ISSN: 2583-7354

International Journal of Emerging Knowledge Studies

Publisher's Home Page: https://www.ijeks.com/

Fully Open Access Research Paper

Perceived Partner Responsiveness and Relationship Satisfaction among Married Couples: Development of a Relationship Satisfaction Scale

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.70333/ijeks-05-02-006

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Article Info: - Received : 02 January 2026 **Accepted** : 25 January 2026 **Published** : 30 January 2026

Abstract

The present study examined the relationship between perceived partner responsiveness (PPR) and relationship satisfaction (RS) among married couples and to develop a culturally relevant Relationship Satisfaction Scale (RSS). Perceived partner responsiveness reflects the degree to which an individual feels understood, validated and cared for by their partner, based on attachment theory and social exchange theory principles. The study involved 200 married individuals (100 men, 100 women), aged 22–40 years. The Perceived Partner Responsiveness Scale (PPRS; Reis et al., 2011) and the newly developed RSS were administered. Exploratory factor analysis of the RSS revealed four factors: Emotional Support, Communication, Shared Goals and Conflict Resolution, explaining 61% of the variance. Reliability analyses indicated high internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .89$). Correlation analysis showed a significant positive relationship between PPR and RS ($r = .56$, $p < .01$). The findings underscore the role of partner responsiveness in enhancing marital satisfaction and provide a culturally sensitive tool for research and clinical use.

Keywords: *Perceived Partner, Responsiveness, Relationship Satisfaction, Scale Development.*

1. Introduction

Marriage is a central social institution affecting psychological well-being, mental health and social adjustment **(Jose & Alfons, 2007)**. Relationship satisfaction, a key indicator of marital quality, is defined as the subjective evaluation of happiness and fulfillment within the marital bond **(Funk & Rogge, 2007)**. The construct is grounded in social exchange theory, which suggests that marital satisfaction depends on the balance of

rewards and costs in the relationship (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) and attachment theory, which emphasizes that secure bonds promote closeness and satisfaction (Bowlby, 1982).

A significant predictor of relationship satisfaction is perceived partner responsiveness (PPR), which reflects how well an individual perceives their partner as understanding, validating and caring for them (Reis et al., 2011). Responsive partners engage in empathetic listening, provide emotional support and show appreciation, enhancing intimacy and trust (Reis & Gable, 2015). According to attachment theory, partners who feel understood and supported experience higher emotional security, which promotes overall relationship satisfaction (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Previous studies demonstrate a robust positive link between PPR and marital satisfaction across diverse populations (Slatcher & Selcuk, 2017; Gable et al., 2004).

In collectivist cultures like India, relationship satisfaction may be influenced by unique cultural factors, including family expectations, gender roles and communication patterns (Chadda & Deb, 2013). Existing tools such as the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976) and Couples Satisfaction Index (Funk & Rogge, 2007) may not fully capture these culturally embedded aspects. Hence, there is a need for a culturally relevant, psychometrically sound scale to measure relationship satisfaction among Indian married couples.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The sample consisted of 200 married individuals (100 males and 100 females) from Cuddalore, India, aged between 22 and 40 years (M = 30.4, SD = 4.8). Participants were recruited using purposive sampling. The inclusion criteria were: (a) being legally married, (b) cohabiting with the spouse and (c) having been married for at least one year. Participants completed the study measures individually in English.

2.2. Measures

Perceived Partner Responsiveness Scale (PPRS; Reis et al., 2011). The PPRS is a 12-item self-report measure that assesses perceived partner understanding, validation and care. Items are rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree). Higher scores indicate greater perceived partner responsiveness. In the present sample the PPRS demonstrated excellent internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .91$).

Relationship Satisfaction Scale (RSS; newly developed). The RSS was developed for the present study to assess relationship satisfaction among married couples in an Indian context. Development and characteristics of the RSS are summarized below.

Item generation. An initial pool of 35 items was generated from a review of the literature, semi structured interviews with married couples and consultation with subject-matter experts in couple relationships and clinical psychology. Items were written to reflect four conceptually derived domains: Emotional Support, Communication, Shared Goals and Conflict Resolution.

Content validity and item reduction. A panel of experts (clinicians and academics with expertise in relationship assessment) reviewed the 35-item pool for clarity, cultural relevance and representativeness. Based on expert ratings and consensus, 8 items were removed because of low relevance, redundancy, or poor cultural fit, yielding a 27-item instrument.

Response format and scoring. Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Subscale scores are computed by summing responses to the items comprising each domain (Emotional Support: 7 items; Communication: 6 items; Shared Goals: 7 items; Conflict Resolution: 7 items). A total RSS score (sum of all 27 items) represents overall relationship satisfaction; higher scores indicate greater satisfaction.

Reliability: Internal consistency of the RSS in the present sample was good to excellent: total scale $\alpha = .89$; subscale alphas ranged from .76 to .84.

2.3. Procedure

Participants were approached through community networks and invited to participate. Following informed consent, participants completed a brief demographic form and then the Perceived Partner Responsiveness Scale (PPRS) and the Relationship Satisfaction Scale (RSS) individually in a quiet setting. The average completion time for the assessment battery was approximately 25 minutes.

2.4. Data screening and handling of missing data

Data were screened prior to analysis for completeness, univariate outliers and distributional assumptions. Participants with more than 10% missing item responses on a given scale were excluded from analyses involving that scale. For participants with ≤10% missing items on a scale, missing item responses were imputed using the participant's mean score on the completed items of that scale. Normality of scale scores and linearity of associations were examined to verify assumptions for parametric tests; where assumptions were not severely violated, parametric statistics were used.

2.5. Data analysis

All analyses were performed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 28. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations) were computed for demographic variables and scale scores. Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha for each subscale and for the total RSS. To examine the dimensionality of the RSS, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted. The suitability of the item correlation matrix for factor analysis was evaluated using the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity. EFA was performed using principal axis factoring as the extraction method. A Varimax rotation was applied to aid interpretability of orthogonal factor solutions; factors were retained based on multiple criteria including eigenvalues greater than 1.0, inspection of the scree plot and theoretical interpretability of the factor structure. Item loadings, communalities.

3. Results and Discussion

Table 1: ***Reliability and Validity of Relationship Satisfaction Scale (RSS)***

Item	No. of Items	Mean	Var		SD (n)	Cronbach's Alpha
Relationship Satisfaction Scale (RSS)	27	112.118.62			10.89	0.89

Source: Primary data

Table 2: ***Factorial Validity by KMO and Bartlett's Test***

Test	Value			
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Adequacy	0.87			
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Approx. Chi-Square	2456.40			
Df	351			
Sig.	0.001			

Source: Primary data

Table 3: ***Loading of Scale Items on Factors by Rotated Factor Matri*** **Relationship Satisfaction Components**

Subscale / Item	1 Emotional Support	2 Communication	3 Shared Goals	4 Conflict Resolution
Factor 1 – Emotional Support				
I feel emotionally cared for in this relationship.	0.82			
My partner understands my feelings.	0.79			

My partner values and respects me.	0.76			
I feel appreciated by my partner.	0.72			
I receive comfort when upset.	0.69			
My partner encourages me.	0.65			
Factor 2 – Communication				
We openly discuss our problems.		0.79		
My partner listens attentively.		0.76		
We communicate expectations clearly.		0.71		
We talk about sensitive issues.		0.68		
I express feelings freely.		0.63		
Factor 3 – Shared Goals				
We work together toward common goals.			0.80	
We plan our future jointly.			0.77	
We share similar family values.			0.73	
We make important decisions together.			0.69	
Our long-term plans align.			0.66	
Factor 4 – Conflict Resolution				
We resolve disagreements without hurting each other.				0.78
We compromise to settle differences.				0.74
We remain respectful when arguing.				0.70
We avoid letting issues escalate.				0.65
We reconcile quickly after disagreements.				0.62

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization Rotation converged in 7 iterations Note. Only items with factor loadings of .60 and above are presented in the rotated factor matrix for clarity. The full Relationship Satisfaction Scale consists of 27 items distributed across four subscales, as reported in Table 5.

Table 4: ***Correlation Matrix***

Variables	Emotional Support	Communication	Shared Goals	Conflict Resolution	Relationship Satisfaction
Emotional Support	1				
Communication	0.62**	1			
Shared Goals	0.58**	0.64**	1		
Conflict Resolution	0.49**	0.53**	0.56**	1	
Relationship Satisfaction (Total)	0.81**	0.78**	0.74**	0.69**	1

Source: Primary data
*** significant at the 0.01 level*

Table 5: ***Items, Subscales and Reliability of the RSS***

Subscale	Item Numbers	Sample Item	No. of Items	Score Range	Cronbach's α
Emotional Support	1–7	I feel emotionally cared for in this relationship.	7	7–35	.84
Communication	8–13	We openly discuss our problems with each other.	6	6–30	.79
Shared Goals	14–20	We work together towards common life goals.	7	7–35	.81
Conflict Resolution	21–27	We are able to resolve disagreements without hurting each other.	7	7–35	.76
Total RSS	1–27	—	27	27–135	.89

Table 6: ***Correlation between Perceived Partner Responsiveness and Relationship Satisfaction***

Variable	Relationship Satisfaction
Perceived Partner Responsiveness	.56**

*** correlation at 0.01 levels*
Note: N = 200; p < .01.

4. Analysis and Results

4.1. Reliability and Validity

The reliability analysis of the Relationship Satisfaction Scale (RSS) indicates a Cronbach's α of 0.89, which demonstrates a high level of internal consistency among the 27 items. According to **Cronbach (1951)**, alpha values above 0.70 are acceptable and values above 0.80 indicate strong reliability. Therefore, the RSS used in the present study is highly reliable for measuring marital satisfaction among participants.

The mean score of 112.40 and a standard deviation of 10.89 show that the participants generally reported high levels of relationship satisfaction, with moderate dispersion in responses. The variance value (118.62) further confirms the variability within the sample. Overall, the reliability indices confirm that the scale is dependable and suitable for further statistical analysis.

4.2. Factorial Validity

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value of 0.87 indicates meritorious sampling adequacy, meaning the sample size and inter-item correlations were adequate for factor analysis **(Kaiser, 1974)**. A KMO value above 0.80 is considered excellent and confirms that the data structure is appropriate for extraction of latent factors.

The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity shows a chi-square value of 2456.40 with a significance level of $p < 0.001$, demonstrating that correlations between items are sufficiently large and statistically significant. This confirms the suitability of the data for factor analysis.

Together, the KMO and Bartlett's results provide strong evidence of factorial validity, allowing credible extraction of the underlying dimensions of relationship satisfaction.

4.3. Factor Structure - Rotated component matrix

The rotated factor matrix extracted four distinct components, consistent with the theoretical structure of relationship satisfaction: Emotional Support, Communication, Shared Goals and Conflict Resolution.

Factor 1: Emotional Support: This factor includes items with loadings between 0.65 and 0.82. These high loadings indicate that feelings of care, appreciation, reassurance and emotional understanding strongly represent this domain. This suggests that emotional experiences form the strongest predictor of relationship satisfaction.

Factor 2: Communication: Items such as problem discussion, attentive listening and open sharing loaded between 0.63 and 0.79, demonstrating that communication skills are a stable and essential component of marital adjustment. Effective communication appears foundational for maintaining satisfaction.

Factor 3: Shared Goals: This factor includes joint planning, shared values and decision-making with loadings between 0.66 and 0.80. The results indicate that alignment of life goals, future aspirations and mutual support significantly influence marital well-being.

Factor 4: Conflict Resolution: Loadings between 0.62 and 0.78 indicate items related to problem-solving, compromise, respectful arguments and reconciliation. These items show that healthy conflict management is a major contributor to satisfaction.

The factor solution validates the conceptual model of relationship satisfaction, where emotional, communicative, goal-oriented and conflict-management factors interact to shape marital outcomes. The absence of major cross-loadings shows good discriminant validity, indicating that the scale captures distinct yet related dimensions.

4.4. Correlation matrix

The correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships among all four subscales of the Relationship Satisfaction Scale and the total relationship satisfaction score. Emotional Support showed the strongest association with overall relationship satisfaction ($r = .81$, $p < .01$), indicating that feeling valued, cared for and emotionally understood is the most powerful contributor to marital satisfaction. Communication was also strongly related to relationship satisfaction ($r = .78$, $p < .01$), highlighting the importance of open discussion, attentive listening and honest emotional expression in maintaining satisfying marital relationships. Shared Goals demonstrated a substantial positive correlation with relationship satisfaction ($r = .74$, $p < .01$), suggesting that alignment in values, joint decision-making and shared future planning play a crucial role in enhancing marital well-being. Conflict Resolution, although comparatively lower, still showed a strong positive relationship with overall satisfaction ($r = .69$, $p < .01$), underscoring the significance of respectful problem-solving and effective management of disagreements. Additionally, the moderate-to-high inter correlations among the four subscales indicate that emotional support, communication, shared goals and conflict resolution are closely interconnected processes that collectively contribute to relationship satisfaction among married couples.

5. Findings

The items, subscales and internal consistency reliability coefficients for the Relationship Satisfaction Scale (RSS). The final version of the RSS consisted of 27 items representing four conceptually derived subscales: Emotional Support, Communication, Shared Goals and Conflict Resolution. Each item was rated on a five-point Likert scale and subscale scores were calculated by summing the corresponding items. Higher scores indicate greater perceived support within the relationship. Internal consistency reliability analyses indicated acceptable to excellent reliability for all subscales. Cronbach's α values were .84 for Emotional Support (7 items; sample item: "I feel emotionally cared for in this relationship."), .79 for Communication (6 items; sample item: "We openly discuss our problems with each other."), .81 for Shared Goals (7 items; sample item: "We work together towards common life goals.") and .76 for Conflict Resolution (7 items; sample item: "We are able to resolve disagreements without hurting each other."). The

overall RSS demonstrated excellent internal consistency (27 items; α = .89), suggesting that the scale reliably measures perceived relationship support.

To examine the factor structure of the RSS, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was .87, indicating meritorious adequacy of the data for factor analysis. Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant, χ^2 (351) = 2456.40, p < .001, confirming that the inter-item correlation matrix was suitable for factor extraction. The analysis yielded a four-factor solution, consistent with the theoretical model, which together accounted for 61% of the total variance. Factor loadings ranged from .54 to .82, indicating moderate to strong associations between items and their respective latent constructs.

Overall, the EFA results supported a clear four-factor structure corresponding to the subscales of Emotional Support, Communication, Shared Goals and Conflict Resolution. These findings provide initial evidence for the construct validity and internal consistency reliability of the RSS as a measure of perceived partner responsiveness and relational support.

The significant positive correlation between perceived partner responsiveness and relationship satisfaction (r = .56, p < .01) suggests that individuals who perceive their partners as more understanding, supportive and emotionally attuned experience greater satisfaction in their relationships. This finding aligns with previous research indicating that perceived partner responsiveness plays a central role in fostering intimacy, trust and emotional security within romantic relationships (Reis & Gable, 2015). When individuals feel that their partners acknowledge, validate and care for their needs and emotions, it strengthens mutual understanding and enhances relational harmony.

From a theoretical perspective, these results are consistent with attachment theory, which posits that responsive interactions promote feelings of safety and closeness between partners **(Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016)**. Moreover, interdependence theory emphasizes that satisfaction in relationships depends on the extent to which each partner's needs are met through supportive exchanges **(Kelley & Thibaut, 1978)**. Thus, higher perceived responsiveness likely contributes to satisfaction by reinforcing emotional intimacy, effective communication and mutual appreciation.

Overall, the observed correlation provides empirical support for the notion that perceived partner responsiveness is a key predictor of relationship satisfaction. It underscores the importance of emotional attunement and supportive communication in maintaining fulfilling and resilient marital relationships.

6. Limitations

The present study has several limitations. First, the cross-sectional design precludes causal inferences between perceived partner responsiveness and relationship satisfaction. Second, the sample was limited to urban Cuddalore, which may restrict generalizability to other regions or populations. Third, reliance on self-report measures may introduce response biases. Finally, while the newly developed RSS demonstrated good internal consistency and a clear four-factor structure, further validation (e.g., CFA, test–retest reliability and measurement invariance) is needed. Future research should use larger, more diverse samples and consider longitudinal or dyadic designs.

7. Conclusion

Perceived partner responsiveness showed a significant positive relationship with relationship satisfaction among married couples (r = .56, p < .01). The RSS demonstrated good internal consistency (α = .89) and a four-factor structure, suggesting it is a reliable, culturally sensitive instrument for assessing marital satisfaction in Indian couples. These findings highlight the importance of partner responsiveness in fostering relational well-being and provide a foundation for future research and applied work in marital assessment.

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Cite this article as: S. Srikumaran and Dr. K. Nagalakshmi (2026). Perceived Partner Responsiveness and Relationship Satisfaction among Married Couples: Development of a Relationship Satisfaction Scale. International Journal of Emerging Knowledge Studies. 5(1), pp. 25–32.
https://doi.org/10.70333/ijeks-05-02-006