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A LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE INFLUENCE OF ATTACHMENT STYLES ON ACHIEVEMENT MOTIVATION AND THE BALANCE OF CHALLENGES AND THREATS AMONG JUNIOR WORKERS

Bachelor's Thesis

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I hereby affirm in lieu of an oath that I provided the submitted bachelor thesis

**A LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE INFLUENCE OF ATTACHMENT STYLES ON
ACHIEVEMENT MOTIVATION AND THE BALANCE OF CHALLENGES AND
THREATS AMONG JUNIOR WORKERS**

I did not use any sources other than those stated. In case that the work is additionally submitted on a data medium, I declare that the written and the electronic form are completely identical. The work was not submitted in the same or similar form to any examination authority.

May 28, 2025

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1. Introduction

1.1 Contextualizing the Research Topic in Industry

In high-tech industries such as software engineering and advanced manufacturing, junior professionals are expected to rapidly develop technical expertise while simultaneously adapting to complex team dynamics. The pressure to meet tight deadlines, collaborate on complex projects, and continually update skills can create significant psychological stress for junior employees. According to a 2017 study by Hays (1), 81% of employees reported that they would consider leaving their current jobs for better opportunities, with 74% willing to accept lower pay for work environments that offer greater motivation and personal satisfaction. These findings highlight a critical issue in the retention and motivation of young professionals, particularly in high-pressure, high-demand technical industries. The decision-making process behind junior employees' dissatisfaction and their inclination to seek new opportunities can be understood through the lens of attachment theory. Attachment styles, shaped by early relational experiences, can profoundly influence how individuals manage stress, form relationships, and navigate challenges in the workplace. In technical settings, where both independent problem-solving and team collaboration are critical, understanding how different attachment styles affect motivation, performance, and resilience is key to creating supportive work environments. Studying attachment theory in the context of junior employees in technical fields offers valuable insights into how organizations can better address the unique psychological needs of their workforce.

1.2 Research Question and Objectives

This thesis aims to answer the following research question:

How do different attachment styles influence achievement motivation, task performance, and the perception of challenges and threats among junior professionals in technical fields?

The primary objective of this study is to explore how early attachment experiences shape workplace behavior, particularly in junior employees working in high-tech industries. By synthesizing existing literature, this research aims to identify tailored organizational strategies that enhance motivation and performance among employees with different attachment styles. Given the increasing emphasis on talent development in rapidly evolving technological sectors, this investigation contributes to fostering sustainable innovation and maintaining a competitive advantage.

1.3 Review of Existing Literature

Attachment theory, introduced by Bowlby (2), emphasizes the role of early caregiver child relationships in shaping patterns of emotional regulation and social behavior throughout life. Ainsworth et al. (3) extended this work by categorizing attachment into secure, anxious, and avoidant styles, which continue to influence how individuals manage stress and engage in relationships, including those formed in adult environments. Although much of the foundational research on attachment theory focuses on familial or romantic relationships (4,5), the framework has since been extended to broader adult social contexts, including the workplace. For example, Mikulincer and Shaver (6) explored how attachment dynamics affect interpersonal functioning, stress coping, and responsiveness to social support, factors that are increasingly recognized as relevant to organizational settings. Despite growing interest in attachment styles at work, research directly linking attachment theory to junior employees in technical fields remains limited. This is a significant gap, as junior employees often face unique stressors such as heavy cognitive workloads, the pressure to quickly acquire new skills, and the challenge of integrating into existing teams. These stressors are particularly acute in technical domains like engineering and IT, where both independent problem-solving and effective collaboration are essential for success.

From this perspective, it is plausible to interpret their findings through an attachment lens, employees with anxious attachment may be more sensitive to unclear expectations and a lack of feedback, while avoidantly attached individuals might struggle with building the collaborative relationships that technical projects demand.

These practices may indirectly promote behaviors associated with secure attachment, such as seeking help, accepting feedback, and building trust with coworkers, which could positively impact motivation and performance. While these observations suggest the relevance of attachment theory in technical work environments, direct empirical studies are scarce. Further research is needed to investigate how attachment-related tendencies interact with common demands in technical roles, such as problem-solving under pressure, communication in multidisciplinary teams, and adaptation to high expectations early in one's career.

1.4 Identified Gaps in the Literature

While attachment theory has been widely applied to workplace settings, there are notable gaps in the research when it comes to junior employees in technical fields. Most studies have focused on general workplace outcomes, overlooking the specific challenges these professionals face, such as adapting to rapid technological changes, tight deadlines, and the dual demands of independent problem-solving and teamwork. One key gap is the

limited understanding of how attachment-related anxiety and avoidance impact achievement motivation and task performance in technical environments. Although attachment insecurity has been linked to workplace difficulties, its specific effects on junior employees, who must balance collaboration and autonomy in complex projects, remain underexplored. Additionally, the role of attachment styles in managing stress and feedback in these high-pressure roles has not been sufficiently studied.

There is also a lack of research on targeted organizational strategies that address the distinct needs of junior employees with different attachment styles in technical fields. Existing interventions for improving motivation and performance often fail to consider how attachment influences workplace behavior. Understanding how to tailor support mechanisms like feedback and mentorship could provide valuable insights for improving retention and performance in technical roles.

1.5 Contribution of This Thesis

This study seeks to bridge the identified research gaps by conducting a systematic literature review on the impact of attachment styles /secure, anxious, avoidant, and fearful/ on achievement motivation and the perception of challenges and threats among junior employees in technical fields. Through a synthesis of existing research, this thesis will propose targeted strategies to enhance motivation and performance, offering both theoretical insights and practical applications for organizational leaders aiming to optimize workforce development in high-tech industries.

1.6 Rationale for Using Attachment Theory

Attachment theory offers a uniquely valuable framework for understanding the behavior of junior employees in technical fields, where both independent problem-solving and team collaboration are essential. While other motivational theories, such as self-determination theory or cognitive behavioral models, emphasize cognitive or environmental factors, they do not fully account for the relational and emotional complexities that are central to attachment theory. Attachment theory, by focusing on how early relational experiences shape emotional regulation, stress management, and interpersonal relationships, provides deeper insights into the psychological factors that influence performance and motivation in technical environments. Junior employees in technical industries, such as engineering and software development, face specific pressures, including high workloads, tight deadlines, and the need to balance autonomy with collaboration, that can trigger attachment-related behaviors. For instance, employees with anxious or avoidant attachment styles may struggle to manage stress effectively or build supportive professional relationships, which are crucial in environments where teamwork and feedback are central to success. Unlike other

frameworks, attachment theory directly addresses how these emotional and relational tendencies manifest in workplace settings, particularly under the high-stress, high-demand conditions common in technical roles.

Furthermore, attachment theory is especially relevant for junior professionals, who are still in the process of developing their professional identity and navigating workplace relationships. Understanding how attachment-related behaviors, such as avoidance of collaboration or anxiety about feedback, impact motivation and performance allows for more tailored interventions. This is particularly important in technical fields, where early-career professionals often face steep learning curves and high expectations. By applying attachment theory, this study will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the emotional and relational dynamics that drive performance and motivation in junior employees, offering insights that other theories may overlook.

1.7 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is structured as follows. The literature review presents a detailed examination of attachment theory and its relevance to achievement motivation, task performance, and stress management across different attachment styles. Subsequent sections introduce tailored propositions that outline specific strategies for motivating junior employees with diverse attachment styles in technical environments. The final section discusses key findings, their implications for organizational practices, and potential directions for future research.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study adopted a systematic literature review methodology, following the principles outlined by the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines. A systematic review approach was selected to ensure a transparent, reproducible, and comprehensive synthesis of existing research regarding the influence of attachment styles on achievement motivation, task performance, and stress among junior workers in technical fields.

The PRISMA framework provides a structured process for identifying, screening, and analyzing relevant literature, helping minimize bias and maximize the validity of conclusions. This method aligns well with the goals of this thesis, which required a thorough and methodical examination of previous empirical and theoretical work.

2.2 Literature Search Strategy

The literature search was conducted using major academic databases such as Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, and Web of Science. Search terms included combinations of keywords such as:

- "attachment styles AND workplace behavior"
- "attachment theory AND achievement motivation"
- "junior employees AND stress"
- "attachment styles AND technical fields"
- "secure attachment OR anxious attachment OR avoidant attachment OR fearful attachment AND task performance"

The search focused primarily on peer-reviewed journal articles, published between 1990 and 2024, to ensure relevance and incorporate both foundational and contemporary perspectives.

2.3 Screening and Selection Process

The screening process followed PRISMA's four-phase flow:

1. Identification: All retrieved articles were collated, and duplicates were removed.
2. Screening: Titles and abstracts were reviewed for relevance based on inclusion/exclusion criteria.
3. Eligibility: Full-text articles were assessed for eligibility. Articles that did not meet the criteria were excluded with justification noted.
4. Inclusion: A final set of articles was included for detailed analysis and synthesis, focusing on theoretical models, empirical findings, and workplace applications.

The screening and selection process are visualized in the PRISMA flow diagram below.

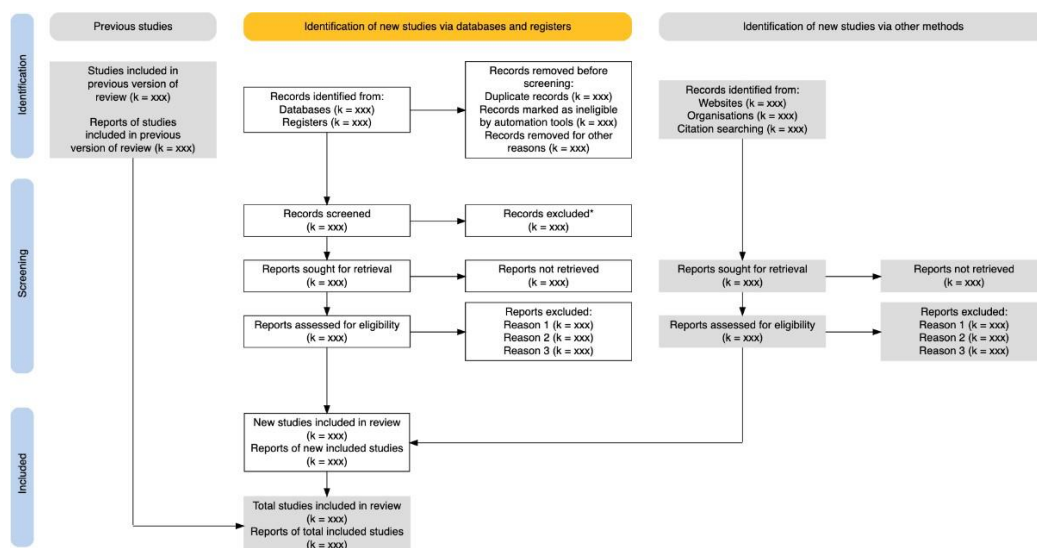


Figure 1. Prisma flow diagram 2020

Source: <https://www.eshackathon.org/software/PRISMA2020.html>

2.4 Extraction and Analysis

For each selected study, key information was extracted, including:

- Authors
- Year of publication
- Major findings related specifically to attachment styles and their influence on achievement motivation, task performance, or stress in workplace settings

Sample characteristics were not systematically extracted, as the primary focus was on conceptual findings and theoretical implications rather than empirical sample details.

A thematic analysis was conducted to organize the findings by attachment style (secure, anxious, avoidant, fearful) and workplace outcomes. Where relevant, contradictory findings, research gaps, and future directions were identified to support the development of practical propositions for organizations.

3. Literature Review

3.1 History of Attachment Theory

Attachment theory, developed by British psychologist John Bowlby, explores the deep emotional bonds formed between individuals, particularly focusing on the dynamics between children and their primary caregivers. Bowlby posited that these early attachments play a crucial role in shaping an individual's social, emotional, and cognitive development, influencing behaviors and relationships throughout life (2)

Child Attachment Theory

Bowlby's interest in attachment was influenced by his observations of children's distress when separated from their parents. He theorized that such behaviors were evolutionary mechanisms to ensure proximity to caregivers, thereby enhancing survival. This perspective was further enriched by Mary Ainsworth, whose empirical studies provided substantial support for Bowlby's propositions (3,7).

Ainsworth's seminal contribution was a structured observational study designed to assess the quality of attachment between infants and their caregivers. Through this method, Ainsworth identified three primary attachment styles:

First, children with *secure attachment* exhibited distress upon separation but were easily comforted upon the caregiver's return, using them as a secure base for exploration. Second, children with *anxious ambivalent attachment* displayed intense distress during separation and ambivalence upon reunion, seeking comfort yet resisting it simultaneously. Third, children with *avoidant attachment* showed minimal distress upon separation and avoided the caregiver upon return, often displaying indifference. (3)

These attachment styles were found to be significantly influenced by the caregiver's responsiveness and sensitivity to the child's needs. Consistent and sensitive caregiving tended to foster secure attachments, while inconsistent or unresponsive caregiving was associated with insecure attachment patterns. The implications of these early attachment experiences are profound. Securely attached children generally develop healthy social and emotional skills, exhibit resilience in the face of stress, and form positive relationships with peers and adults. In contrast, children with insecure attachment styles may encounter challenges in emotional regulation, social interactions, and may be at a higher risk for psychological difficulties (8).

Adult Attachment Theory

The transition from child to adult attachment theory reflects an extension of Bowlby's concepts to encompass a broader spectrum of relational experiences. While child attachment focuses on caregiver-infant bonds, adult attachment examines how these early patterns influence romantic, platonic, and professional relationships. Bartholomew and Horowitz (5) made significant contributions by proposing a four-category model of adult attachment that builds on the secure, anxious, and avoidant classifications identified in childhood research. Their model introduces dimensions of self-worth and perceptions of others, producing four adult attachment styles:

Secure attachment reflects the continuity of positive early attachments, characterized by comfort in intimacy and autonomy. *Dismissive avoidant attachment* stems from avoidant childhood patterns, marked by emotional detachment and a preference for independence. *Anxious preoccupied attachment* is rooted in anxious child attachment, leading to dependency and fear of abandonment. Finally, *fearful Avoidant attachment* combines traits of anxious and avoidant styles, associated with negative views of self and others.

This framework underscores the enduring impact of childhood attachment, demonstrating how early relational patterns influence adult interactions and perceptions.

Attachment styles developed in childhood continue to play a significant role in adult behaviors, particularly in exploration and adaptation. Elliot and Reis (9) emphasized that securely attached adults, influenced by stable caregiving in childhood, exhibit greater confidence in exploration and self-directed learning. This parallels the safe base concept, wherein secure attachment fosters a willingness to engage with challenges and pursue personal growth. Insecure attachment styles, in contrast, often lead to avoidance or anxiety in the face of new tasks, reflecting unresolved fears of failure or rejection.

For young adults transitioning into higher education, independence, or new environments, attachment theory provides key insights into their adaptability and growth. Securely attached individuals, drawing confidence from stable early attachments, exhibit higher resilience, self-efficacy, and openness to challenges. This aligns with Bartholomew and Horowitz's (5) model, which highlights how secure attachment fosters meaningful exploration and self-reliance (9). In contrast, anxious attachment may lead to dependency and fear of failure, while avoidant attachment often results in emotional detachment, limiting collaboration and growth. Kogut (10) found that securely attached young adults recover from setbacks more effectively, emphasizing the role of attachment in shaping responses to challenges. These patterns reveal the lasting impact of childhood attachment as young adults navigate independence and establish their identities.

Organizational Attachment Theory

The application of attachment theory to organizational settings provides valuable insights into workplace dynamics, particularly for junior workers navigating the early stages of their careers. Hazan and Shaver (4) extended attachment theory beyond personal relationships to explore its impact on professional interactions. They argued that attachment styles, shaped during childhood, influence how individuals relate to colleagues, supervisors, and organizational structures. Securely attached individuals typically demonstrate higher trust, collaboration, and adaptability in workplace settings. In contrast, those with insecure attachment styles may struggle with trust, communication, and team cohesion, challenges that can be particularly pronounced for junior workers adjusting to new roles.

Nelson and Quick (11) further examined the role of attachment in newcomer adjustment, emphasizing the importance of secure attachment for effective integration into workplace environments. For junior workers, secure attachment facilitates the development of positive social networks and mentoring relationships, key factors in building confidence

and achieving early career success. Insecure attachment styles, such as anxious or avoidant, often hinder adaptation, leading to difficulties in forming relationships and reduced job satisfaction. Yip et al. (12) offered a comprehensive review of attachment theory in organizational behavior, focusing on its implications for leadership, team dynamics, and employee well-being. They highlighted secure attachment as a critical factor in fostering resilience, effective communication, and adaptive responses to workplace challenges. These traits are especially crucial for junior workers who face high-stakes environments and unfamiliar responsibilities. Additionally, Yip et al. (12) emphasized the importance of organizational support systems, such as structured feedback and mentorship programs, in mitigating the negative effects of insecure attachment and supporting the professional development of junior workers.

3.2 Literature Review on How Secure Attachment Influences Achievement Motivation, Task Performance, and Stress

Building on the foundational understanding of attachment theory discussed earlier, its application to workplace dynamics reveals critical insights, particularly for junior employees navigating professional challenges. In engineering and technical fields, where collaboration, precision, and adaptability are paramount, secure attachment emerges as a key factor influencing achievement motivation, task performance, and stress management (3,7). These elements are essential for fostering both individual growth and organizational success in such demanding environments. This alignment of secure attachment with professional attributes highlights its profound influence on junior employees' ability to excel. By fostering confidence, resilience, and a growth-oriented mindset (10,12), secure attachment underpins the behaviors that drive achievement motivation, enhance task performance, and alleviate workplace stress (4,11). These dynamics are particularly significant in the high-stakes environments typical of engineering and technical roles.

Secure Attachment and Achievement Motivation

Achievement motivation, defined as the drive to excel and accomplish goals, is closely linked to attachment style. Securely attached individuals exhibit higher intrinsic motivation, stemming from confidence in their abilities and supportive relationships (9). Their positive self-image and view of others enable goal-directed behavior and resilience in the face of challenges (5). This resilience translates to a proactive approach to tasks and a willingness to learn, as noted by Dweck and Leggett (13) who highlighted the role of a growth mindset. For junior employees, who often face steep learning curves and

new responsibilities, secure attachment encourages viewing failures as opportunities for growth, fostering persistence and adaptability.

In technical and engineering roles, intrinsic motivation driven by secure attachment is crucial for innovation and problem-solving. Securely attached individuals approach complex problems with curiosity and determination, actively seeking feedback and engaging in collaborative efforts (12). This openness enhances creativity and teamwork, vital for addressing multifaceted challenges in dynamic environments. Moreover, studies by Furrer and Skinner (14) emphasize that secure attachment positively correlates with engagement and perseverance, especially in high-pressure roles where persistence is key to success. For junior employees transitioning into demanding technical fields, secure attachment facilitates effective adaptation to workplace expectations. Their motivation to excel and learn aligns with the collaborative nature of technical projects, where team success often depends on individual contributions. Research by Towler and Stuhlmacher (15) supports this, showing that securely attached employees demonstrate higher commitment to organizational goals and a greater willingness to embrace challenging tasks.

Secure Attachment and Task Performance

Secure attachment also plays a critical role in task performance, a key indicator of workplace success. Attributes such as organization, dependability, and focus are commonly exhibited by securely attached individuals, contributing to sustained productivity even under pressure (4). Additionally, their ability to regulate emotions and manage stress strengthens performance in high-stakes scenarios. For junior employees in engineering roles, these attributes are particularly relevant, as precision and adaptability are essential for success.

In team settings, securely attached employees build trust and foster open communication, enabling cohesive and effective collaboration across disciplines (16). This adaptability is crucial for junior employees developing their skills in technical environments. Research by Schmidt and Hunter (17) demonstrated that the combination of general mental ability and secure attachment enhances task performance by enabling individuals to efficiently apply knowledge and respond flexibly to dynamic workplace demands. Secure attachment also facilitates effective decision-making and problem-solving. According to Mikulincer and Shaver (6), securely attached individuals are better equipped to approach problems systematically, leveraging both logical reasoning and emotional regulation. These qualities are particularly advantageous for junior employees in technical fields,

where decision-making often involves analyzing complex data and coordinating with multidisciplinary teams.

Secure Attachment and Stress

Stress management is another area where secure attachment offers significant advantages. Professional life, especially for junior employees, often involves navigating unfamiliar environments, tight deadlines, and evolving responsibilities. Securely attached individuals are better equipped to utilize workplace resources, such as mentorship and peer support, to manage stress effectively (18). Their ability to recover from setbacks with composure and focus (10) makes them well-suited to roles requiring precision and problem-solving under pressure. For junior employees, secure attachment fosters a positive outlook on challenges, reframing them as opportunities rather than threats. This perspective is particularly beneficial in engineering and technical fields, where problem-solving under stress is a common requirement. Nelson and Quick (11) emphasized that secure attachment facilitates the development of supportive social networks, which are instrumental in buffering stress and fostering a sense of belonging.

3.3 Motivating Securely Attached Junior Employees in Technical Fields: A Proposition

Building on the historical context of attachment theory and its demonstrated influence on motivation, task performance, and stress management, this section proposes strategies to motivate securely attached junior employees in the technical and engineering fields. Drawing from the reviewed literature and industry specific studies, the proposition centers on leveraging the intrinsic strengths of securely attached individuals, such as their resilience, openness to collaboration, and proactive learning mindset to optimize their professional growth and contributions to organizational success. Securely attached individuals are characterized by a strong sense of self-worth and trust in others, which significantly impacts their workplace behavior. For junior employees in technical fields, these attributes translate to a high capacity for learning, adaptability, and collaborative problem-solving. This aligns with Dweck and Leggett's (13) concept of a growth mindset, where individuals view challenges as opportunities to develop skills rather than threats to their competence. In technical roles requiring precision and innovation, securely attached junior employees thrive when provided with environments that encourage experimentation, constructive feedback, and skill enhancement (12). Their intrinsic motivation, stemming from confidence in their abilities and a positive outlook on their relationships, makes them receptive to tasks that offer both autonomy and opportunities

for collaboration. Furthermore, these employees are likely to seek and value mentorship, recognizing its role in advancing their professional capabilities (11).

Securely attached junior employees excel in environments that prioritize open communication and teamwork. These individuals are more likely to engage positively in team dynamics due to their trust in others and capacity for handling constructive criticism (16). Establishing a culture of collaboration, particularly through cross-disciplinary technical teams, fosters diverse perspectives and innovation. Borrego and Newswander (19) emphasize that successful cross-disciplinary collaborations enable team members to leverage unique strengths, resulting in creative solutions and improved performance. For instance, interdisciplinary engineering teams that integrate technical and non-technical expertise can achieve superior outcomes by encouraging the exchange of diverse ideas. Structured feedback mechanisms further enhance this dynamic by providing junior employees with recognition and actionable insights. Yip et al. (12) found that regular peer reviews and one-on-one feedback sessions contribute to motivation and skill refinement by aligning individual contributions with team goals. By cultivating a culture where collaboration and transparent communication thrive, organizations can maximize the potential of securely attached junior employees, driving both individual and team success. The conclusions from this discussion are captured in the following proposition.

Proposition 1a: Cultivating a collaborative and feedback driven culture enhances motivation and performance among securely attached junior employees in technical fields.

Another critical aspect of motivating securely attached junior employees lies in structured learning and development programs. These individuals are highly receptive to professional development opportunities that align with their intrinsic motivation for growth (17). Research by Noe and Wilk (20) underscores the importance of individualized training programs tailored to both organizational objectives and employees' aspirations. Programs such as workshops on emerging technologies, certifications in advanced methods, or participation in technical boot camps provide junior employees with the tools they need to enhance their technical proficiency. Additionally, collaborative learning environments, such as hackathons and innovation sprints, encourage teamwork while fostering confidence in tackling complex challenges. Recognizing achievements through certifications, promotions, or technical awards reinforces the value of these initiatives, ensuring sustained engagement and motivation among junior employees. These

programs not only build technical expertise but also foster a sense of accomplishment and belonging, which are critical for maintaining long-term motivation in high-pressure technical roles. Furthermore, creating opportunities for securely attached employees to mentor newer recruits helps reinforce their own learning while enhancing organizational knowledge transfer, strengthening the team as a whole. These considerations lead to the following propositions.

Proposition 1b: Leveraging tailored learning and development programs fosters engagement and technical proficiency among securely attached junior employees in technical fields.

In addition, securely attached junior employees benefit from a balanced approach that combines autonomy with structured support. Deci and Ryan's (21) self-determination theory emphasizes that autonomy-supportive environments enhance intrinsic motivation by fulfilling individuals' needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy. Delegating challenging tasks, such as overseeing a subsystem's design, empowers junior employees while providing opportunities to develop their decision-making abilities and technical expertise. Mentorship programs, which offer both guidance and emotional support, further strengthen this balance. Open-door policies and regular supervisor check-ins also ensure that junior employees feel supported without compromising their independence. These strategies not only reduce stress but also foster a culture where employees feel valued and capable of achieving their best. Moreover, creating structured systems that allow securely attached employees to provide feedback on their autonomy and support needs can help fine tune these programs, ensuring a balance that optimizes both performance and well-being. The conclusions from this discussion are captured in the following proposition.

Proposition 1c: Balancing autonomy with structured support optimizes performance and reduces stress among securely attached junior employees in technical fields.

Practical application for organizations

To effectively harness the motivational potential of securely attached junior employees in technical fields, organizations should adopt targeted strategies that integrate relationship-building, skill development, and emotional well-being. Enhanced onboarding programs that prioritize mentorship and peer network development can facilitate

smoother transitions into demanding technical roles, fostering a sense of belonging and support. Structured feedback mechanisms, such as regular performance reviews and one-on-one meetings, provide securely attached employees with the constructive input they need to maintain intrinsic motivation and pursue continuous improvement. In addition, opportunities for cross-disciplinary collaboration expose junior employees to diverse perspectives, encouraging creativity and strengthening problem solving skills critical for technical challenges. Organizations should also address workplace stress by offering resources such as flexible work schedules, wellness programs, and access to counseling services. These initiatives align with the needs of securely attached individuals, promoting emotional resilience and sustained productivity. Recognizing the achievements of junior employees through meaningful incentives, such as career advancement pathways, innovation awards, or leadership roles, further reinforces their commitment and enhances their sense of purpose. By implementing these strategies, organizations can unlock the full potential of securely attached junior employees, fostering a thriving and innovative workforce.

3.4 Literature review on how anxious attachment influences achievement motivation, task performance, and stress

Building on the foundational understanding of attachment theory, anxious attachment presents a range of unique and multifaceted challenges in workplace dynamics, particularly for junior employees in technical fields. These challenges stem from the deeply ingrained emotional patterns established during earlier attachment relationships, which significantly influence how individuals perceive, interpret, and respond to workplace stressors (5). Anxiously attached individuals often grapple with a strong need for approval, which influences their interactions and coping mechanisms in high-stakes environments (4). Moreover, their heightened emotional sensitivity can lead to over-analysis of workplace interactions, further impacting their adaptation and performance (22). Understanding these dynamics is critical, as they shape not only individual outcomes but also team cohesion and organizational success in technical environments.

Anxious Attachment and Achievement Motivation

Achievement motivation, defined as the drive to excel and accomplish goals, is often undermined by the insecurities associated with anxious attachment. Unlike securely attached individuals, those with anxious attachment may doubt their abilities and fear

failure, which can impede goal directed behavior (9). This pervasive fear of inadequacy is further compounded by their reliance on external validation to maintain self-esteem and confidence (5). For junior employees navigating the technical field, this dynamic often translates into an overdependence on supervisors for guidance and reassurance, which can slow decision-making processes and hinder innovation. Louis (22) highlighted that newcomers frequently experience a sense of surprise and uncertainty when entering unfamiliar organizational settings, adding to the challenges for those with anxious attachment. This adjustment process can be particularly daunting for anxiously attached junior employees, who may struggle significantly with the ambiguity and unfamiliarity inherent in new roles. They often exhibit heightened concerns about meeting expectations or making mistakes, leading to hesitancy in decision-making, avoidance of risks, and a focus on perceived inadequacies. These tendencies are compounded in technical roles where precision, independence, and autonomy are frequently required. Wang et al. (23) observed that anxious attachment might also influence how employees set and pursue goals, often prioritizing short-term outcomes as a means to alleviate immediate insecurities rather than focusing on long-term developmental objectives. Such tendencies could severely limit the capacity for sustained professional growth in technically demanding roles.

Anxious Attachment and Task Performance

Task performance, a critical measure of workplace success, is particularly susceptible to the emotional volatility associated with anxious attachment. Anxiously attached employees often struggle with maintaining focus and consistency due to their heightened emotional reactivity and frequent overthinking (4). This can manifest as difficulty in prioritizing tasks, excessive concern over minor errors, or an inability to delegate responsibilities effectively. For junior employees adapting to technical roles, the sense-making process adds an additional layer of complexity and stress. Newcomers must reconcile their preconceived expectations with the realities of organizational practices, a process that can be particularly disorienting for individuals prone to self-doubt and overanalysis. They may expend disproportionate cognitive resources worrying about performance evaluations or how their contributions are perceived, which further detracts from their ability to effectively concentrate on assigned tasks. Wu and Parker (24) emphasized that leader support plays a significant role in alleviating these performance issues. Leaders who consistently provide reassurance and constructive feedback can help anxiously attached employees shift their focus toward meaningful task engagement rather than dwelling excessively on self-perceived inadequacies. This adjustment process, if unsupported, may lead to significant delays in task completion and overall

reductions in productivity. Regular, actionable feedback and clearly defined role expectations can give anxiously attached employees the structured framework they need to navigate challenges successfully and maintain consistent task performance (16).

Anxious Attachment and Stress

Stress management presents a notable challenge for junior employees with anxious attachment, as they tend to experience more intense emotional reactions in high-pressure environments. Their heightened sensitivity to criticism and intense fear of letting others down further aggravate workplace stress, often culminating in burnout or disengagement (18). These individuals may resort to avoidance strategies when feeling overwhelmed, such as procrastination or withdrawing, which can exacerbate stress levels and disrupt team cohesion. In technical roles where deadlines are tight and tasks are complex, these stressors can negatively affect both individual performance and overall team dynamics. Louis (22) pointed out that adapting to new work environments naturally involves stress, as employees adjust to interpreting and responding to unfamiliar situations. For those with anxious attachment, this stress is heightened due to their increased emotional sensitivity and fear of failure. Schusterschitz et al. (25) emphasized that anxious attachment orientations can intensify emotional responses to daily workload variations, leading to disproportionate stress reactions. These studies emphasize the critical need to understand attachment related stress patterns when developing effective, tailored strategies to alleviate stress. If left unaddressed, prolonged exposure to such stressors can lead to serious, long-term psychological and physical health consequences.

3.5 Literature review on what motivates people with anxious attachment

Understanding the motivational dynamics of individuals with anxious attachment is critical for creating environments that support their unique needs. People with anxious attachment are often characterized by heightened emotional sensitivity and a strong reliance on external validation. These traits shape their motivational drivers, particularly in workplace settings where interpersonal interactions play a significant role. This section explores the existing literature on how motivation manifests in people with anxious attachment, focusing on their need for reassurance, preference for relational goals, and susceptibility to feedback-driven dynamics.

Anxiously attached individuals are heavily motivated by the desire to gain approval and avoid rejection. Pai et al. (26) emphasized that individuals with anxious attachment are more likely to exhibit reduced proactivity in environments where they feel unsupported or undervalued. Their attachment system, which prioritizes connection and reassurance, often guides their behavior toward seeking safety in relationships rather than autonomy or innovation. This relational focus often manifests in efforts to align with the expectations of supervisors or colleagues, as they equate interpersonal harmony with personal success. For example, research shows that anxiously attached individuals may put extra effort into tasks when they believe these efforts will enhance their standing within a team or earn recognition from superiors. However, this behavior can sometimes lead to overcommitment, causing stress and reduced focus on long-term goals (26).

The role of relational goals in motivating anxiously attached individuals has been widely noted. Elliot and Reis (9) suggested that these individuals are more likely to pursue goals that emphasize closeness and connection, as opposed to goals centered on personal achievement or mastery. This pursuit is rooted in their fundamental need to mitigate feelings of insecurity through the validation of others. For example, in professional settings, they might prioritize collaborative efforts or tasks that involve interpersonal engagement over solitary, high-risk projects. However, this relationally driven motivation can sometimes limit their ability to excel in roles that require significant independence or innovation. The literature also notes that anxiously attached individuals may struggle to balance their relational goals with performance-based objectives, often prioritizing short-term relational security over long-term career aspirations (9).

Social support emerges as another critical factor influencing the motivation of anxiously attached individuals. Nelson and Quick (11) highlighted that the availability of social resources significantly enhances their adjustment in organizational contexts. Support from peers, mentors, or supervisors can help anxiously attached employees feel valued and understood, reducing their insecurities and boosting their confidence. For example, employees who perceive their managers as approachable and empathetic are more likely to engage in proactive behaviors and sustain motivation, even in challenging situations. Additionally, the presence of a supportive network often serves as a buffer against the negative effects of workplace stress, enabling anxiously attached individuals to maintain focus and productivity. However, the literature also suggests that the absence of such support can exacerbate feelings of inadequacy and hinder their ability to sustain motivation over time (11).

Another important aspect of the motivational dynamics of anxiously attached individuals is their response to feedback. Research by Deci and Ryan (21), which introduced self-determination theory, provides insights into how feedback affects motivation. According to their framework, anxiously attached employees are particularly responsive to positive feedback, which they perceive as a form of validation and reassurance. This responsiveness can drive them to work harder and strive for higher performance levels when they receive consistent acknowledgment of their efforts.

However, the same sensitivity to feedback can become a double-edged sword, as negative or ambiguous feedback often triggers feelings of self-doubt and inadequacy. For example, an anxiously attached employee might overinterpret a critical comment from a supervisor, leading to decreased motivation and a reluctance to take on new challenges. Schusterschitz et al. (25) further highlighted that emotional reactions to feedback are often amplified in anxiously attached individuals, underscoring the importance of constructive and supportive feedback mechanisms to sustain their motivation.

Moreover, anxiously attached individuals are often motivated by environments that emphasize inclusivity and psychological safety. Pai et al. (26) observed that anxiously attached employees thrive in workplaces where power dynamics are minimized, and individual contributions are recognized. Such settings allow these employees to feel secure and confident, encouraging them to engage more actively in their roles. This finding underscores the importance of organizational cultures that prioritize fairness and inclusivity as a means of enhancing motivation among anxiously attached individuals. Wu and Parker (24) also noted that leader support is instrumental in creating such environments, emphasizing that empathetic leadership can significantly enhance the motivation of employees with anxious attachment by fostering trust and reducing perceptions of vulnerability.

In summary, the existing literature highlights that the motivation of anxiously attached individuals is intricately tied to their relational needs, sensitivity to feedback, and dependency on supportive environments. Their reliance on external validation and focus on interpersonal dynamics shape their motivational framework, making them highly sensitive to their work environment. Understanding these factors is essential for identifying strategies that effectively support and enhance their motivation in professional settings.

3.6 Motivating Anxiously Attached Junior Employees in Technical Fields: A Proposition

Building on the insights from the literature review on anxious attachment, this section proposes tailored strategies to motivate junior employees with anxious attachment working in technical fields. Anxiously attached individuals are characterized by their heightened need for reassurance, sensitivity to feedback, and reliance on external validation (4,5). For junior employees in technical roles, these traits can manifest as challenges in adapting to complex, high-stakes environments. However, understanding these characteristics also provides an opportunity to develop supportive strategies that align with their motivational drivers. Drawing from the existing literature, the propositions focus on fostering psychological safety, leveraging structured feedback mechanisms, and promoting relational goals to optimize performance and well-being among anxiously attached junior employees.

Anxiously attached junior employees thrive in environments that emphasize inclusivity, fairness, and psychological safety. These individuals often experience heightened emotional responses in unfamiliar or high-pressure situations, making them particularly sensitive to perceived rejection or exclusion (26). Technical roles often involve intricate problem solving and interdisciplinary collaboration, both of which can amplify feelings of uncertainty for those with anxious attachment. Cultivating a psychologically safe environment, where employees feel secure to express concerns, seek help, and voice ideas is critical for reducing stress and enhancing motivation. Wu and Parker (24) highlighted that empathetic leadership plays a pivotal role in fostering such environments. Leaders in technical fields who demonstrate genuine care and understanding will help anxiously attached employees feel valued and supported, encouraging active engagement and reducing their fear of failure.

For example, team dynamics that prioritize collaboration and mutual respect are likely to create a sense of belonging, which is essential for anxiously attached individuals. Organizational cultures that openly recognize contributions, celebrate successes, and provide constructive support during setbacks are likely to reinforce anxiously attached individuals' confidence and willingness to take on challenges. These practices will not only mitigate their stress but also strengthen relational bonds, which are central to the motivational framework of anxiously attached employees.

Proposition 2a: Developing team structures that promote psychological safety and inclusive leadership enhances motivation and engagement among anxiously attached junior employees in technical fields.

In technical fields, where clarity and precision are paramount, structured and constructive feedback is critical for supporting anxiously attached junior . Similar to Proposition 1a, which highlights feedback as a tool for fostering collaboration, the next proposition emphasizes feedback tailored for reassurance and emotional support in environments requiring technical excellence. Anxiously attached individuals are particularly responsive to positive feedback, which serves as a form of reassurance and validation (10).

However, their sensitivity to criticism underscores the importance of delivering feedback in a supportive and constructive manner, especially in roles requiring technical precision and autonomy. Feedback mechanisms that emphasize specific, actionable guidance rather than vague or overly critical evaluations can help reduce self-doubt and build confidence (25). Regular feedback sessions, such as one-on-one meetings or peer reviews provide anxiously attached employees with the clarity and reinforcement they need to maintain focus and motivation.

For instance, in technical projects setting clear performance expectations and acknowledging incremental achievements can encourage them to stay committed to long-term goals without becoming overwhelmed by self-perceived inadequacies. Additionally, creating opportunities for anxiously attached employees to contribute to team discussions about progress and challenges will foster a sense of agency and inclusion, further enhancing their motivation and job satisfaction. These considerations lead to the following proposition.

Proposition 2b: Establishing feedback systems tailored to the precision and clarity requirements of technical aspects boosts focus, performance, confidence and motivation among anxiously attached junior employees in technical fields.

Anxiously attached individuals are intrinsically motivated by relational goals, as their attachment system prioritizes connection and reassurance over independence or personal achievement (9). These employees thrive when provided with opportunities for meaningful interpersonal engagement, which aligns the collaborative nature of technical environments. Nelson and Quick (11) emphasized that strong social support networks significantly enhance the adjustment and motivation of anxiously attached employees. For junior employees, such networks are vital for easing the transition into demanding technical roles and fostering a sense of belonging.

For example, assigning anxiously attached junior employees to roles that involve teamwork or cross-functional collaboration are likely to allow them to leverage their interpersonal strengths while fostering a sense of belonging. Structured mentorship programs, where senior employees provide guidance and support, may further enhance their professional development and relational satisfaction. Additionally, encouraging participation in group problem-solving sessions or brainstorming meetings is likely to help these employees feel valued and integrated, reinforcing their motivation to contribute effectively. Expanding these strategies with structured team-building activities can further solidify the sense of connection and alignment within the team. The conclusions from this discussion are captured in the following proposition:

Proposition 2c: Fostering collaborative opportunities and relationally oriented projects tailored to the team-centric nature of technical fields enhances motivation, relational satisfaction, and productivity among anxiously attached junior employees in technical fields.

Practical Application for Organizations

To implement these strategies effectively, organizations should adopt a holistic approach that integrates psychological safety, structured feedback, and relationally driven opportunities. Inclusive leadership practices and empathetic communication can foster an environment where anxiously attached employees feel secure and supported. Establishing clear, constructive feedback mechanisms and recognizing incremental achievements should ensure sustained motivation and confidence. Moreover, by fostering collaborative opportunities and relationally centered projects, organizations can align work structures with the intrinsic motivational drivers of anxiously attached employees. Finally, creating avenues for mentoring relationships and relational goal achievement is likely to address the unique needs of these employees, empowering them to thrive in technical roles. By adopting these integrated strategies, organizations can unlock the potential of anxiously attached junior employees, transforming their challenges into opportunities for growth and meaningful contribution.

3.7 Literature review on how avoidant attachment influences achievement motivation, task performance, and stress

Avoidant attachment introduces a unique set of challenges in workplace settings, particularly for junior employees in technical fields. Characterized by a strong preference

for self-reliance, discomfort with emotional closeness, and a tendency to suppress relational needs, avoidantly attached individuals often navigate professional environments with a heightened focus on independence at the expense of collaboration (5). These characteristics can significantly influence their achievement motivation, task performance, and stress management, particularly in technical fields that demand both individual expertise and teamwork. For junior employees who are at the formative stage of their careers, the interplay between avoidant attachment and the demands of technical roles presents critical obstacles to effective adaptation and professional growth.

Avoidant Attachment and Achievement Motivation

Achievement motivation which encompasses the intrinsic and extrinsic drivers to excel in professional tasks, is often uniquely shaped by avoidant attachment patterns. Avoidantly attached individuals may exhibit a diminished focus on mastery-approach goals, reflecting a reluctance to strive for personal improvement and competence (9). This avoidance of task-based standards of competence often stems from their discomfort with perceived vulnerability or dependence on others. Such tendencies can hinder their ability to engage with constructive feedback or take calculated risks, both of which are essential for innovation and problem-solving in technical environments. For junior employees, who must navigate steep learning curves and integrate into organizational cultures, avoidant attachment can exacerbate challenges. Louis (22) emphasized that newcomers to organizations often experience "surprise and sense-making" as they reconcile expectations with workplace realities. Avoidantly attached junior employees may struggle with these processes, as their discomfort with seeking guidance or feedback limits their ability to adapt effectively. This resistance to relational engagement often isolates them within team settings, reducing opportunities to learn from peers and supervisors. In technical fields, where cross-disciplinary collaboration is integral to innovation (19) avoidantly attached individuals may fail to fully participate in collective problem-solving. Their preference for solitary work and reluctance to rely on others can hinder their ability to integrate their expertise with broader team objectives. Furthermore, Wang et al. (23) highlighted that goal orientation plays a crucial role in professional achievement. Avoidantly attached individuals' avoidance of challenging goals may limit their ability to achieve long-term success in technical environments, where ambition and innovation are valued.

Avoidant Attachment and Task Performance

Task performance, a central measure of workplace effectiveness, is profoundly affected by the tendencies associated with avoidant attachment. Avoidantly attached individuals

often prefer solitary work environments where they can exercise control over their tasks without relying on others. While this preference aligns with certain technical tasks requiring individual expertise, it creates challenges in roles demanding collaboration and teamwork. The engineering and technical fields frequently involve complex projects that require collective problem-solving and the integration of diverse skill sets (19). Avoidantly attached junior employees may perceive collaborative efforts as threats to their autonomy, leading to disengagement or minimal participation in group activities. Richards and Schat (16) observed that avoidantly attached individuals often exhibit behaviors that undermine team cohesion, such as withholding information or appearing uncooperative. This dynamic can disrupt team workflows, particularly in technical settings where synchronized efforts are crucial for meeting project deadlines and achieving optimal outcomes.

Additionally, avoidantly attached employees' resistance to seeking feedback or clarification further hampers their performance. In technical roles, where precision and adaptability are critical, the reluctance to engage with team input or acknowledge areas for improvement may hinder both individual and collective performance. While self-reliance can be advantageous for completing certain assignments, avoidantly attached employees might find it challenging to balance this with the collaborative requirements of modern technical work environments.

Avoidant Attachment and Stress

Stress management presents significant challenges for avoidantly attached individuals, particularly in the high pressure environments typical of technical roles. Avoidantly attached employees often rely on deactivating strategies, such as emotional suppression and avoidance of support seeking behaviors, to cope with stress (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). While these strategies may provide short-term relief, they frequently result in unresolved stress that accumulates over time, negatively impacting mental and physical health. Junior employees, who are new to the demands of technical roles and organizational expectations, are particularly vulnerable to stress. Louis (1980) highlighted that the process of adjusting to new environments inherently involves stress, as individuals navigate unfamiliar norms and expectations. For avoidantly attached junior employees, this adjustment is further complicated by their reluctance to engage with available support systems. Nelson and Quick (11) noted that the absence of supportive relationships exacerbates perceptions of workplace stress, particularly for newcomers who have not yet established strong social networks.

In technical fields, the dynamic nature of work requiring frequent adaptation to new technologies and processes further amplifies stress for avoidantly attached individuals.

Schusterschitz et al (25) emphasized that avoidantly attached employees experience heightened emotional reactivity to workload variations, making them particularly susceptible to burnout in high-pressure situations. This susceptibility is compounded by their tendency to avoid addressing stressors directly, which can result in prolonged periods of disengagement or reduced productivity.

Moreover, the lack of access to social support networks significantly limits the stress mitigation strategies available to avoidantly attached employees. Wu and Parker (24) emphasized that leadership support plays a crucial role in fostering resilience among employees. However, avoidantly attached individuals may perceive such support as intrusive or unnecessary, further isolating them from potential resources that could alleviate workplace stress. This dynamic not only affects individual well-being but also disrupts team dynamics in technical settings where interdependence and collaboration are essential.

3.8 Literature review on what motivates people with avoidant attachment

Understanding the motivational dynamics of individuals with avoidant attachment is essential for creating environments that align with their unique psychological tendencies. Avoidantly attached individuals are often characterized by a strong preference for independence, discomfort with emotional closeness, and a tendency to suppress relational needs (5). These traits significantly shape their motivational frameworks, particularly in the workplace, where interpersonal interactions and collaboration play a central role. This section reviews existing literature on what motivates people with avoidant attachment, focusing on their inclination toward autonomy, their response to achievement-oriented tasks, and their approach to feedback and goal-setting.

Avoidantly attached individuals often exhibit a strong drive for autonomy, rooted in their reluctance to rely on others for support or validation. This intrinsic desire for independence can serve as a primary motivational driver, particularly in work environments that allow for self-directed tasks and minimal supervision. Mikulincer and Shaver (6) noted that avoidantly attached individuals tend to thrive in settings where they can maintain control over their responsibilities without feeling obligated to engage in close interpersonal relationships. In technical and engineering fields, where tasks often demand high levels of individual expertise and problem-solving, this preference for autonomy may align with certain aspects of job requirements. For example, roles involving research, data analysis, or programming may appeal to avoidantly attached individuals, as these tasks emphasize independent work and personal accountability.

However, their focus on autonomy can also limit their motivation in collaborative settings where interdependence is necessary. Schusterschitz et al. (25) emphasized that avoidantly attached employees might find motivation in structured environments that clearly define individual responsibilities while minimizing the need for extensive collaboration. Such environments allow them to concentrate on their strengths without feeling overwhelmed by relational demands.

The achievement motivation of avoidantly attached individuals is often shaped by their desire to demonstrate competence while avoiding relational entanglements. Elliot and Reis (9) found that avoidantly attached individuals are less likely to pursue mastery approach goals, which focus on improving skills and achieving personal growth. Instead, they may adopt task-oriented goals that emphasize achieving results without the necessity of relational engagement. This orientation aligns well with technical fields, where objective measures of performance, such as meeting project deadlines or producing accurate results, are often prioritized. Avoidantly attached individuals may also be motivated by task structures that provide clear, measurable outcomes and minimize ambiguity. For junior employees entering technical fields, the emphasis on tangible achievements can help them focus on specific goals without feeling the need to seek validation from peers or supervisors. Wang et al. (23) highlighted that goal orientation plays a crucial role in maintaining motivation, particularly for individuals who prioritize task completion over interpersonal engagement. Structured performance benchmarks and individualized project scopes can provide avoidantly attached employees with the clarity and direction they need to stay motivated.

Feedback mechanisms present a unique challenge for motivating avoidantly attached individuals, as their discomfort with relational closeness can make them resistant to seeking or accepting feedback from others. Avoidantly attached individuals often perceive feedback as a threat to their autonomy or as a critique of their competence, leading them to avoid opportunities for developmental conversations (5). However, when feedback is framed in a way that emphasizes objective performance outcomes rather than personal evaluations, it may serve as a motivational tool. Schusterschitz et al. (25) suggested that feedback mechanisms that focus on task-specific guidance, rather than interpersonal dynamics, can help avoidantly attached individuals engage with constructive criticism. For example, technical fields often rely on performance reviews that highlight measurable outcomes, such as project milestones or quality assessments. These objective forms of feedback align with the motivational framework of avoidantly attached individuals, allowing them to focus on task-related improvements without feeling emotionally exposed.

Goal setting also plays a critical role in motivating avoidantly attached individuals. Research by Deci and Ryan (21) on self-determination theory highlights the importance of autonomy supportive goals in maintaining motivation for individuals who prioritize independence. For avoidantly attached employees, goals that emphasize personal achievement and skill development can foster a sense of purpose without requiring extensive relational engagement. Wu and Parker (24) observed that avoidantly attached individuals are more likely to respond positively to goal setting processes that allow for self-direction and flexibility, as these elements align with their intrinsic motivational drivers.

Although avoidantly attached individuals typically de-emphasize relational goals, the broader organizational context can still influence their motivation. Nelson and Quick (11) highlighted the importance of creating environments that offer psychological safety and inclusivity, even for employees who may not actively seek relational support. For avoidantly attached individuals, this might involve fostering a culture of respect and professionalism, where interactions are focused on task-related collaboration rather than personal connections. In technical fields, where teamwork is often necessary to achieve complex outcomes, the relational dynamics of the workplace can indirectly affect the motivation of avoidantly attached individuals. Borrego and Newswander (19) emphasized the importance of cross-disciplinary collaboration in technical education and practice, noting that diverse team environments can enhance innovation and problem-solving. For avoidantly attached employees, participation in such teams might be facilitated by clearly defined roles and responsibilities, which reduce the relational ambiguity that often triggers discomfort.

The existing literature highlights several key factors that influence the motivation of avoidantly attached individuals. Their preference for autonomy, task-oriented achievement goals, and objective feedback mechanisms shapes their engagement in workplace settings, particularly in technical fields that demand both individual expertise and teamwork. While their reluctance to engage in relational dynamics can present challenges, understanding their unique motivational drivers provides a foundation for creating environments that align with their needs. Recognizing the interplay between individual preferences and organizational contexts is essential for supporting the motivation and performance of avoidantly attached individuals in professional settings.

3.9 Motivating Avoidantly Attached Junior Employees in Technical Fields: A Proposition

Building on the literature review on avoidant attachment, this section proposes tailored strategies to motivate avoidantly attached junior employees working in technical fields. Avoidantly attached individuals are characterized by their strong preference for independence, discomfort with seeking support, and tendency to downplay emotional engagement in the workplace (5). These traits shape their motivation and behavior, often leading them to prioritize autonomy over collaboration and suppress stress rather than actively seeking coping mechanisms. For junior employees in technical fields, who are still developing their professional competencies and adapting to structured work environments, these tendencies may present additional challenges in skill development, performance optimization, and stress management. However, understanding these characteristics also offers an opportunity to design workplace strategies that align with their motivational drivers while addressing potential obstacles. Drawing from the literature, the propositions focus on providing autonomy supportive environments, refining feedback mechanisms, and structuring goal setting processes to enhance the engagement and performance of avoidantly attached junior employees in technical fields. Avoidantly attached junior employees often exhibit strong motivation when they can exercise autonomy in their roles, particularly in technical fields where problem solving, analytical thinking and independent expertise are valued (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). In contrast, environments that impose frequent interpersonal interactions, extensive supervision or collaborative dependency may undermine their motivation by creating discomfort and resistance to engagement (25). Given that technical fields frequently involve individual problem-solving tasks, structured project ownership, and deep expertise in specialized areas, providing autonomy in these aspects may be particularly effective in sustaining motivation for avoidantly attached employees. For instance, engineering and software development roles often require employees to manage coding projects, analyze data, or conduct independent research. These task structures align well with avoidantly attached employees' preferences for self directed work. However, complete isolation in technical roles is often impractical as modern technical work still necessitates coordination with teams to integrate findings, ensure consistency and align individual efforts with larger project goals (19). Therefore, while autonomy should be prioritized, mechanisms that facilitate structured but flexible interactions, such as clearly defined responsibilities in team projects or allowing asynchronous contributions, can optimize motivation without forcing discomforting interpersonal dependencies. The conclusions from this discussion are captured in the following proposition:

Proposition 3a: Designing technical work environments that provide avoidantly attached junior employees with structured autonomy /such as independent

project ownership, flexible task execution, and minimal mandatory interpersonal dependency/ while integrating collaboration through asynchronous communication and defined touchpoints enhances motivation, task engagement, and project commitment.

Feedback mechanisms play a critical role in shaping workplace motivation, particularly for avoidantly attached individuals who may resist feedback that feels overly personal or emotionally charged (5). Traditional feedback approaches that rely on direct interpersonal discussions, frequent check-ins, or emotional framing may be perceived as intrusive by avoidantly attached employees, leading to disengagement rather than motivation. In technical fields, where objective performance metrics are often used to evaluate success, structuring feedback in a way that emphasizes task performance rather than interpersonal validation can be a more effective approach. Objective, data driven feedback mechanisms, such as key performance indicators, code review systems or milestone based evaluations may help avoidantly attached junior employees process feedback constructively without feeling emotionally vulnerable. Wang et al. (23) highlighted that performance oriented individuals respond well to structured and depersonalized feedback processes that focus on tangible results rather than subjective assessments. This is particularly relevant in technical fields where productivity and precision are prioritized over social collaboration. The conclusions from this discussion are captured in the following proposition:

Proposition 3b: Implementing structured, objective based feedback mechanisms enhances receptiveness to performance evaluation and professional development among avoidantly attached junior employees in technical fields.

In technical fields, goal setting is critical for maintaining focus and optimizing task performance, particularly for avoidantly attached junior employees. Research by Deci and Ryan (21) highlights the importance of autonomy supportive goal setting; however, rather than emphasizing mastery oriented goals, which avoidantly attached individuals are less likely to pursue (9) it appears that these employees might be better motivated by task oriented achievement goals. Task oriented goals focus on clear performance benchmarks, measurable outcomes, and specific deliverables. Such goals can provide avoidantly attached individuals with concrete targets that align with their preference for independence and self direction. For instance, establishing individualized project milestones, quality standards, or quantifiable performance indicators can help avoidantly attached junior employees concentrate on specific tasks without feeling the need to

engage in broader relational dynamics. This task focused approach may be particularly effective in technical environments where objective measures of success are common and collaboration is balanced with independent work (23). Additionally, when feedback is structured around these task-oriented objectives rather than personal or developmental growth, it may reduce the potential for avoidant individuals to experience discomfort or perceive a threat to their autonomy (24). By aligning goal setting practices with task oriented achievement objectives, organizations can support avoidantly attached employees in a manner that resonates with their intrinsic motivational drivers. This approach not only enhances individual productivity but also ensures that these employees contribute effectively to team projects, even in collaborative technical settings. The conclusions from this discussion are captured in the following proposition:

Proposition 3c: Establishing task-oriented, individually structured goal setting frameworks that emphasize clear performance benchmarks and measurable outcomes enhances motivation and task efficiency among avoidantly attached junior employees in technical fields.

Practical Application for Organizations

To effectively apply these strategies, organizations should focus on creating structured yet flexible work environments that align with the motivational drivers of avoidantly attached junior employees. Prioritizing autonomy while strategically incorporating minimal, necessary collaboration ensures that employees can engage with technical tasks without excessive relational pressure. Feedback systems should be designed to emphasize task performance and objective evaluations rather than interpersonal critiques, thereby promoting receptiveness to professional growth. Additionally, goal-setting strategies should focus on task-oriented achievement goals and individualized development pathways, ensuring that employees remain motivated to refine their technical skills without feeling forced into social interactions that may undermine their preference for independence. By implementing these strategies, organizations can foster a work environment where avoidantly attached junior employees can thrive, contributing meaningfully to technical projects while maintaining their desired level of autonomy.

3.10 Literature review on how fearful attachment influences achievement motivation, task performance, and stress

Fearful attachment, characterized by both high anxiety and high avoidance, presents unique challenges in workplace settings. Individuals with this attachment style often experience conflicting desires to seek social validation while simultaneously fearing rejection, leading to inconsistent interpersonal behaviors (5,6). This attachment style may influence various work related outcomes, and in technical fields, where precision, collaboration, and rapid adaptation are critical, the effects may be particularly pronounced. For junior employees who are new to their roles, the challenges of navigating unfamiliar organizational cultures and steep learning curves (22,27) may be exacerbated by the cognitive and emotional tendencies associated with fearful attachment.

Fearful Attachment and Achievement Motivation

Achievement motivation, defined as the drive to excel and accomplish goals, may be uniquely affected by the ambivalence inherent in fearful attachment. Individuals with fearful attachment often experience internal conflicts; they might desire the benefits of social validation and support, yet simultaneously fear the vulnerability that comes with such closeness (6). Park et al. (28) found that individuals with fearful attachment are particularly likely to base their self-esteem on external contingencies, such as others' approval, rather than intrinsic task mastery. This reliance on external validation may result in inconsistent motivation, as fearfully attached individuals may pursue goals for social approval but withdraw when faced with perceived criticism or failure.

In technical fields, where achievement often relies on iterative problem-solving and exposure to critical feedback, such tendencies may hinder professional development. Junior employees, who often face high expectations to learn rapidly and integrate into teams, may experience heightened stress when their performance is subject to evaluation. Elliot and Reis (9) suggest that fearfully attached individuals may struggle with mastery approach goals, making them less likely to embrace challenges that require sustained effort. Instead, they may adopt avoidance oriented strategies, preferring tasks where success is guaranteed while avoiding those that expose them to possible failure or judgment. This risk-averse approach may be particularly problematic in technical roles that demand resilience, adaptability, and proactive engagement with complex problem-solving processes (29).

Fearful Attachment and Task Performance

Task performance, a critical factor in professional success, may be significantly influenced by fearful attachment. Fearfully attached individuals tend to struggle with self-

regulation and workplace engagement, leading to variability in performance (6). In technical roles, where structured methodologies and precision are necessary, such inconsistencies can undermine both individual and team effectiveness. One key challenge for fearfully attached employees is their difficulty in seeking and utilizing constructive feedback. Collins & Feeney (30) suggest that fearfully attached individuals may perceive feedback as a personal attack rather than as an opportunity for growth. In engineering and technical settings, where feedback loops are essential for iterative improvement, this defensive reaction may prevent employees from fully engaging in learning and skill development. Furthermore, Borrego & Newswander (19) highlight the importance of cross-disciplinary teamwork in technical fields. Fearfully attached employees may struggle in such environments due to their discomfort with close collaboration, leading to difficulties in effectively integrating their expertise within larger project teams.

Additionally, research suggests that fearfully attached individuals may exhibit inconsistent work habits due to their fluctuating confidence levels. Their fear of criticism may cause them to excessively self-monitor or second-guess their work, leading to inefficiencies and delays. Alternatively, when faced with high-pressure situations, they may disengage entirely to avoid the emotional distress associated with potential failure (28). These tendencies can be particularly problematic for junior employees in technical roles, as they often require rapid skill acquisition and the ability to navigate complex, high stakes projects with confidence. Furthermore, fearfully attached employees may struggle with knowledge sharing behaviors, an essential component of success in technical fields. Van Maanen & Schein (27) emphasize that junior employees rely heavily on informal learning and mentorship to develop their professional competencies. However, fearfully attached individuals may avoid such interactions, thereby limiting their own skill development. The reluctance to seek assistance or share expertise with colleagues could lead to inefficiencies in collaborative projects, ultimately impacting overall team performance.

Fearful Attachment and Stress

Stress management is particularly challenging for individuals with fearful attachment, as their high levels of anxiety and avoidance may lead to maladaptive coping strategies (6). In technical fields, where project deadlines are stringent and problem-solving under pressure is a routine requirement, this difficulty in managing stress can negatively impact both individual well-being and overall team dynamics.

Fearfully attached individuals may struggle to seek social support in the workplace, despite their underlying need for validation. Bartholomew & Horowitz (5) suggest that

these individuals may withdraw from colleagues or supervisors during periods of stress, isolating themselves instead of seeking guidance or reassurance. This avoidance strategy can be particularly detrimental for junior employees, who may already experience heightened stress due to their inexperience and the pressures of adapting to a new professional environment (27). Additionally, Schusterschitz et al. (25) emphasize that individuals with high attachment-related anxiety are more likely to experience disproportionate emotional responses to daily workload variations. In technical fields, where problem-solving often involves handling unexpected challenges, these heightened stress reactions may lead to burnout, decreased productivity, or disengagement from professional responsibilities. Furthermore, fearful attachment may contribute to a reluctance to seek mentorship or career guidance, despite the potential benefits of such support systems. Collins & Feeney (30) highlight that fearfully attached individuals often misinterpret supportive behaviors as conditional or insincere, leading them to reject offers of assistance. This reluctance to build professional relationships may hinder career progression, as junior employees in technical fields often benefit significantly from mentorship programs and collaborative learning opportunities (29).

3.11 Literature review on what motivates people with fearful attachment

Fearful attachment, characterized by both high anxiety and high avoidance, leads to ambivalent behaviors, particularly when it comes to handling social interactions and emotional regulation (5). These tendencies influence how fearfully attached individuals approach autonomy, feedback, goal-setting, and interpersonal dynamics. This is particularly relevant in technical fields, such as engineering, where problem-solving and collaboration are essential but autonomy is also frequently required. This section explores how autonomy and related factors motivate fearfully attached junior employees in technical roles.

Autonomy is a key motivational factor in technical fields, especially for junior employees who are often expected to develop self-directed problem-solving skills. The Experiences in Close Relationships (ECR) scale, originally developed by Brennan, Clark, & Shaver (31) is widely used to assess attachment-related anxiety and avoidance. Wei et al. (32) adapted and validated a shorter version of the ECR scale, further demonstrating that individuals high in both avoidance and anxiety struggle with interpersonal closeness and experience conflicted motivational tendencies. In workplace settings, this conflict may manifest as an attraction to autonomous tasks that minimize the unpredictability of social

interactions, while still allowing for structured engagement. In technical fields, autonomy is particularly relevant for tasks such as research, coding, and engineering design, where independent problem-solving is a key skill (33).

However, for fearfully attached junior employees, autonomy alone may not be sufficient as a motivational driver. Fearful attachment is associated with disorganized behavioral patterns (34), meaning that excessive autonomy without structure may cause distress rather than motivation. Unlike avoidantly attached individuals, who thrive in unstructured independence, fearfully attached employees may benefit from “structured autonomy”, a work environment that allows them a sense of control while also providing predictable, non-intrusive support mechanisms. Avoidantly attached individuals prefer autonomy as a means of emotional distance; dissimilarly, fearfully attached employees may be motivated by task structures that offer flexibility without complete social detachment. Research suggests that autonomy supports motivation most effectively when it is paired with accessible but low-pressure social interactions (21). Fearfully attached employees may be more motivated when working independently but with structured check-ins, where guidance is available without the expectation of deep interpersonal engagement. For instance, in engineering teams, they may be more engaged when working on self-contained project components while still having a defined point of contact for troubleshooting.

Moreover, fearfully attached individuals may exhibit fluctuating comfort levels with autonomy, depending on their perceived sense of competence and security in their role (35). This fluctuation may occur because autonomy provides a safe distance from social interactions, but prolonged independence can trigger feelings of inadequacy, especially when junior employees feel unprepared to handle the demands of technical tasks independently (25). In technical fields, where early career employees must quickly build expertise, autonomy that incorporates gradual responsibility increases may enhance motivation. Structured mentorship models, where guidance is provided on an as-needed basis rather than through intensive supervision, may also be effective. This approach allows junior employees to feel supported without being micromanaged, promoting self-efficacy while mitigating feelings of inadequacy (36). This approach aligns with findings from Felder & Brent (36), who emphasized that structured, scaffolded learning environments enhance motivation and skill development for new engineers, particularly those who may be reluctant to seek direct support.

Receiving and processing feedback is crucial in technical fields, particularly for junior employees who are still developing their skills. Collins & Feeney (30) found that individuals with insecure attachment often misinterpret social support, perceiving it as

criticism rather than guidance. Fearfully attached junior employees, who experience both high anxiety and avoidance, may view feedback as a personal attack, which can hinder their professional development. This defensive reaction is particularly detrimental in engineering fields, where continuous feedback and iterative learning are essential for improving technical skills (37). Simpson & Rholes (34) emphasized that disorganized attachment, which includes fearful-avoidant patterns, makes it difficult for individuals to seek or accept feedback, as they fear negative evaluation.

In technical roles, where feedback is often highly specific and task-oriented, fearfully attached individuals may avoid feedback altogether, perceiving it as a confirmation of their inadequacies. This avoidance is problematic, especially for junior engineers, as feedback is critical for skill development and career progression (38). Structured feedback mechanisms that focus on task performance rather than personal evaluations could help mitigate the anxiety that fearfully attached junior employees experience. This is because fearfully attached individuals are more likely to view personal evaluations as threats to their self-worth (28). In engineering education and early career stages, receiving feedback is essential for junior employees to build confidence and competence (36). However, fearfully attached individuals may react defensively to constructive criticism, leading to a cycle of avoidance and stagnation in skill development. Mikulincer & Shaver (6) suggest that individuals with high attachment anxiety are prone to interpreting feedback and social interactions as threats to their self-worth, often viewing them through the lens of rejection. Based on these findings, fearfully attached individuals may associate feedback with rejection, triggering defensive behaviors. Providing feedback in a manner that reduces the emotional vulnerability of these employees, such as through written or anonymous evaluations, may help them process feedback more effectively without triggering their attachment-related anxieties. Fearfully attached individuals' fear of failure and rejection often undermines their achievement motivation (28). Mikulincer & Shaver (6) found that individuals with high attachment anxiety and avoidance tend to adopt avoidance-oriented strategies, focusing on tasks with guaranteed success to protect themselves from potential failure. In technical fields, where long-term, mastery-oriented goals are essential, this risk-averse behavior can limit their potential. Junior engineers, in particular, are often tasked with mastering new skills and solving complex problems over time. Research indicates that attachment-related anxiety is associated with avoidance of long-term challenges and a preference for immediate, externally validated success (6). Favez & Tissot (35) further suggest that individuals with fearful attachment engage in self-protective behaviors, which can include goal selection strategies that minimize exposure to failure or negative evaluation. Given these tendencies, fearfully attached individuals may struggle with long-

term mastery-oriented goals in technical fields, where sustained engagement with complex skill sets is necessary.

Instead, they may be more likely to pursue short-term, low-risk goals that provide immediate validation and reduce perceived psychological threats. While this pattern has not been exclusively studied in technical professionals, existing attachment research suggests that these behaviors may translate into workplace settings, particularly in fields requiring continuous learning and problem-solving. Park et al. (28) highlighted that individuals with attachment anxiety often base their self-worth on external validation, which makes them vulnerable to inconsistent goal-pursuit. Fearfully attached junior employees may initially set high goals to gain approval from supervisors or peers but may withdraw when faced with challenges that require sustained effort. This is particularly problematic in engineering roles, where problem-solving often requires perseverance and iteration. In these situations, fearfully attached individuals may avoid tasks that carry a risk of failure, leading to underperformance and missed opportunities for growth.

Additionally, Simpson & Rholes (34) discussed how fearful-avoidant individuals often show disorganized behaviors, particularly when faced with complex or ambiguous tasks. This disorganization may manifest in technical settings as a reluctance to engage in challenging projects, particularly when junior employees feel uncertain about their abilities. To mitigate this, goal-setting strategies that provide clear, measurable milestones and emphasize personal achievement rather than external approval may help fearfully attached individuals stay motivated.

Despite their discomfort with close relationships, fearfully attached individuals may still be motivated by social comparison and validation, particularly in professional settings. Bartholomew & Horowitz (5) suggested that fearfully attached individuals, who have negative views of both themselves and others, might seek validation through professional achievements while avoiding deeper interpersonal connections. In technical fields, success often depends on individual competencies, which aligns with Dweck's (13) work on performance orientation. Dweck highlighted that individuals with a performance-oriented mindset are motivated by demonstrating their competence to gain external validation rather than focusing on collaboration and mastery. Based on these findings, fearfully attached junior employees may find motivation in demonstrating competence through individual achievements without engaging in close teamwork. Favez & Tissot (35) emphasized that fearfully attached individuals often struggle with forming close bonds but are still motivated by the need for recognition. In engineering teams, structured collaboration that limits emotional exposure while offering opportunities for individual recognition may help motivate fearfully attached employees.

3.12 Motivating Fearfully Attached Junior Employees in Technical Fields: A Proposition

Fearfully attached individuals, characterized by both high anxiety and high avoidance, present a unique set of motivational challenges in technical fields, particularly for junior employees. Their simultaneous desire for validation and fear of rejection leads to inconsistent engagement with tasks and collaboration. While this attachment style can negatively impact their achievement motivation, task performance, and stress management (5), understanding how to address these dynamics in technical settings can lead to more effective strategies for enhancing motivation. Junior employees in technical fields, who face high expectations to acquire new skills and integrate into team-based environments, are particularly susceptible to these attachment-related issues. In this section, I propose three strategies specifically designed to motivate fearfully attached junior employees by addressing their distinct needs regarding autonomy, feedback, and collaboration.

Autonomy is a critical driver of motivation in technical fields, where problem-solving, independent thinking, and creativity are required. Junior employees, who are typically transitioning from academic to professional environments, often find themselves handling complex tasks such as engineering design, data analysis, or software development. While autonomy is known to enhance motivation by fostering a sense of control and competence (21) for fearfully attached individuals, too much autonomy can trigger feelings of vulnerability and self-doubt. Simpson & Rholes (34) emphasized that fearfully attached individuals are prone to disorganized behaviors, especially in contexts where they are left to manage tasks independently without clear guidelines or support. For fearfully attached junior employees, the solution lies in offering gradual autonomy, a stepwise increase in independence that is closely accompanied by clear role boundaries and structured check-ins. In practice, this could involve assigning smaller, self-contained tasks at the outset, where employees can work independently but within a clearly defined framework. As these employees gain confidence, their tasks can become more complex, but the boundaries must remain clear to avoid overwhelming them. For example, an engineering junior employee tasked with coding a small software module can work independently, with pre-defined deliverables and periodic check-ins to ensure progress. The key is to prevent them from feeling either completely isolated or micromanaged, allowing them to develop a sense of ownership without the anxiety of total independence. Fearfully attached individuals may show shifting levels of comfort with autonomy, contingent on their perceived competence and security within the relationship context (5,31). Additionally, research shows that clear role boundaries and structured autonomy

provide psychological safety, which is particularly important in technical fields where ambiguity can exacerbate stress and reduce motivation (39). By offering them structured yet flexible autonomy, organizations can support fearfully attached junior employees in technical fields by encouraging creativity and independent problem-solving without overwhelming them with too much responsibility too soon. The conclusions from this discussion are captured in the following proposition:

Proposition 4a: Gradual autonomy, coupled with clear role boundaries and structured, non-intrusive support, enhances motivation and engagement for fearfully attached junior employees in technical fields.

Fearful individuals are often highly sensitive to feedback, interpreting constructive criticism as a personal attack rather than an opportunity for growth (6). This defensive reaction can be particularly detrimental in technical fields, where feedback is essential for iterative improvement, especially for junior employees who are still developing their skills. Technical roles frequently involve detailed performance evaluations, from code reviews to design critiques, and fearfully attached employees may find this constant evaluation overwhelming if it is not delivered carefully. One way to address this is through objective feedback mechanisms that emphasize task performance over personal qualities. Fearfully attached employees, who base much of their self-worth on external validation, can find emotionally neutral feedback more manageable (28). In a technical context, feedback that is centered on measurable outcomes, such as project milestones, design accuracy, or code efficiency, rather than subjective opinions reduces the emotional burden of feedback. For example, a software engineer receiving feedback on code performance metrics (such as execution speed or error rates) is less likely to feel personally criticized than one receiving vague comments about "improving" or "doing better." Quantifiable feedback makes it easier for fearful employees to focus on their professional development without fearing personal rejection. In addition to objective feedback, anonymized peer feedback can also play a crucial role in reducing anxiety. Fearfully attached individuals may struggle with direct interpersonal feedback, fearing judgment or rejection from their colleagues (30). By utilizing written feedback mechanisms or anonymous peer review processes, organizations can create an environment where fearfully attached employees can accept criticism without feeling emotionally exposed. In technical fields where collaboration is essential but emotionally charged feedback can derail progress, this approach is particularly valuable.

Proposition 4b: Providing objective, task-focused feedback through measurable outcomes and anonymized peer reviews reduces the emotional vulnerability and enhances receptiveness to feedback for fearfully attached junior employees in technical fields.

Collaboration is a cornerstone of technical fields, where interdisciplinary teamwork is often required to solve complex problems (19). However, fearfully attached individuals tend to avoid deep interpersonal engagement due to their fear of rejection and interpersonal conflict (5). While they may recognize the importance of teamwork, their discomfort with emotional closeness makes it difficult for them to fully engage in collaborative settings, particularly when such settings require extensive face-to-face interaction. To address this, organizations can implement structured collaboration models that limit emotional exposure while still facilitating meaningful teamwork. Structured collaboration involves clearly defined roles and responsibilities within team projects, allowing fearfully attached employees to contribute their expertise without feeling overwhelmed by interpersonal dynamics. For example, in a cross disciplinary engineering project, a fearfully attached junior engineer might be responsible for a specific technical component of the design, with limited direct interaction with other team members. Their contribution would be vital to the project's success, but the structure of the collaboration would allow them to engage primarily with their technical tasks rather than with the social aspects of teamwork. Park et al. (28) noted that fearfully attached individuals are still motivated by external validation, even if they tend to avoid social situations in which they could experience overt rejection. In technical fields, this means that creating opportunities for individual recognition within a team context without excessively deep interpersonal closeness can be an effective way to motivate them. Research shows that employees in technical fields are more motivated when their individual contributions are recognized and tied to project success, even when working within a team environment (40). Structured collaboration models that offer such recognition, while minimizing the need for constant relational engagement, can help motivate fearfully avoidantly attached employees, who are still driven by professional validation but may avoid close interpersonal connections.

The conclusions from this discussion are captured in the following proposition:

Proposition 4c: Implementing structured collaboration models that emphasize defined roles, asynchronous communication, and the use of technology driven collaboration tools enhances motivation and reduces the emotional burden of teamwork for fearfully attached junior employees in technical fields.

4. Discussion

4.1 Comparative Analysis of Attachment Styles and Workplace Behavior

This chapter synthesizes the reviewed literature by comparing the four primary attachment styles /secure, anxious, avoidant, and fearful/ with regard to their influence on achievement motivation, task performance, and stress management in junior employees in technical fields. Additionally, it aligns these styles with the propositions developed in previous chapters to highlight practical applications for organizations.

The table below offers a structured overview:

Attachment Style	Core Characteristics	Workplace Strengths	Common Challenges	Motivational Drivers	Key Propositions from Thesis
Secure	Low anxiety, low avoidance; confident and open to relationships	High resilience, intrinsic motivation, adaptability, collaboration	May become bored without growth; over-reliance on social support in teams	Autonomy, mastery, and meaningful collaboration	1a: Encourage collaborative, feedback-driven culture 1b: Offer structured learning and development 1c: Balance autonomy and support
Anxious	High anxiety, low avoidance; seeks approval and fears rejection	Strong drive when supported, socially sensitive, willing to please	Overly dependent on feedback, avoids risk, high emotional volatility	Validation, clear expectations, psychological safety	2a: Promote inclusive leadership and team safety 2b: Tailor structured feedback to reduce insecurity 2c: Leverage relational goals in team settings
Avoidant	Low anxiety, high avoidance; independent	Strong in self-directed tasks, logical, avoids	Resists collaboration, avoids help, disengages	Independence, task clarity, control	3a: Provide structured autonomy with minimal forced collaboration

	but emotionally distant	interpersonal drama	under feedback		3b: Use objective, impersonal feedback systems 3c: Set task-focused, measurable individual goals
Fearful	High anxiety, high avoidance; conflicted desire for closeness and fear of rejection	May perform well when structure and predictability are high	Disorganized under pressure, avoids both feedback and closeness, burnout risk	Structured autonomy, predictable routines, non-intrusive support	4a: Implement gradual autonomy with clear roles and check-ins 4b: Offer emotionally safe, depersonalized feedback 4c: Design step-by-step, low-threat collaborative opportunities

Table 1. Comparison of Attachment Styles in the Workplace: Core Characteristics, Challenges, Motivational Drivers, and Corresponding Propositions for Junior Employees in Technical Fields

4.2 Practical Implications

This comparative framework reveals that each attachment style requires distinct motivational strategies in order to thrive in technical environments. Secure individuals respond well to dynamic, team-oriented environments, while avoidantly attached employees require space and independence. Anxiously attached employees perform best under emotionally supportive leadership, and fearfully attached employees need highly structured and psychologically safe work conditions.

By matching work design and leadership approaches to attachment styles, organizations can:

Improve retention of junior talent.

Reduce onboarding stress by tailoring support systems.

Enhance innovation by creating psychologically diverse teams with complementary strengths.

Prevent burnout, especially among employees with high attachment-related anxiety.

These findings support a customized management approach rather than a “one-size-fits-all” model. Especially in technical fields with high complexity and pressure, such alignment can enhance both well-being and performance.

4.3 Hypothetical Scenarios: Attachment Styles in Action

To further illustrate the practical implications of attachment styles in the workplace, the following hypothetical scenarios depict how junior employees with different attachment orientations might respond to similar challenges in a technical team setting. Each case highlights their behavioral tendencies, stress reactions, and ideal management approaches, reinforcing the propositions made in earlier chapters.

Scenario 1: Securely Attached – “Ganduulga, the Confident Collaborator”

Ganduulga is a junior mechanical engineer who recently joined a cross-functional R&D team tasked with developing a new product prototype. From day one, he shows a positive attitude, asks questions freely, and builds rapport with both peers and supervisors. When the project encounters unexpected design issues, Ganduulga actively participates in brainstorming sessions, shares ideas without fear of judgment, and seeks feedback to improve. He treats challenges as opportunities to grow and helps maintain team morale during stressful periods.

Management Strategy: Ganduulga thrives in an open, collaborative culture with regular mentorship, constructive feedback, and opportunities to learn new skills. He benefits from being given autonomy on smaller components of the project while remaining embedded in the team’s communication flow.

Attachment Style Fit: Secure

Aligned Propositions: 1a, 1b, 1c

Scenario 2: Anxiously Attached – “Saruul, the Approval Seeker”

Saruul, a junior software developer, joins the same team and initially appears highly motivated. She frequently checks in with her supervisor for reassurance and becomes anxious when she doesn’t receive immediate responses to her code reviews. During meetings, she hesitates to voice her ideas, fearing judgment or rejection.

When she receives vague or overly critical feedback, Saruul internalizes it as personal failure, which affects her performance and causes emotional distress. However, when praised or included in team discussions, her productivity and creativity soar.

Management Strategy: Saruul needs regular, specific, and emotionally supportive feedback. An inclusive, psychologically safe environment with structured mentoring can help her feel secure and boost her motivation.

Attachment Style Fit: Anxious

Aligned Propositions: 2a, 2b, 2c

Scenario 3: Avoidantly Attached – “Temuulen, the Lone Coder”

Temuulen is a junior data engineer who excels at individual tasks but avoids team activities unless absolutely necessary. He delivers clean, functional code ahead of deadlines but ignores team Slack channels and resists attending check-ins. When assigned to a pair programming session, he appears disengaged and provides minimal interaction.

Despite his performance, his behavior leads to communication breakdowns. He avoids asking for help, even when stuck, leading to avoidable delays in one sprint.

Management Strategy: Temuulen performs best with individual project ownership, clear performance expectations, and impersonal feedback (e.g., written reports or automated code reviews). Allowing asynchronous collaboration and limiting emotional demands in team interactions can help sustain his engagement.

Attachment Style Fit: Avoidant

Aligned Propositions: 3a, 3b, 3c

Scenario 4: Fearfully Attached – “Tsetseg, the Cautious Observer”

Tsetseg is a junior civil engineer who seems both eager and hesitant. During team orientation, she participates minimally and avoids taking on leadership roles. She is highly competent but constantly second-guesses her work. She avoids asking questions, fearing judgment, and becomes visibly anxious during performance reviews.

She performs best when given well-defined tasks, clear deliverables, and a trusted contact person she can approach quietly. When overwhelmed, she may disengage or avoid meetings entirely.

Management Strategy: Tsetseg needs gradual increases in responsibility, paired with emotionally neutral feedback and structured support. A calm, non-confrontational environment with predictable routines can reduce her anxiety and help her gradually open up to teamwork.

Attachment Style Fit: Fearful

Aligned Propositions: 4a, 4b, 4c

5. Directions for Future Research

The relationship between attachment styles and how junior employees handle stress, motivation, and work challenges is a growing area that deserves more attention. While this thesis focused on reviewing and organizing existing literature, future research should build on these ideas with more practical, evidence-based approaches. Deeper and broader investigations will help organizations better support young professionals, especially in technical fields where tasks are often complex and pressure is high.

5.1 Conducting Data-Based Research with Junior Employees

One of the most essential next steps is to collect first-hand data from young professionals currently working in different organizations. Surveys, interviews, and workplace assessments can help measure how employees' attachment styles affect their daily experiences. This might include their comfort level when working in teams, their reactions to constructive criticism, their ability to stay motivated during repetitive or difficult tasks, and their coping strategies when under pressure. It would be valuable to conduct such studies across different industries, engineering, IT, architecture, finance, and other, to see whether the trends apply broadly or vary by field. These studies could also explore how secure versus insecure attachment types /such as anxious or avoidant tendencies/ relate to specific workplace behaviors. For example, are securely attached individuals more likely to seek help when needed or offer help to others? Do avoidantly attached employees tend to isolate themselves or hesitate to ask for guidance? A deeper look at such questions could bring real clarity to how personality traits rooted in early life experiences continue to influence job performance and satisfaction in adulthood. By gathering data from a large number of junior employees, future studies can provide stronger evidence that either supports or challenges the conclusions drawn from existing theories.

5.2 Observing Behavior in Simulated or Real Work Situations

Alongside surveys, it is equally important to observe how employees act in real or realistic work settings. Researchers could create tasks or simulations that mirror workplace scenarios, such as group projects, last minute deadlines, or performance reviews, and examine how people with different attachment styles respond. This kind of observation can reveal behaviors that employees may not be fully aware of or may not report in interviews. For instance, someone with an anxious attachment style might respond to unclear instructions by frequently checking in with their supervisor or doubting their own work. In contrast, someone with an avoidant attachment style might avoid asking for help even when they are unsure about the task. These differences could affect

team dynamics, productivity, and even employee well-being over time. Observing such patterns in a controlled environment would help confirm the connection between internal attachment tendencies and outward behavior. This kind of research could also provide important guidance for managers and HR teams when trying to understand and support their new employees more effectively.

5.3 Looking at Physical and Emotional Reactions to Stress

Another interesting direction is to explore the physical and emotional reactions that junior employees have when they face difficult tasks or uncertain situations. This could include tracking basic signs such as changes in breathing, sweating, or heart rate, especially during high-pressure scenarios. These measurements could help researchers understand how attachment styles are linked to the way people react to stress in real-time. For example, employees with more secure attachments might remain more stable during workplace challenges, while those with anxious or avoidant tendencies could show stronger stress responses. Even simple observations, like how quickly someone recovers after receiving critical feedback, could offer important insights. This line of research can make the connection between attachment style and stress more visible and measurable, which can support better workplace planning and support systems.

5.4 Designing Practical Support Programs Based on Attachment Styles

The final and perhaps most important direction for future research is turning theory into action, developing real programs and practices that help employees succeed based on their emotional and behavioral needs. As our understanding of attachment styles in the workplace improves, it will be possible to create tailored interventions that guide managers, HR professionals, and team leaders in supporting junior staff more effectively. For example, research could test whether assigning mentors based on personality compatibility improves job satisfaction and learning. Onboarding programs might be adjusted to make insecurely attached individuals feel more welcomed and involved during their first few weeks. Trainings could be offered to managers, teaching them how to recognize and adapt to different emotional responses in their team members. Even small changes in communication style or feedback delivery could make a big difference in helping junior employees feel safe, supported, and motivated.

These kinds of interventions could be especially helpful in fast-paced or competitive fields where the pressure to perform is high and support is limited. Future research should explore which types of interventions work best for specific attachment styles and how they can be implemented efficiently across different workplaces. It would also be useful to follow junior employees over time to see whether such programs lead to longer-term improvements in job performance, motivation, and emotional well-being.

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