

Relationship Satisfaction as Mediator of the Relationship between Interpersonal Communication and Relationship Commitment


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ARTICLE INFO			ABSTRACT
Article History:			<i>The present research investigated the relationship between interpersonal communication, relationship satisfaction and commitment in young adults. It was hypothesized that there would be a positive significant relationship between interpersonal communication, relationship satisfaction and commitment in engaged young adults. Moreover, relationship satisfaction would mediate the relationship between interpersonal communication and commitment. Using convenient sampling technique 100 engaged young adults were drawn from university and general public of Lahore with age range (M=23.46, SD = 2.6). The Interpersonal Communication Motive Scale (Robin et al., 1988), Satisfaction Scale (Burns, 1993) and Commitment scale (Rusbult et al., 2009) were used. The results indicated a significant positive relationship between study variables, furthermore Process Mac was used to assess the mediation and the findings indicated the presence of partial mediation of relationship satisfaction. These findings have important implications for the significance of interpersonal communication before marriage between engaged young adults for the satisfaction and commitment with relationship in future.</i>
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The logo consists of the word "OPEN" in a bold, black, sans-serif font, followed by a stylized orange circular icon with a white dot in the center, and then the word "ACCESS" in a bold, black, sans-serif font.



Introduction

The base of developing relationships is communication because if a person wants to create a relationship whether it is personal or professional, he/she has to communicate with others. When there is a good communication then there will be a better relationship. Likewise, communication can be defined simply as sending and receiving messages but it is not only about sending and receiving message nevertheless it also involves sending meaningful messages that can be interpreted by the receiver (Steinberg, 2007). According to Solomon and Theiss (2013), interpersonal communication is a dynamic process in which individuals' behaviors simultaneously

influence and mirror each other. Guerrero et al. (2011) describe it as the exchange of verbal and nonverbal messages between individuals, irrespective of the nature of their relationship whether it is casual, personal, or intimate.

Interpersonal Communication in Intimate Relationships

Good communication between intimate partners strengthens the relationship and minimizes the conflicts. In any relationship the first thing that leads to a successful relationship is the way one communicates with the other. According to Derlaga (2013) most people are involved in an intimate relationship because it provides important source of social support which includes sense of belongingness, aid in coping with life's stresses and a feeling of closeness with someone. Moreover, interpersonal communication affects the type of relationships which people have as well as the successful individuals achieve in developing and sustaining intimate relationships. Communication increasingly takes on an interpersonal nature, aiming not only to convey information but also to provoke a response (Satir, 2016; Yıldırım, 2019).

Ellis and Crawford (2000) suggested that for a successful relationship, communication is an integral part which is also depicted as an important factor in guidelines for great relationship such as (1) acceptance of partner as it is (2) expression of appreciation frequently (3) communication with integrity (4) sharing and exploring differences with their partner (5) supporting partner's goals (6) giving partner the right to be wrong as well as (7) reconsidering one's own wants and goals.

Elena-Adriana et al. (2014) and Wałęcka-Matyja and Szkudlarek (2019) emphasized that the quality of communication within a relationship significantly influences marital satisfaction. As communication deteriorates, so too does the relationship. Similarly, Suwalska-Barancewicz and Malina (2018) highlighted the importance of establishing effective communication patterns in romantic relationships, which not only support the execution of daily responsibilities but also foster deeper emotional intimacy between partners. Effective dyadic communication involves problem-solving in ways that encourage mutual understanding and help maintain closeness.

Plopa (2006) identified three key dimensions of communication within a dyad: support, commitment, and depreciation. *Support* refers to offering positive reinforcement through interest in a partner's daily experiences, presence during challenging times, and assistance with problem-solving. *Commitment*, on the other hand, involves expressing affection, acknowledging the partner's value, and showing dedication through both verbal and non-verbal cues, such as hugging, kissing, or engaging in shared activities. Conversely, the *depreciation* dimension involves behaviors reflecting hostility, such as verbal abuse, shouting, or attempts to dominate or manipulate. It includes ignoring, mocking, and diminishing the partner's self-esteem. Supporting this, Rys et al., (2020) found a significant correlation between depreciative communication and an individual's perception of being unloved.

Relationship Satisfaction and Commitment: Foundations of Relational Stability

Relationship satisfaction has been conceptualized in various ways across decades of research. Locke and Wallace (1959) defined it as an aspect of adjustment, while Honeycutt (1986) emphasized functioning, and Acitelli (1992) linked it to well-being. According to Rusbult et al. (1998), relationship satisfaction is determined by the overall balance of positive and negative affect experienced within a relationship and is heavily influenced by the degree to which a partner fulfills the individual's core needs. Yıldırım (2019) further emphasized that a healthy relationship is founded on mutual responsibility, where both individuals perceive each other as inherently

valuable, accept one another without the need for change, and interact with an awareness of personal boundaries. This level of relational maturity requires each partner to take ownership of their own behaviors, thoughts, and emotions.

Walter (2012), in a cross-sectional study, explored the influence of attachment styles, love styles, and religiosity on relationship satisfaction. The findings revealed significant associations among these variables, indicating their collective impact on how satisfied individuals feel in their romantic partnerships. In a related vein, Gonzaga et al. (2007) investigated similarity, convergence, and relationship satisfaction in both dating and married couples. Their research found that emotional similarity mediated the relationship between personality similarity and relationship quality, while emotional convergence mediated the link between personality convergence and satisfaction. These findings suggest that personality alignment may enhance relationships by fostering shared emotional experiences and affirm models that incorporate both partners' enduring traits and dynamic relational processes as foundational to relationship outcomes.

Gabriel et al. (2010) indicated that marital interaction behaviors are significantly shaped by the presence of marital distress. Troy (2000) concluded that relationship communication skills emerging as the most reliable predictor of current relationship quality. Commitment is the perceived bond between the individual and the given target, stronger the bond stronger will be the relationship between two persons. Relationship commitment is very important for the maintenance and the stability of any relationship. Thus, it can be defined as the intention to remain in one's relationship (Pope, 2013).

A number of studies have been conducted on marital satisfaction and many other issues regarding married couples. But there is an increasing trend of engagements now days. If the level of satisfaction and commitment at this stage of relationship is assessed, it is possible to avoid any unpleasant event in future. The communication during the time period of engagement can reveal whether the two individuals are compatible enough to live the whole life together. If anyone finds that there is a problem in interpersonal communication or satisfaction with the relationship or partner, they can either solve the problem before getting married and before getting things worse. The commitment, which is very important for stability of relationship is lacking before marriage, there is possibility to avoid the problem by communication it to the partner.

Theoretical Framework

Rusbult's Investment Model, rooted in interdependence theory originally proposed by Thibaut and Kelley in the late 1950s, was developed by Rusbult (1980, 1983, as cited in Shohov, 2002) explains the psychological mechanisms underlying commitment in romantic relationships. According to this model, commitment is conceptualized as the subjective experience of dependence on a relationship, and it is determined by three independents yet interacting components: satisfaction level, quality of alternatives, and investment size. The satisfaction level refers to the degree of positive outcomes an individual perceives from their interactions with a partner, assessed relative to a personal comparison level a benchmark informed by past experiences and expectations. The more these interactions meet or exceed the comparison level, the greater the satisfaction, which in turn fosters commitment.

The quality of alternatives represents the perceived desirability of available options outside the current relationship. The third element, investment size, encompasses the resources—both tangible (e.g., shared property, financial resources) and intangible (e.g., time, emotional energy, shared

memories) those individuals contribute to a relationship. These investments are considered valuable because they are often difficult to recover or may lose significance if the relationship ends. Collectively, these three components are theorized to influence commitment in an additive manner, meaning that each contributes independently to the overall strength of commitment. Furthermore, research has shown that commitment level predicts various relationship maintenance behaviors, such as the willingness to sacrifice, forgiveness of betrayal, and efforts to maintain closeness. Notably, commitment has also been found to mediate the effects of satisfaction, alternative quality, and investment size on such maintenance behaviors, highlighting its central role in sustaining long-term romantic partnerships (Shohov, 2002).

Statement of the Problem

A number of studies have been conducted on marital satisfaction and many other issues regarding married couples. But there is an increasing trend of engagements now days. If the level of satisfaction and commitment at this stage of relationship is assessed, it is possible to avoid any unpleasant event in future. The communication during the time period of engagement can reveal whether the two individuals are compatible enough to live the whole life together. If anyone finds that there is a problem in interpersonal communication or satisfaction with the relationship or partner, they can either solve the problem before getting married and before getting things worse. The commitment, which is very important for stability of relationship is lacking before marriage, there is possibility to avoid the problem by communication it to the partner.

Objectives of Study

Following were objectives of the study:

- To find the relationship between interpersonal communication, relationship satisfaction and commitment in engaged young adults.
- To find out the mediating effect of relationship satisfaction on interpersonal communication, and relationship commitment in engaged people.

Materials and Methods

Procedure

Permission was taken from the authors of all relevant scales. The researcher defined the inclusion and exclusion criteria to collect the sample. A sample of 100 engaged young adults were taken. Written informed consent was taken from the participants. The researcher assured the participants about the full confidentiality of all the information obtained from them. The purpose of the research was explained to them. Their concerns were answered. The participants were given Demographic Information Sheet, Interpersonal Communication Motive Scale, Satisfaction Scale, and Commitment Scale to be completed. Overall, 100 participants meeting the selection criteria were included in the research. Data was collected and statistical analysis was carried out.

Participants

The sample comprised of engaged young adults (N = 100). Convenient sampling technique was used to collect data with the age ranges from 18-29 years (M = 23.46, SD = 2.60). Only those participants were included who were in contact with their fiancé whereas, participants with time period of engagement less than one month were excluded.

Instruments

Demographic Questionnaire

A self-developed demographic questionnaire was utilized to obtain background information about the participants. The instrument comprised a combination of categorical and open-ended items designed to gather essential personal and contextual data relevant to the study objectives. Specifically, the questionnaire assessed variables such as age, gender, educational level, employment status, **and** occupation.

Interpersonal Communication Motive Scale

The Interpersonal Communication Motives Scale (ICM), developed by Rubin et al. (1988), is a self-report measure designed to assess the underlying motivations individuals have for engaging in interpersonal communication. Based on uses and gratifications theory, the scale conceptualizes communication as a goal-directed activity through which individuals seek to fulfill specific personal and social needs. It identifies six distinct motives for interpersonal interaction: pleasure, affection, inclusion, escape, relaxation, and control. The scale comprises 28 items, each rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Almost Never) to 5 (Almost Always). Higher scores on each subscale indicate stronger motivation for that particular communicative purpose. The ICM scale has been widely used in interpersonal and relational research and has demonstrated acceptable reliability and validity across diverse populations.

Satisfaction Scale

The Satisfaction Scale, developed by Burns (1993), is a brief self-report measure designed to assess individuals' overall satisfaction within interpersonal relationships, particularly in close or romantic contexts. The scale focuses on capturing subjective evaluations of emotional fulfillment, relational contentment, and perceived quality of the relationship. It comprises seven items, each rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). Sample items include statements such as "I am satisfied with the way we handle conflicts in our relationship" and "My relationship meets my emotional needs." Higher scores indicate greater relationship satisfaction. Burns (1993) reported acceptable internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha typically exceeding .80.

Commitment Scale

The Rusbult Commitment Scale, developed by Rusbult et al. (2009), is a self-report measure to assess the extent to which individuals are psychologically attached to their romantic partner and intend to maintain the relationship over time. The scale captures key aspects of commitment, including dedication, long-term orientation, and persistence despite difficulties. The instrument consists of 15 items, each rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Do not agree at all) to 7 (Agree completely). Higher scores indicate stronger relationship commitment. The scale has demonstrated strong psychometric properties, with Cronbach's alpha typically exceeding .85, reflecting high internal consistency.

Results

The Pearson product moment correlation was applied to determine the relationship between study variables. Table 1 showed all the subscales of interpersonal communication motives had

significant positive correlation with relationship satisfaction and commitment. Relationship satisfaction also had positive significant correlation with relationship commitment.

Table 1

Intercorrelations between Study Variables (N = 100).

	variables	k	M	SD	1	2	3
1	Interpersonal Communication	28	91.81	20.40	-	.67**	.61**
2	Relationship Satisfaction	7	31.66	7.75		-	.72**
3	Commitment	15	5.86	1.45			-

** $p < .01$.

A mediation analysis was conducted using PROCESS Model 4 to examine whether Satisfaction mediates the relationship between Interpersonal Communication and Commitment. Results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Mediation analysis through hierarchical regression (N=100).

Path	Effect (b)	B	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
a	Interpersonal Communication → Satisfaction	0.32	0.05	6.40	< .001	0.22	0.42
b	Satisfaction → Commitment	0.10	0.02	4.50	< .001	0.05	0.13
c	Total Effect (IV → DV)	0.30	0.04	7.25	< .001	0.21	0.37
c'	Direct Effect (IV → DV, controlling for M)	0.20	0.05	4.00	< .001	0.10	0.30
ab	Indirect Effect (a × b)	0.10	0.03	-	-	0.04	0.16

The mediation analysis examined whether relationship satisfaction mediates the association between interpersonal communication and relationship commitment. The findings indicated that interpersonal communication was a significant positive predictor of relationship satisfaction, ($B = 0.32$, $p < .001$), suggesting that individuals who engage in more open and effective communication tend to report higher satisfaction in their relationships. In turn, relationship satisfaction significantly predicted relationship commitment, ($B = 0.10$, $p < .001$) indicating that greater satisfaction is associated with increased levels of commitment.

Furthermore, interpersonal communication showed a significant total effect on relationship commitment, ($B = 0.30$, $p < .001$), suggesting that better communication enhances commitment directly. When relationship satisfaction was included as a mediator, the direct effect of interpersonal communication on commitment remained significant, albeit reduced, ($B = 0.20$, $p < .001$). This reduction in effect size implies that part of the relationship between communication and commitment is accounted for by satisfaction supporting the presence of partial mediation. The indirect effect of interpersonal communication on commitment through relationship satisfaction was also significant, with an effect size of 0.09 and a 95% confidence interval [0.04, 0.16]. Because the confidence interval does not include zero, this confirms that the mediation is statistically significant. The mediation effect accounted for approximately 10% of the maximum possible indirect effect, $\kappa^2 = .10$, representing a medium effect size. This provides evidence of a meaningful and practically relevant partial mediation via relationship satisfaction.

Discussion

First of all, a significant positive relationship was found between interpersonal communication, relationship satisfaction and commitment. These results were in accordance with earlier study of Siahaan and Wulan (2024) as they found a relationship between communication and commitment. These results are also in accordance with Aziz and Naqvi (2025) who found a relationship between interpersonal communication and relationship satisfaction. There was another finding which illustrated partial mediation of relationship satisfaction between interpersonal communication and commitment. It was found that interpersonal communication predicted relationship satisfaction. This was similar to results reported by Gabriel et al. (2010); marital interaction behavior was found to be dependent in marital distress. Furthermore, it was found that relationship satisfaction predicts commitment, it was similar to findings reported by Tran et al. (2020) which indicated the relationship commitment is determined by the level of satisfaction. Overall, findings indicated the presence of partial mediation of relationship satisfaction in the relationship between interpersonal communication and relationship commitment. If the individuals' needs are satisfied by the relationship, they would be more committed to the relationship (Salas et al., 2017; Madathil et al., 2023).

Implications

Based on findings that relationship satisfaction mediates the link between interpersonal communication and relationship commitment, several practical recommendations can be proposed to strengthen relational outcomes. Foremost, fostering open, honest, and supportive communication between partners is essential, as effective interpersonal communication directly enhances relationship satisfaction. This can be encouraged through communication skills training that emphasize active listening, emotional expression, and empathy. Given that satisfaction serves as a vital bridge between communication and commitment, targeted interventions should also aim to boost satisfaction by cultivating emotional intimacy, mutual respect, and constructive conflict resolution.

Couples counseling and psychoeducational workshops can play a key role in this process by guiding partners to express their needs, navigate disagreements productively, and reinforce shared relationship goals. In addition, digital tools such as relationship-focused apps can support couples in maintaining regular, meaningful communication and monitoring satisfaction levels over time. It is also important to consider cultural values and individual differences when designing these strategies, ensuring that approaches are contextually appropriate and sensitive to each couple's background. By simultaneously enhancing communication quality and relationship satisfaction, long-term commitment in romantic relationships can be more effectively promoted and sustained.

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