	-2.50*	-.27	-.03	.25	.83
Provider's Attachment Anxiety	.03	.38	-.12	.18	.04	-.44
Seeker's ES x Provider's Attachment Anxiety	-.03	-.72	-.13	.06	.07	.71
Provider's Attachment Avoidance	.06	.81	-.09	.22	.08	1.05
Seeker's ES x Provider's Attachment Avoidance	.10	1.73	-.01	.21	.18	-1.53

Note. * $p < .05$. Effect sizes (r) were computed using Rosenthal and Rosnow's (2007) formula: $r = \sqrt{\frac{t^2}{t^2 + df}}$. df of intercept was used. CI=confidence interval.

Table A.4. Effect of Seeker’s Expressive Suppression and Provider’s Attachment Anxiety on Seeker’s Perceived Practical and Emotional Support.

Model Associations	Perceived Practical Support						Perceived Emotional Support					
	B	t	95% CI		r	Gender t	B	t	95% CI		r	Gender t
			Low	High					Low	High		
Seeker's Expressive Suppression (ES)	-.17	-2.54*	-.3	-.04	.25	.48	-.19	-3.62**	-.29	-.09	.35	1.13
Provider's Attachment Anxiety	.00	.02	-.17	.17	.002	-1.29	-.05	-.74	-.18	.08	.08	-1.76
Seeker's ES x Provider's Attachment Anxiety	.04	.74	-.07	.15	.08	1.11	-.04	-.87	-.12	.05	.09	1.9
Provider's Attachment Avoidance	-.04	-.41	-.21	.14	.04	2.00*	-.02	-.28	-.15	.12	.03	2.33*
Seeker's ES x Provider's Attachment Avoidance	.09	1.45*	-.03	.22	.15	-1.32	.07	1.31	-.03	.17	.13	-1.33

Note. * $p < .05$ ** $p < .001$. Effect sizes (r) were computed using Rosenthal and Rosnow’s (2007) formula: $r = \sqrt{\frac{t^2}{t^2 + df}}$. df of intercept was used. CI=confidence interval.

Table A.5. Effect of Seeker’s Expressive Suppression and Provider’s Attachment Anxiety on Seeker’s Satisfaction and Commitment over Time.

Model Associations	Longitudinal Satisfaction						Longitudinal Commitment					
	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>	95% CI		<i>r</i>	<i>Gender Intx t</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>	95% CI		<i>r</i>	<i>Gender Intx t</i>
			Low	High					Low	High		
Seeker's Expressive Suppression (ES)	.02	.49	-.06	.10	.05	.21	-.03	-.78	-.10	.04	.09	.33
Provider's Attachment Anxiety	-.09	-1.85	-.19	.01	.20	-.02	-.12	-2.73	-.21	-.03	.29	-.49
Seeker's ES x Provider's Attachment Anxiety	-.03	-.82	-.09	.04	.09	-1.05	-.07	-2.43*	-.13	-.01	.26	-1.02
Provider's Attachment Avoidance	-.03	-.57	-.13	.07	.06	1.12	.02	.45	-.07	.11	.05	-.09
Seeker's ES x Provider's Attachment Avoidance	.02	.63	-.05	.09	.07	.04	-.01	-.35	-.07	.05	.04	2.20*

Note. **p* < .05 ***p* < .001. Effect sizes (*r*) were computed using Rosenthal and Rosnow's (2007) formula: $r = \sqrt{\frac{t^2}{t^2 + df}}$. df of intercept was used. CI=confidence interval.

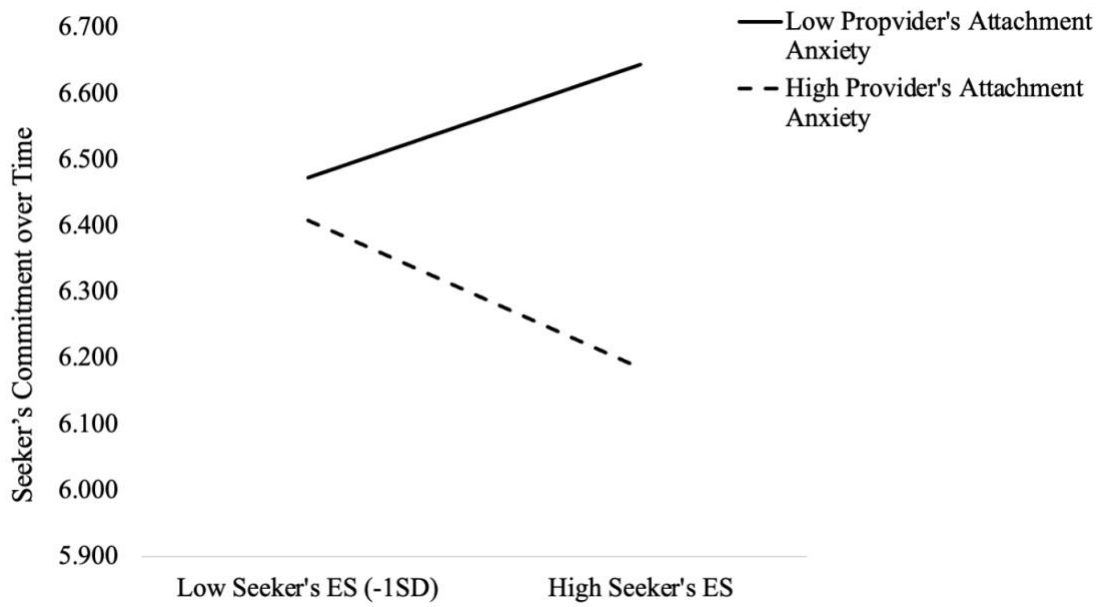


Figure A.1. Interaction between providers' attachment anxiety and seekers' engagement in expressive suppression on seekers' commitment over the following 6 months.

Appendix B. Coding Results

In this section, I examined the effect of seekers' expressive suppression on highly anxious providers' coded support provision. Overall, no statistically significant results were found. Please see below for more information regarding procedures and results.

Coding Procedure and Results

Three trained coders who were blind to the study purposes and participants' information independently coded the videotaped discussions, rating the degree to which support providers provided emotional and practical support. Emotional support included the communication of reassurance, comfort, empathy, expressions of love and affection, and encouragement for partners to express feelings. Practical support involved providing advice and information, or suggesting actions or solutions (see Overall et al., 2010 for full coding manual). Coders were instructed to consider the frequency, intensity, and duration of relevant support behaviors during each discussion (1–2 = *Low*, 3–5 = *Moderate*, 6–7 = *High*). Coded emotional and practical support were positively correlated ($r = .22, p < .001$).

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics. I ran analogous models as above, regressing observer-rated practical and emotional support on seekers' expressive suppression, providers' attachment anxiety, and the interaction of Seekers' ES x Provides' Attachment Anxiety. As Appendix B, Table 2 highlights, no significant interactions between seekers' expressive suppression and providers' attachment anxiety emerged.

Table B.1. Descriptive Statistics of Coders' Measures

Variables	Mean (SD)	ICC	Range
Observer-Rated Practical Support Provision	4.31 (1.13)	.89	1.00-7.00
Observer-Rated Emotional Support Provision	3.05 (1.14)	.91	1.00-7.00

ICC = Intraclass correlations

Table B.2. Effect of Seeker's Expressive Suppression and Provider's Attachment Anxiety on Observer-Coded Practical and Emotional Support Provision

Model Associations	Coded Practical Support						Coded Emotional Support					
	B	t	95% CI		r	Gender Intx t	B	t	95% CI		r	Gender Intx t
			Low	High					Low	High		
Seeker's Expressive Suppression (ES)	.03	.48	-.09	.15	.05	-.81	-.03	-.41	-.15	.10	.04	.42
Provider's Attachment Anxiety	.00	-.04	-.16	.15	.004	-.01	-.07	-.83	-.22	.09	.08	-.35
Seeker's ES x Provider's Attachment Anxiety	-.01	-.23	-.11	.09	.02	.20	-.05	-.97	-.15	.05	.10	-1.19
Provider's Attachment Avoidance	-.11	-1.38	-.28	.05	.14	.15	-.15	-1.84	-.31	.01	.18	.70
Seeker's ES x Provider's Attachment Avoidance	.08	1.33	-.04	.19	.13	-.20	.05	.87	-.07	.18	.09	.26

Note. *p < .05 **p < .001. CI=confidence interval. Gender Intx = Gender Interaction. Effect sizes (r) were computed using Rosenthal and Rosnow's (2007) formula:

$$r = \sqrt{\frac{t^2}{t^2 + df}}$$

df of intercept was used.