



# Emerging Perspectives of Relationship Satisfaction

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Abstract Relationship satisfaction is highly likely to predict life satisfaction, and pleasant feelings [1] and is a forecaster of wellbeing [2]. As young adulthood is a phase where the majority of the time is spent thinking and talking about romantic relationships, it's important to understand how the concept of relationships has changed over time. To grasp this concept, the current paper presents an overview of the current perspectives occurring in the field of romantic relationships.

**Keywords:** *Relationship Satisfaction, Romantic relationships, Young adults*

Relationship quality, relationship adjustment, spousal contentment, and relationship happiness are all phrases used to describe people's pleasure in their personal relationships [3]. Relationship satisfaction is one of the best indicators of an individual's overall life happiness [4, 5] and a potent and dependable predictor of personal well-being [2].

Before engaging in more permanent romantic unions, such as marriage, most young individuals begin to create norms for intimate relationships and gain experience with romantic partners [6]. Previous research has shown that forming and maintaining stable, satisfying romantic relationships during young adulthood is strongly linked to enhanced mental and physical health [7, 8] and, eventually, relationship success [9], making it a critical developmental goal for individuals at this stage in life [10]. Hence, it is critical to understand the different theoretical perspectives and also, the elements that influence them.

## 1. Emotional book-keeping hypothesis [11]:

The main aim of the emotional book-keeping hypothesis or the EMO model was to discover how the primates integrate information to develop and uphold social relationships, which in turn also affects their close interpersonal intimate relationships. Anxiety-FEAR and satisfaction-LIKE, are the two emotional dimensions that regulate one's social behavior. The model focused on one key parameter, i.e., partner selectivity. Partner selectivity denotes the degree to which the individual relies on their LIKE and FEAR attitudes while choosing the partner.

These attitudes have been developed as a result of past experiences, i.e., the previously accumulated emotional affiliations with other partners. This process of choosing the current partner on the basis of past emotional experiences is thus called emotional bookkeeping. Further, these past experiences create alertness in the individual, which increases the rigidity in selecting the future partner, which all together affects relationship satisfaction.

## 2. Relationship Trajectories [12]:

It's a metatheoretical paradigm that explains how close interpersonal, intimate, and sexual relationships emerge, develop, and end over time. The word trajectory means the course, i.e., the course of the relationship and the whole process can be viewed in an arc-shaped trajectory that varies in five dimensions which are:

1. **Shape:** In the context of close romantic relationships, ascent describes the trajectory of how a relationship can rise swiftly, gradually, or not at all, and the descent depicts how the relationship declines, i.e., rapidly, gradually, or not at all.
2. **Fluctuation:** A relationship undergoes variations in seconds, days, months, or years. Some of them can be so intense that partners decide to break up and also get back together numerous times [13, 14].
3. **Threshold:** Performance of certain behaviors affects the threshold trajectory. Even if both partners are experiencing the same kind of events, their subjective evaluations and reactions vary. Each of them has their levels, their maximums of deciding and exhibiting that they are interested romantically in the partner and perform a certain kind of behavior.
4. **Composition:** The amount to which trajectories are built from diverse underlying components (passion, love, commitment, trust, satisfaction, intimacy, etc.) varies. These constructions can then be subdivided into finer subcomponents, such as devotion and constraint commitments [15].
5. **Density:** People also differ in how their life paths are centralized or dispersed over time. If trajectories are exceptionally thick, they may overlap, implying that an individual simultaneously has pleasant romantic feelings for numerous individuals (Person A). Individuals may have long intervals "between trajectories" if trajectories are distributed, during which they are not romantically interested in anyone (Person B).

### 3. Culturally based Romantic Relationships (CBR<sup>2</sup>) Model [16]:

The model fundamentally focuses on understanding how the similarities/differences within the person's emotional process and relationship-related norms correlate to the between person's emotional process and relationship-related norms and how in turn, this relationship affects the relationship quality.

The core of this model deals with studying the dyadic cultural affinity, i.e., the extent to which there is congruence and variations in the cultural elements of the partners. In comparison to the other models like the Vulnerability Stress Adaptation Model [17], it is the only model that emphasizes the importance of the culture as it is essentially a blueprint of what constitutes an individual, how they manage and display their emotions, how they deal with the stressful situations, what norms do they follow and how do they maintain their social relationships, and lastly what is their communication and conflict management style.

It is an important model as it caters to a lot of miscellaneous groups and also highlights how emotions, culture, and interpersonal relationships are interrelated and how the development and relationship quality gets affected by culture itself.

Further, the model also highlights that relationship quality is still vulnerable even when the two partners share similar backgrounds when one of them adopts a different cultural belief and values.

### 4. Love as Caring Maturity [18]:

This model aimed to display that true love is an evolutionary phenomenon. It involves various steps, but it does not imply that passionate love or love, at first sight, is meaningless. Instead, it is just a part of love life as love may occur unexpectedly and passionately. Love is rational and is composed of three components: cognitive capacities, emotional capacities, and voluntary capacities.

The model also states that 'Mature Love' is multifaceted and governed by the adult ego state where the individual accepts himself before accepting the other, recognize the differences between the two, and delays their own needs/pleasures for the other. The 'caring maturity' component has five minor interconnected, and interactive features, which are :

- a. **Valuative Maturity or Awareness based on Appreciation:** It is based on understanding the hierarchy of values, the similarities and the differences between oneself, the other person, and the relationship altogether.
- b. **Affective Maturity or Awareness of Emotions:** It helps the individual think entirely about his interests and feelings of affection and state them effortlessly.

- c. **Normative Maturity or Awareness of Norms:** It involves thinking, realizing, and considering the gaps or differences between the partners in terms of their liking and values.
- d. **Emphatic Maturity or Awareness based on Empathy:** Acceptance, empathy, and respect for the other persons feeling lead to inclination toward the partner. They provide the possibility of enhancing the relationship.
- e. **Active Maturity or Awareness of Possibilities:** The person realizes the possibilities of the action in the situation to decrease the unpleasantness involved and improve the quality of the relationship.

## 5. Quadruple Theory [19]:

Attachment is a chief principle in relationships, including the parent-infant, peers, etc. [20]. Maintaining proximity, protection, and separation of distress are central principles of attachment [21]. The existence of an inborn caregiving system in humans that harmonizes their attachment system has been emphasized [22, 23]. All of these forms of love are fully apprehended by the quadruple theory, which was proposed in an attempt to uncover the meaning of love with the help of four critical factors, which are:

- a. **Attraction:** It depends on the worth and also attractiveness perceived towards the relationship and, in turn, influences commitment as well [24]. It has been verified that attachment and attraction play a part in the passion for love [25].
- b. **Connection or Resonance:** It is responsible for creating awareness of oneness in a relationship and is reinforced by factors such as familiarity, shared positive experiences, likability, and proximity [26]. Hence, it is deemed crucial for building and strengthening intimacy, commitment, and caregiving.
- c. **Trust:** It is a dominating factor that affects one's relationship satisfaction [27]. It is an imperative factor for love and enhances other love dimensions, such as attachment [28], caregiving, and intimacy [29].
- d. **Respect:** It is imperative worldwide in all relationships across different cultures [30, 31]. Like trust, it is also considered significant for love [31] and impacts satisfaction and commitment levels [32].

**Love Cycle:** Relationships are prone to change because of changing events and circumstances [21]. It is so because love is linked with these changing conditions and corresponds to these changes positively or negatively. In other words, if there are changes in these conditions, the four love factors (attraction, connection or resonance, trust, and respect) beco up in the relationship, increasing the love factor. On the other hand, if changes in the conditions cause these factors to fade away, the relationship strength also decreases, and as a result, these factors also die. Also, all of these four factors are independent, but if there is a decline in even one of them, it affects the relationship intensely.

## 6. Hierarchical Model for Interpersonal Verbal Communication [33]:

Language communication is found to be linked with the arrangement of interpersonal neural synchronization (INS) or the neural coupling between the partners [34, 35, 36]. Neural coupling refers to the courses of the brain activities of both partners when they are involved in the communication course. However, the neurocognitive processes involved in interpersonal neural synchronization are still incomprehensible, which is the primary aim of this model. Further, verbal communication has been emphasized as it is foremost used and a preferred way of communication.

The model consists of three levels of processes, which are:

- a. **Interactive speech processing:** It is the foundation of verbal language; it best provides insight into the relationship between language and the human brain.
- b. **Mutual understanding:** When both the partners involved in the communication process can equally decipher the semantic, syntactic, and conceptual information being exchanged, mutual understanding is said to occur.

- c. **Relationship Establishment and Maintenance:** For the successful maintenance of these close intimate interpersonal relationships, turn-based communication is the most effective and a requirement [37] indeed to identify the neurocognitive routes of these close intimate interpersonal relationships.

Further, in each of the three levels, two processes, namely, shared representation and interpersonal predictive coding, work together.

The model consists of three-level of processes, namely, interactive speech processing, mutual understanding, and relationship establishment and maintenance. Two processes, namely, shared representation and interpersonal predictive coding, work collectively. They are connected with different models of interpersonal neural synchronization. The three levels involved in the model, moderate each other bidirectionally, i.e., in a bottom-up and top-down manner.

## 7. The Happy, Healthy, Safe Relationship (HHSR) Continuum [38]:

The definition of healthy relationships is varied due to diversity in cultural backgrounds. The overall meaning of a healthy relationship is missing. Hence, the HHSR continuum was designed to be adapted to different kinds and perspectives of relationships and the prerequisites of the different subpopulations and communities. It is thus helpful to detect surplus information about the relationships and act as a guiding source for professionals or health services practitioners to address the various needs of the relationship health.

The pyramid best represents the HHSR continuum. A relationship needs to be considered safe before it can be characterized as a healthy one. Further, only if the relationship is safe and healthy is the relationship regarded as a happy one.

The three categories are:

- a. **Safe relationships:** The relationship should be free from all kinds and forms of abuse (physical, mental, emotional), abandonment, ignorance, and threat to one's safety, well-being, mental health, and development.
- b. **Healthy relationships:** Any relationship can only survive if trust, respect, communication, unconditional acceptance, and freedom of choice are its foundations. No relationship is perfect, and it's crucial also to have challenges and growth-related opportunities so that there is always room for growth.
- c. **Happy relationships:** These relationships are filled with joy and ecstasy. These kinds of relationships are the ultimate source of nurturance and support. Making the other priority, developing a deep understanding, and cherishing the time spent together are essential qualities of a happy relationship.

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