

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AND SATISFACTION IN COUPLE RELATIONSHIPS

Kristine Kreile¹, Alla Plaude-Demidova¹

¹University of Latvia, Riga

ANNOTATION

The aim of the study is to investigate the relationship between the use of functional and dysfunctional communication strategies in relationships and their association with relationship satisfaction. The research examines whether the use of specific communication strategies is related to couple satisfaction and identifies the nature of these relationships. The research instrument consists of a demographic section and two surveys measuring overall relationship satisfaction and communication strategies or habitual patterns in romantic relationships. Satisfaction with relationships was measured using the Partner Satisfaction Score. The method was adapted into Latvian (Mizāne, 2006). The survey contains 35 statements. The preference for different communication strategies in the partnership was measured using the updated version of the Communication Patterns Questionnaire (Crenshaw et al., 2017). The initial adaptation of the questionnaire for the purposes of the study was carried out as part of this work. The study sample consists of 840 respondents. The results confirm that the use of functional or constructive communication strategies in relationships is positively related to couple satisfaction, while dysfunctional, partner-demanding/self-withdrawal, and self-demanding/partner-withdrawal communication strategies are negatively related to couple satisfaction. Regression analysis revealed that relationship satisfaction in this sample was predicted by the use of constructive communication – the more constructive communication is used in interactions, the more satisfied individuals are with their relationships.

Keywords: *communication strategies, constructive communication, dysfunctional communication, relationship satisfaction, self-demanding/partner withdrawal, partner-demanding/self-withdrawal*

Introduction

The research focuses on whether the use of certain communication strategies is related to couple satisfaction and identifies the nature of these relationships.. It is widely believed that the quality of communication in a relationship significantly impacts each individual's assessment of satisfaction, which is why much of the advice given in clinical work with couples is based on this research evidence. The pattern-based communication

strategies of couples have been a focus of research because they predict important aspects of the relationship, such as intimacy, satisfaction, and termination of relationship. The overall quality and health of relationships is considered an important component of an individual's overall health (Bodenmann et al., 2014). In previous decades, research has found that negative communication strategies (avoidance, criticism, threatening, blaming, defending) are associated with greater relationship dissatisfaction, whereas positive communication strategies (engagement, mutual discussion, listening) are positively correlated with greater relationship satisfaction, both in everyday communication and during conflict (Johnson et al., 2021). As relationship satisfaction is considered one of the cornerstones of a happy life and the foundation of relationship longevity, exploring this relationship is essential to strengthen the research base for necessary interventions and to make improvements in clinical practice (Jolin et al., 2022; Karney & Bradbury, 2020).

In research conducted over the past 10 years, contemporary researchers have identified significant gaps and inaccuracies in previous conventional wisdom about the relationship between communication strategies and relationship satisfaction. They challenge several concepts by arguing that assumptions based on research from previous decades are misleading, incomplete, or possibly irrelevant (Barton et al., 2017; Karney & Bradbury, 2020). Some researchers have found that the results of studies on relationship improvement and satisfaction among couples who make communication improvements are quite contradictory. For example, developing communication skills does not necessarily lead to a long-term increase in relationship satisfaction, and using negative communication in a relationship does not always result in a long-term decrease in relationship satisfaction (Karney & Bradbury, 2020; Qingyin et al., 2023). Despite the considerable body of research that unequivocally states that the use of dysfunctional communication strategies in relationships reduces relationship satisfaction (Gottman et al., 1998; Jolin et al., 2022), some contemporary researchers argue that every communication strategy has its benefits and drawbacks in relationships. They suggest that these strategies are more influenced by contextual aspects than by the use of a general categorization of communication strategies (Karney & Bradbury, 2020; Qingyin et al., 2023). In light of the above, the paper tests the previously identified relationship between the use of communication strategies and satisfaction in couple relationships. This will either confirm the proposed hypothesis or provide an additional empirical basis for the patterns found by researchers in the last decade, should the hypothesis not be confirmed.

Research hypothesis. The use of positive or constructive communication strategies in partnerships is positively correlated with relationship satisfaction, while the use of negative or dysfunctional communication strategies in partnerships is negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction.

Additional questions

1. What is the relationship between relationship satisfaction and demographic characteristics such as relationship length, relationship format, presence of children, and level of education?

2. What is the relationship between the choice of communication strategies in a relationship and demographic characteristics such as relationship length, relationship format, presence of children, and level of education?
3. Which communication strategies and demographics best explain and predict relationship satisfaction?
4. What is the relationship between certain dysfunctional communication strategies and relationship satisfaction?

Participants or sample. 840 respondents in a relationship for at least one year, 18–60 years old, women and men.

Communication in relationships

Over the past decades, research on improving relationships has emphasized communication as one of the central concepts, particularly the impact of paired communication strategies on relationships. Past research has shown that communication in partnerships is significantly related to relationship satisfaction. Therefore, research on this concept, particularly on the ability to resolve conflicts, is considered essential for increasing satisfaction in couple relationships (Gottman & Levenson, 2000; Jolin et al., 2022; Qingyin et al., 2023).

Communication is seen as a process of exchanging information. This process involves not only the exchange of verbal and non-verbal information, but also thinking, expressing thoughts, listening, interpreting, understanding perceived information, and responding to information or behavior (Guerrero et al., 2018). Communication also has a major impact on each individual's subjective evaluation of relationships (Qingyin et al., 2023).

Research on communication in relationships distinguishes between *interpersonal communication*, defined as “the exchange of non-verbal and verbal messages between people, regardless of their relationship” (Guerrero et al., 2018), and *relational communication*, or “the part of interpersonal communication that focuses on the expression and interpretation of messages in close relationships. Relationship communication covers a wide range of interactions, from important relationship messages to everyday life interactions” (Guerrero et al., 2018). As the term “communication strategies” in the context of relationships is not defined by a single, unified definition, a collection of several interdisciplinary definitions is used to define it. The definition used in linguistic communication research effectively illustrates the overall process of communication strategies. However, for the purposes of this study and in adapting it to relational communication, communication strategies refer to positive (functional or effective) and/or negative (dysfunctional or ineffective) forms of interaction.

Although communication consists of many dimensions (Baucom et al., 2015; Bokoch, 2018), researchers suggest that communication behaviors can be categorized into two groups of strategies: functional (positive) and dysfunctional (negative) strategies. Constructive communication (positive strategy) and demanding/avoidant behavior (negative strategy) are broadly associated with different relational functioning variables

(Crenshaw et al., 2017). Functional communication is the ability to share one's thoughts, feelings, needs and wants in a way that is understood by others, active engagement, two-way discussion, expressing opinions, listening and collaborative communication. Dysfunctional or negative communication strategies include criticizing the partner, not making concessions, avoiding communication, defending instead of listening, putting pressure, and blaming oneself and the other (Jitaru, 2020; Leuchtman et al., 2019).

Communication strategies and general communication difficulties

Research has extensively explored the link between a couple's communication strategies, or paternal communication strategies, and their impact on the relationship both in the moment and over the long term. In the majority of studies, positive couple interactions are positively associated with relationship quality, while negative interactions (criticism/defensiveness, demanding/withdrawal) are negatively associated with relationship quality (Jolin et al., 2022). Some studies have argued that both spouses' (wife and husband) satisfaction with the wives' communication strategies predicted their own satisfaction with the relationship (Yoo et al., 2013). Research on relationships and their functioning focuses on the difficulties and conflicts that arise in relationships, which are resolved through mutual communication using various communication strategies. In contemporary rhetoric, the formula for relationship success is often discussed and emphasized as the ability to resolve difficulties through negotiation or effective communication: "the idea that successful couples resolve their problems through negotiation has remained central to our understanding of the functioning of marriage" (Lavner et al., 2014). Various sources point to additional conditions that can negatively affect interpersonal communication, such as individual childhood experiences, attachment styles, physical and mental health, misunderstanding the other person's words or motives, inability to understand and accept the other person's views and perspectives, cultural differences, language barriers, false assumptions and stereotypes, secrecy, unpleasant remarks and behaviors, and poor listening skills (McNulty et al., 2021; Righetti et al., 2022).

Different aspects of a dysfunctional communication strategy

The division of communication strategies into functional and dysfunctional strategies implies that functional communication is supportive and has a positive impact on relationships, while dysfunctional communication is harmful and has a negative impact on relationships (Karney & Bradbury, 2020). Research indicates that there is a link between couple conflict and relationship dissatisfaction, divorce, relationship violence, work performance, parenting and child-rearing. Effective conflict management is considered one of the main goals of couples therapy and relationship education (Whitton et al., 2018).

As the initial concepts of the Communication Patterns Survey used in this study are partly based on John Gottman's classification, it is important to note that Gottman categorized dysfunctional communication strategies into four types: criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling (Gottman et al., 1998).

Although much of the research is based on these positive and negative communication strategies, which have been established over several decades, and their direct correlation with positive and negative effects on couple relationship satisfaction, recent studies have pointed to the use of these different communication strategies within a contextual framework. This approach reduces the direct impact of the distinct divisions on couple relationship satisfaction (Baucom et al., 2015; Karney & Bradbury, 2020). Similarly, current research suggests that in some situations, it may be more appropriate for an individual to express negative feelings rather than positive behaviors, as this could have a positive impact on overall relationship well-being in the long term (Baucom et al., 2015; Karney & Bradbury, 2020). During conflict, disagreement, criticism, and anger may even predict a slight increase in relationship satisfaction over time, as these behaviors allow individuals to address issues directly, facilitating desired change and more successful problem resolution (Baucom et al., 2015).

Satisfaction with couple relationships

Satisfaction with couple relationships is viewed as a subjective, global assessment of relationship quality and is an important indicator and predictor of individual well-being and life satisfaction in various types of research (Candel & Turliuc, 2019). Satisfaction with couple relationships has been a focus of researchers for several decades and has been found to be influenced by many different factors, such as an individual's personality traits (Decuyper et al., 2018), the level of intimacy in the relationship, external stressors (McNulty et al., 2021; Zainah et al., 2012), income level, education, whether or not they have children, the number of children, and more.

Previous research on couples' relationship satisfaction indicates that relationship status is a significant predictor of satisfaction, with studies showing that partners in registered relationships report higher levels of relationship satisfaction (Tan et al., 2018; Yucel, 2017). As more couples opt for unregistered cohabitation or separate households, it is important to explore the differences that have been found so far and to understand whether, in the current context, relationship satisfaction also differs between these various relationship status groups. The norms and rules are perceived to be clearer in registered relationships, but are less clear for partners in non-registered relationships and require constant revision, which can lead to conflict and disagreement, thus reducing overall satisfaction with the relationship (Yucel, 2017).

Regarding the relationship between age and satisfaction with couple relationships, a recent systematic review and meta-analysis found that satisfaction with partner relationships declines between the ages of 20 and 40, then gradually increases until age 65 and remains stable in later life. It has also been suggested that the first 10 years of a relationship are the most critical, as around the 10-year mark individuals show the lowest levels of relationship satisfaction, which may be short-lived and gradually increase up to the 20-year mark, when it may again decrease slightly (Buhler et al., 2021).

Satisfaction with couple relationships in relation to communication strategies

Despite various nuances in research methodology, a large body of research shows that communication in relationships has the most direct impact on subjective relationship evaluations (Qingyin et al., 2023) and plays an important role in the health and longevity of close relationships (Gordon & Chen, 2016; Nguyen et al., 2020). Although negative and positive communication strategies during conflict are related to long-term relationship satisfaction, couple communication is equally influenced by the individual dynamic aspects of partners' communication behavior (Leuchtmann et al., 2019).

Longitudinal studies show a stronger association between the use of negative communication strategies and satisfaction with couples' relationships, with individuals reporting higher satisfaction during periods when they used fewer negative communication strategies than usual. However, no such association between the use of positive strategies and satisfaction was found (Johnson et al., 2021). At the same time, a study on women's communication strategies and relationship satisfaction showed a significant relationship between the use of constructive communication strategies during conflict and higher couple relationship satisfaction (Jitaru, 2020).

According to some researchers, low levels of positive affect and high levels of negative affect predict decreases in satisfaction with couples' relationships over time (Johnson et al., 2021; Lavner, 2016). Some studies claim that couples who express more negative interaction strategies during the first two years of their relationship report greater unhappiness in their marriage more than 10 years later, compared to couples who initially report more positive forms of interaction. Other studies show inconsistent results regarding the general claim that negative communication is associated with changes in marital satisfaction, and suggest that conflict resolution does not necessarily predict increased satisfaction in couple relationships (Renanita & Setiawan, 2018). At the same time, other researchers suggest that both husbands' and wives' satisfaction with the wives' communication strategies (patterns) predicted their own satisfaction with the relationship (Yoo et al., 2013).

Methodology

A total of 840 respondents participated in the study, including $n = 786$ women (93.5%) and $n = 54$ men (6.5%), aged 18–60 ($M = 34.75$; $SD = 7.08$), who have been married or in an unregistered relationship for at least one year. The majority of respondents, 57.1% ($n = 480$), are in a registered relationship, while 42.9% ($n = 360$) are in an unregistered relationship, with 36.1% ($n = 303$) cohabiting and 6.8% ($n = 57$) not cohabiting. The average length of relationship in the sample is 10 years ($M = 10.63$; $SD = 7.28$), with the most represented groups being those in relationships for 4 years ($n = 55$, 6.8%) and 1 year ($n = 55$, 6.8%), followed by those with 10 years ($n = 52$, 6.2%). The majority of respondents, 64.9% ($n = 545$), have children, while 35.1% ($n = 295$) have no children. The sample was based on the principle of accessibility and data were collected electronically.

Study instruments

1. The Comprehensive Marital Satisfaction Scale (CMSS, Blum & Mehrabian, 1999), adapted for the Master's thesis (Mizāne, 2006), was used to assess each respondent's individual level of satisfaction with their partnership. The questionnaire consists of 18 statements describing the relationship positively and 17 statements describing it negatively. The internal consistency calculated for the whole sample was $\alpha = 0.94$.
2. To identify functional and dysfunctional communication styles, an initial adaptation was made to an enhanced version of the Communication Patterns Questionnaire (CPQ) (Crenshaw et al., 2017). The initial adaptation of the questionnaire involved three independent translations from English into Latvian, followed by three independent back-translations from Latvian into English. The questionnaire consists of 35 questions, which are grouped into three subscales: Constructive Communication (CC), Self-Demanding/Partner Withdrawal Communication (SelfDPartW) and Partner-Demanding/Self-Withdrawal Communication (PartDSelfW). The internal consistency scores for all subscales are above 0.7 for the adapted questionnaire in this study.
3. The questionnaires also included a demographic section, where respondents provided information on gender, age, length of relationship, relationship format (registered/unregistered), presence and number of children in the household, education level, and place of residence.

Study procedure

Potential participants were invited to complete the questionnaire online via social networking platforms (Instagram; Facebook) using the QuestionPro tool. The first part of the survey was deliberately designed to be a satisfaction survey, so that its scores would not be influenced by possible feelings that could arise when recalling situations of communication interaction. The second part included all the statements of the "Communication Patterns Questionnaire" and the final part asked respondents to provide information on demographic data.

The results show that constructive communication strategies are positively associated with satisfaction in couple relationships, while self-demanding and partner-withdrawal behaviours, as well as partner-demanding and self-withdrawal behaviours, are negatively associated with relationship satisfaction.

Results

To test the study hypothesis, Spearman correlation coefficients were calculated for the entire sample with each of the communication strategy subscales (see Table 1 for the results).

Table 1 Correlations between communication strategies and satisfaction with partnerships (n = 840)

Variable	Constructive communication	Self-demanding/ partner-withdrawal communication	Partner-demanding/ self-withdrawal communication
Satisfaction with the relationship	0.75**	-0.52**	-0.46**

** $p < 0.01$

Table 2 Correlations of demographic data with satisfaction with relationships and communication strategies in the full sample (n = 840)

Variables	Number of children	Age	Sex	Relationship length	Level of education
Satisfaction with the relationship	-0.02	-0.11**	-0.01	-0.05	0.00
Constructive communication	-0.01	-0.05	0.00	-0.08*	-0.03
Self-demanding/ partner-withdrawal communication	0.01	0.03	-0.06	0.02	0.07*
Partner-demanding / self-withdrawal communication	0.01	0.05	0.05	0.04	0.02

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

To address the first two research questions, Spearman correlation coefficients were calculated between relationship satisfaction and communication strategies and selected demographic characteristics (see Table 2). The results indicate statistically significant but weak relationships between the constructs and demographic characteristics. Note that all correlation coefficients are below 0.3 ($r_s < 0.3$), indicating weak correlations that explain less than 10% of the total variance.

To answer the third research question, which communication strategies and demographics best explain and predict relationship satisfaction, a statistical regression analysis was performed using a forward selection method (see Table 3), as there was no clear predictor of the main variable.

The results of the regression analysis show that, among all the factors showing a correlation, the constructive communication strategies used in the relationship predict the most, accounting for 61.2% of the satisfaction with the couple relationship ($\beta = 0.78$, $p < 0.01$). When this factor is added to the next steps, 4 more factors are added: age of the individual ($\beta = -0.09$, $p < 0.01$), relationship format ($\beta = -0.07$, $p < 0.01$), partner-demanding/self-withdrawal (PDSW) communication strategies ($\beta = -0.06$, $p < 0.01$) and education level ($\beta = 0.04$, $p < 0.01$), this explains an additional 1.2% of relationship satisfaction, so that these 5 factors together explain 62.4% of couple relationship satisfaction.

Table 3 Multiple regression model for predicting relationship satisfaction ($n = 840$)

Independent variable	<i>B</i>	<i>B SE</i>	β	<i>F</i>	<i>R</i> ²
<i>Step 1</i>				1279.71**	0.612
Constructive communication	1.19	0.03	0.78*		
<i>Step 2</i>				648.41**	0.615
Constructive communication	1.12	0.03	0.74*		
Age	-0.18	0.07	-0.05*		
<i>Step 3</i>				441.47**	0.620
Constructive communication	1.17	0.03	0.77*		
Age	-0.26	0.07	-0.08*		
Relationship format	-2.83	1.07	-0.07*		
<i>Step 4</i>				335.23**	0.623
Constructive communication	1.11	0.04	0.73*		
Age	-0.27	0.07	-0.08*		
Relationship format	-2.92	0.84	-0.07*		
Partner-demanding/ self-withdrawal communication	-0.16	0.06	-0.06*		
<i>Step 5</i>				269.93**	0.624
Constructive communication	1.11	0.04	0.73*		
Age	-0.29	0.07	-0.09*		
Relationship format	-2.75	0.84	-0.07*		
Partner-demanding/ self-withdrawal communication	-0.16	0.06	-0.06*		
Level of education	0.98	0.49	0.04*		

* $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$

Since the results of this study show a negative relationship between overall dysfunctional communication scores and relationship satisfaction, while contemporary researchers argue that types of dysfunctional communication, such as withdrawal and direct confrontation, may have a positive relationship with relationship satisfaction, the fourth research question was addressed through an additional correlation analysis. This analysis examined selected items representing dysfunctional communication from the “Communication Patterns Questionnaire” and their relationship with relationship satisfaction, as well as an additional correlation analysis of four items that were not included in the calculation of the overall communication strategies subscales but correspond to strategies

that may positively affect relationship satisfaction. The results in this sample did not show a positive relationship; however, the “expressing emotions and logical solutions” behavioral items demonstrated medium and weak positive relationships with relationship satisfaction.

Discussion

The main aim of the study was to investigate the relationship between satisfaction with couples' relationships and the functional and dysfunctional communication strategies used within those relationships. Based on the published literature, it was hypothesized that positive or functional communication strategies would be positively correlated with relationship satisfaction, while negative or dysfunctional communication strategies would be negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction. Given that recent scientific research points to an ambiguous relationship between these communication strategies and satisfaction constructs, this paper sought to examine what this relationship is.

After data collection and analysis, the hypothesis of this study was fully confirmed. It is consistent with research conducted in past decades, which shows a direct correlation between higher relationship satisfaction and the use of functional or constructive communication strategies in partnerships, and lower relationship satisfaction for those who employ dysfunctional communication strategies. The correlations found in this study are consistent with previous literature, which indicates that positive couple interactions are positively associated with relationship quality, while negative interactions are negatively associated with relationship quality (Markman et al., 2010; Jolin et al., 2022). Specifically, negative communication strategies are linked to greater relationship dissatisfaction, whereas positive communication strategies are positively correlated with greater couple relationship satisfaction (Markman et al., 2010; Johnson et al., 2021).

On the one hand, these results reject the claims made in recent studies that certain components of dysfunctional communication may increase relationship satisfaction. At the same time, it is possible that such a relationship could not be observed in this study, as the measurement was time-locked and taken at a specific point in the individual's life. Some recent research suggests that these relationships persist over the long term, with negative communication strategies being associated with lower relationship satisfaction in the short term (Markman et al., 2010), while higher levels of negativity are linked to greater satisfaction in the long term (Johnson et al., 2021; Karney & Bradbury, 2020; Nguyen et al., 2020; Qingyin et al., 2023).

In response to the first and second research questions, all relationships were found to be statistically significant but weak. Therefore, these results should be interpreted as indicative trends rather than definitive conclusions. The results showed that respondents in a registered relationship are more satisfied with their relationship than respondents in an unregistered relationship. Although weak, these trend-level results may reflect the findings of previous studies, which suggest that factors such as receiving support from a partner for better physical and mental health, combining finances, and experiencing

physical and emotional security may contribute to higher relationship satisfaction in registered relationships (Blanchflower & Clark, 2020; Renantina & Setiawan, 2018). The results also showed a weak negative relationship between age and relationship satisfaction. As the sample of this study is 18 to 60 years old, with a mean age of 34 years ($M = 34.82$), it is possible to interpret this relationship at the trend level as part of overall life satisfaction. As most studies highlight the significant impact of relationship satisfaction on an individual's overall life satisfaction, it is worth noting one of the largest studies in recent years. This study gathered data on the relationship between age and unhappiness from nearly 14 million respondents across European countries, the USA, and 168 other countries. It concluded that there is a link between low life satisfaction and midlife, with the lowest satisfaction scores occurring around the age of 49 (Blanchflower, 2020). It is also important to consider that the average length of the relationships in this sample is 10 years, and existing research suggests that satisfaction in couples' relationships tends to decline over time. Individuals often enter relationships with a high level of positivity and enthusiasm, which gradually diminishes as the relationship progresses (Lavner et al., 2014). At the same time, some research suggests that this correlation cannot be clearly explained, as it is important to consider that couples who experience significant declines in relationship satisfaction over time are more likely to have faced stress during various life transitions (Karney & Bradbury, 2020). Although many studies have shown a negative relationship between satisfaction in couple relationships and having children, this study found a small positive correlation between relationship satisfaction and having children. This could be explained by the fact that this sample may represent a portion of the population that is managing the financial burden of raising children, rather than young parents. A large study conducted in European Union countries indicates that having children can make an individual happier if their financial situation is stable and paying bills does not impose a significant burden. The study also found that children under the age of 10 provide a greater sense of happiness than children aged 10–14, and parents are generally happier if they are under the age of 45. This study also indicated that those in registered relationships with children are happier than those in non-registered relationships with children (Blanchflower & Clark, 2020). In the light of these findings, future research should include additional control variables, such as financial situation and age of children.

The regression analysis conducted in response to the third research question revealed that among the various communication strategies and demographic characteristics, constructive communication is the most significant predictor of relationship satisfaction, accounting for 61.2% of the variance in couples' relationship satisfaction in this sample. These results are consistent with the general findings of studies on total communication as one of the most significant predictors of couple relationship satisfaction (Jitaru, 2020; Renanita & Setiawan, 2018), while differing from those studies that argue that negative or dysfunctional communication is a more significant predictor of couple relationship satisfaction than positive or functional communication (Johnson et al., 2021).

Additionally, the examination of individual dysfunctional communication strategies and their relationship with relationship satisfaction addressed the fourth research question by exploring the potential positive effects of dysfunctional communication strategies, as suggested by contemporary researchers, on couple relationship satisfaction (Karney & Bradbury, 2020). The results of this study did not support recent assumptions, as dysfunctional communication strategies such as “discussion/avoidance” and “reconciliation and avoidance or withdrawal” showed moderately strong negative associations with relationship satisfaction ($r_s = -0.15-0.44, p < 0.01$).

Several limitations should be noted when considering the results of this study. Firstly, the significantly different gender distribution of the respondents to the survey questionnaire (93.5% women and 6.5% men) in this sample should be taken into account, which does not give an equally clear picture of the gender differences in the research on this issue. Although satisfaction in couples’ relationships is generally viewed as a balance between positive and negative forms of interaction, men and women perceive their relationships differently. As a result, the factors that determine relationship satisfaction vary between samples of men and women (Jitaru, 2020). For example, in a study of couple dynamics in the choice of communication behaviour during conflict discussion, results revealed that women’s initial positive communication was associated with higher relationship satisfaction scores for both partners, a decrease in women’s negative communication increased women’s relationship satisfaction scores, while men’s assumptions about the effectiveness of their actions in understanding their partner’s feelings predicted a lower choice of negative communication strategies for men but an increase in negative communication for women (Leuchtmann et al., 2019). Secondly, the study relied solely on self-assessment methods, meaning each respondent may interpret the situation being described, and the communication strategies being assessed, in very different ways. Third, it is very likely that the nuances described by contemporary researchers can only be observed in the long term, and although the study involved respondents with different, including long-term, relationship durations, it does not provide an answer to the overall impact in the long term, as it is a subjective measurement captured at a particular moment in time, without including the different aspects of relationship dynamics.

In conclusion, although the results of this study align broadly with research conducted in previous decades and do not contribute new insights to more recent findings, there is a clear case for further research on this issue. Future studies should focus more deeply on the individual components of both constructs to gain a better understanding. To provide more accurate data, further research on this topic would require the development of a more nuanced instrument to measure communication strategies. This should include a more in-depth and detailed consideration of different dimensions of couple communication during measurement procedures, such as directness and the severity of issues discussed. Additionally, it would be important to examine the influence of other contextual and external factors on the communication strategies used, such as financial situation, age of children, individual stress management strategies, emotion regulation, and personality traits.

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