

Influence of a Spouse's Reported Partner Agreement, Tension, Affection, and Common Interests on His or Her Spouse's Perceived Relationship Satisfaction

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Introduction

Social and Professional Significance

With divorce rates rising, it is important to understand the various factors that contribute to relationship quality and satisfaction. Some of these factors include, partner agreement, relationship tension, expression of affection, and shared interests. Individuals in relationships inherently influence each other's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to analyze the effect that one partner's perception of these factors has on the other partner's perceived relationship satisfaction. More specifically, we analyzed the effect that spouses' dyadic adjustment had on their spouses' relationship satisfaction. We expect that the findings from this study will lead to a greater understanding of the connection between dyadic adjustment and relationship satisfaction, thus influencing how social science professionals approach helping couples at various points in their relationship.

Together Project Background

Our data comes from a larger study called the Together Project that was started in October 2006, and funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Family Assistance. This study provided marriage and relationship education to low-income, married couples with children in the Central Florida community. The study compared the effects of marriage and relationship education on the dyadic adjustment, relationship satisfaction, distress, and marital expectations of the couples in the treatment group with those of the couples in the control group. For the purpose of this current study, we analyzed the results from the Dyadic Adjustment Scale and the Relationship Assessment Scale to explore what influence spouses' dyadic adjustment had on their partner's perceived relationship satisfaction.

Key Terms

Dyadic Adjustment Subscales

- **Dyadic Consensus** – the extent of **agreement** between partners on matters important to the relationship
- **Dyadic Satisfaction** – the amount of **tension** in the relationship, as well as the extent to which the individual has considered ending the relationship
- **Affectional Expression** – the individual's satisfaction with the expression of **affection** and sex in the relationship
- **Dyadic Cohesion** – the **common interests** and activities shared by the couple

Research Question

Question 1: What is the influence of a spouse's reported dyadic adjustment on his or her partner's perceived relationship satisfaction?

- **H₀1:** There will be no influence of a husband's reported dyadic adjustment on his wife's perceived relationship satisfaction.
- **H₀2:** There will be no influence of a wife's reported dyadic adjustment on her husband's perceived relationship satisfaction.

Abstract

Although research addresses the existence of, extent of, and outcomes related to relationship quality and satisfaction, there is little research that addresses how factors of relationship quality as reported by one spouse influences his or her partner's perceived relationship satisfaction. In an effort to fill this gap, we are examining the influence of dyadic consensus, dyadic satisfaction, affectional expression, and dyadic cohesion on relationship satisfaction. Using dyadic data analysis, we are analyzing the scores from the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS; Spanier, 1976) and the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS; Hendrick, Dicke, & Hendrick, 1998) of 146 low-income married couples with children. We predict that the analysis will show that a spouse's reported dyadic adjustment will influence his or her spouse's perceived relationship satisfaction. We expect that the findings from this study will help counselors, relationship educators, and other helping professionals better understand the connection between dyadic adjustment and relationship satisfaction, thus influencing how they approach helping couples at various points in their relationship including dating, cohabiting, pre-marital counseling, couple checkups, and couples in distress.

Methodology

Participant Demographics

▪ Data was collected from 146 low-income, married couples with children under the age of 18 including equal numbers of males (n=146) and females (n=146)

▪ The length of marriage for the couples in our sample ranged from less than one year to 19.75 years (M = 7.97, SD = 6.34)

▪ The couples in our sample had a mean number of 1.93 (SD = .96) children under the age of 18 years living at home, including 43% of couples having two children.

Variable		% (N)
Ethnicity	Hispanic	52.2%
	White	32%
	Black	11.3%
	Native American	0.3%
	Asian American	0.3%
Age	Other	3.8%
	21-29	26.4%
	30-39	43.5%
	40-49	27.6%
50-59	2.2%	

Materials

Upon consent, participants filled out two sets of questionnaires: The Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) consisting of 32 items and the seven-item Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS).

Analysis

Dyadic Data Analysis was conducted using a standard dyadic design and the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model, which is a form of multilevel modeling. This was used to measure the influence that a spouse's reported dyadic adjustment has on his or her partner's relationship satisfaction.

Results

Effect of Spouses' Dyadic Adjustment Scores on Partners' Relationship Assessment Scores

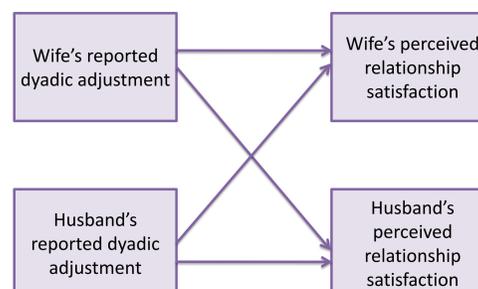
Estimates of Fixed Effects

Parameter	Estimate	Std. Error	df	t	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Intercept	23.063713	.335798	152.054	68.683	.000	22.400281	23.727144

Estimates of Covariance Parameters

Parameter		Estimate	Std. Error	Wald Z	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Repeated Measures	CSR diagonal	9.602459	1.24188	8.542	.000	7.633608	12.079115
	CSR rho	-1.000000	2.051207E-6	-487517.942	.000	-1.000000	1.000000
apreDAStot [subject= dyad]	Variance	.001925	.000226	8.514	.000	.001529	.002423

Standard Dyadic Design: Actor-Partner Interdependence Model



Discussion

In our research, we studied 146 low-income, married couples with children under the age of 18 to assess the influence of a spouse's dyadic adjustment on his or her partner's perceived relationship satisfaction. We conducted dyadic data analysis, a form of multilevel modeling. We found a statistically significant interaction between husbands' dyadic adjustment scores and wives' relationship assessment scores. We also found a statistically significant interaction between wives' dyadic adjustment scores and husbands' relationship assessment scores. Therefore, we rejected both null hypotheses which stated that there would be no interaction. For every one point that the spouse's dyadic adjustment score increases, the partner's relationship assessment score will increase by .002. Thus, the influence, while statistically significant, was low. This low influence could be due to the fact that there may be many different factors influencing relationship satisfaction in addition to dyadic adjustment.

Limitations and Future Research

Although the current study is fairly representative of our community, the majority of the current sample is made up of Hispanic participants. Further research could replicate this study in a different environment (e.g., rural setting) to study a larger sample of people from different backgrounds.

In addition, our study used the data from the Together Project which focuses only on low-income married couples with children. Future research could include unmarried couples who are dating and/or cohabiting, married couples without children, and couples from different socioeconomic backgrounds.

Since our study looked at the total score for the dyadic adjustment scale, future research could include analyzing the subscales. In addition, in our study, we used the standard dyadic design method so future research could use more robust designs.

References

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