

ISSN: 2584-0142

PSYCHOPEDIA
JOURNALSInternational Journal of
Interdisciplinary Approaches
in Psychology (IJIAP)

Young And Old Couples at the Poles of Satisfaction: A Comparative Analysis of Dyadic and Relational Strengths

¹**Dr. Neha Sharma**, *Assistant Professor, Department of Human Development, Government Home Science College, Affiliated to Panjab University, Chandigarh, India*
sh.neha.83@gmail.com

²**Shagun Gupta**, *Masters in Human Development, Department of Human Development, Government Home Science College, Affiliated to Panjab University, Chandigarh, India*
guptashagun191@gmail.com

Abstract: The present study, entitled “Young and Old Couples at the Poles of Satisfaction: A Comparative Analysis of Dyadic and Relational Strengths”, aimed to examine differences in dyadic adjustment, resilience, and perceived partner responsiveness among young (22–32 years) and old (50–60 years) married couples who reported the highest and lowest levels of couple satisfaction. A total of 76 couples (38 young and 38 old) from Hisar, Haryana, participated in the research. Utilizing a comparative correlational design, the data was collected through standardized instruments: Couple Satisfaction Index (CSI-32), Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS), Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC), and Perceived Partner Responsiveness Scale (PPRS). The findings revealed significant differences in all three domains, i.e. dyadic adjustment, resilience and perceived partner responsiveness. Couples with higher satisfaction scores demonstrated significantly better dyadic adjustment ($M = 129.58$), resilience ($M = 80.07$), and perceived partner responsiveness ($M = 80.13$) compared to their low-satisfaction counterparts ($M = 113.58$, 67.06 , and 74.27) respectively. The results suggested that satisfaction in couples is closely linked to emotional coordination, adaptive coping, and mutual responsiveness across marital life stages. The study offered important implications for marital counselling and relationship-strengthening interventions tailored to different age groups.

Keywords: *Couple Satisfaction, Dyadic Adjustment, Resilience, Perceived Partner Responsiveness, Young Married Couples, Old Married Couples, Age Differences.*

1. Introduction

1.1 Marriage and Psychosocial Well-Being

Marriage is one of the most significant interpersonal relationships across the life span. It offers individuals emotional intimacy, social integration, companionship, and a stable foundation for personal and familial development (Stack & Eshleman, 1998). Research in psychological and social sciences consistently highlights that a high-quality marital relationship serves as a protective factor against stress, depression, and loneliness (Dush & Amato, 2005; Robles et al., 2014). It also contributes to physical health benefits, such as lower risk of cardiovascular disease and improved immune functioning, as a result of emotional security and reduced physiological stress responses (Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001; Uchino et al., 2012). On the other hand, marital discord or dissatisfaction has been associated with increased cortisol levels, anxiety, chronic illnesses, and sleep disturbances (Whisman & Uebelacker, 2006; Sbarra, 2009). As such, marital satisfaction represents not only relational well-being but also an integral component of psychological health and life satisfaction.

1.2 Background of the Study

Couple satisfaction plays a crucial role in shaping the emotional, psychological, and relational health of individuals across the lifespan. However, the experience of satisfaction within marriage is not uniform; it is influenced by various interpersonal and intrapersonal factors that may shift across developmental stages. Among these, dyadic adjustment (the quality of interaction and harmony between spouses), resilience (the ability to recover from relational stress), and perceived partner responsiveness (the sense that one's partner is supportive and attuned) are consistently recognized as strong predictors of marital satisfaction. While much research has explored these constructs individually, fewer studies have examined how they interact in the context of high versus low satisfaction across different age groups. Life-stage transitions, evolving responsibilities, and changing priorities often differentiate the marital dynamics of young and old couples.

Younger couples may face challenges related to career, parenting, and identity development, whereas older couples are often navigating retirement, health issues, and emotional companionship. These differing life contexts can significantly shape the expression and impact of dyadic adjustment, resilience, and partner responsiveness within marriage. This study builds upon this understanding by examining young (22–32 years) and old (50–60 years)

married couples who perceive either high or low couple satisfaction. By focusing on these polar ends of satisfaction and comparing age groups, the study seeks to uncover nuanced patterns that can inform relationship counselling, marital enrichment programs, and sustainable relationship strategies across the marital lifespan.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Although numerous studies have independently explored the roles of dyadic adjustment, resilience, and perceived partner responsiveness in shaping marital satisfaction, there remains a significant gap in understanding how these variables interact across age groups and extremes of couple satisfaction. Much of the existing literature has either focused solely on young couples or has treated married individuals as a homogenous group without considering age-related variations. Moreover, studies often examine average levels of satisfaction, rather than looking at the two poles, those with the highest and lowest satisfaction, where differences may be more pronounced and revealing. This lack of comparative and age-specific analysis presents a critical limitation in understanding marital dynamics from a developmental perspective. Specifically, there is insufficient empirical evidence to explain how young and old married couples differ in their experience of dyadic adjustment, in their capacity for resilience, and in their perceptions of their partners' responsiveness, especially among those who are either thriving in their relationships or struggling significantly. Therefore, the central problem addressed by this study is the need to identify and compare the relational characteristics of young and old married couples at both ends of the marital satisfaction spectrum. By investigating the differences in dyadic adjustment, resilience, and perceived partner responsiveness among these groups, the study aims to provide insights that are both age-sensitive and practically applicable in counselling and intervention settings. This understanding can support the development of tailored strategies to promote marital well-being across different stages of the marital journey.

1.4 Couple Satisfaction as a Multidimensional Construct

Couple satisfaction refers to “an individual’s subjective evaluation of the quality and emotional content of their marriage” (Bradbury et al., 2000). It involves affective experiences (love, happiness, intimacy), behavioural interactions (conflict resolution, communication), and cognitive assessments (expectations, shared goals) that unfold over time (Funk & Rogge, 2007; Fincham & Beach, 2010). Rather than being a static trait, couple satisfaction is shaped by day-to-day interactions, evolving commitments, and life stressors. High satisfaction is marked by adaptability, mutual understanding, emotional validation, and joint problem-solving (Cutrona,

1996). Conversely, low satisfaction often correlates with persistent conflict, emotional withdrawal, reduced responsiveness, and unmet needs.

1.5 The Role of Dyadic Adjustment, Resilience, and Perceived Partner Responsiveness

The quality of marital interaction is closely linked with dyadic adjustment, a multidimensional construct encompassing satisfaction, cohesion, consensus, and emotional expression (Spanier, 1976). It serves as an operational measure of marital quality and stability. Resilience, defined as the capacity to recover and adapt in the face of adversity, allows couples to bounce back from external pressures such as illness, economic stress, or familial conflict (Walsh, 2003; Masten, 2001). Resilient couples demonstrate flexible communication, strong belief systems, and effective problem-solving, all of which are vital to marital continuity. The third component, perceived partner responsiveness, reflects the degree to which individuals feel understood, cared for, and appreciated by their partner, factors that foster emotional intimacy and secure attachment (Reis et al., 2004; Lemay & Clark, 2008). These three constructs work together to build relational strength and influence marital satisfaction.

1.6 The Life Course Perspective: Young vs. Old Couples

The life course perspective provides a valuable framework for understanding how marital dynamics evolve with age and shared experiences (Elder, 1994). As individuals transition through various roles, student, professional, parent, caregiver, their relational needs and expectations also transform. Younger couples may prioritize goal alignment, financial planning, and parenting coordination, whereas older couples may value companionship, emotional security, and mutual caregiving (Antonucci et al., 2001; Carstensen et al., 1999). This framework emphasizes that the timing of experiences matters: the same marital challenge may have different implications depending on the stage of life. Hence, comparing young and old married couples enables researchers to explore developmental changes in how psychosocial strengths influence satisfaction.

1.7 High vs. Low Couple Satisfaction: A Comparative Lens

Much of the existing literature treats marital satisfaction as a continuum, averaging results across diverse samples. However, examining couples at extreme ends, those with very high or very low satisfaction, can yield clearer insights into relational strengths and vulnerabilities (Lavner & Bradbury, 2010). Highly satisfied couples often exhibit proactive coping, secure emotional bonds, and mutual respect, while dissatisfied couples are more likely to demonstrate blame, rigidity, and emotional disengagement (Fincham & Beach, 2010). Studying these two polarities in both young and old age groups allows for a nuanced understanding of what makes a relationship flourish or falter at different stages of life.

1.8 Cultural Relevance in the Indian Context

Indian marriages operate within a collectivist cultural context, where familial involvement, societal expectations, and traditional values play a central role (Rastogi, 2022; Chakraborty & Thakur, 2017). Marriages are not only personal but also social contracts, often shaped by extended kinship systems. While modernization has influenced partner selection and autonomy, the essence of marriage in India remains deeply rooted in notions of duty, adjustment, and endurance (Srinivasan, 1993). Expressions of emotional support or resilience may differ from those seen in Western dyadic frameworks. Therefore, any exploration of marital satisfaction in India must be grounded in a culturally sensitive approach that accounts for social obligations, hierarchical structures, and context-specific stressors.

1.9 Rationale of the Study

Marital satisfaction is a vital component of relational and psychological well-being, influenced by various psychosocial factors such as dyadic adjustment, resilience, and perceived partner responsiveness. While existing literature highlights their significance, limited research explores how these variables differ across distinct age groups and satisfaction levels, particularly within the Indian cultural context. This study addresses this gap by examining young (22–32 years) and old (50–60 years) married couples who report either high or low levels of couple satisfaction. Understanding how these psychosocial factors interact across the satisfaction spectrum can inform tailored, evidence-based interventions. Insights from this research may enable marital counsellors and therapists to develop age-appropriate strategies to strengthen relational functioning. Furthermore, exploring these dynamics in an Indian context offers culturally grounded perspectives on marital quality, contributing to the development of more relevant therapeutic models. Ultimately, this study aims to foster healthier, more resilient, and emotionally fulfilling marriages across different stages of life.

1.10 Objectives of the Study

- a) To examine differences in dyadic adjustment among young and old married couples with the highest and lowest levels of couple satisfaction.
- b) To assess differences in resilience among young and old married couples who perceive high and low couple satisfaction.
- c) To explore differences in perceived partner responsiveness among young and old married couples at the extremes of couple satisfaction.
- d) To provide insights that can inform age-specific counselling and family therapy interventions for enhancing marital well-being.

1.11 Hypotheses

H1: There will be a significant difference in dyadic adjustment between young and old married couples who perceive high and low couple satisfaction.

H2: There will be a significant difference in resilience between young and old married couples who perceive high and low couple satisfaction.

H3: There will be a significant difference in perceived partner responsiveness between young and old married couples who perceive high and low couple satisfaction.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Couple Satisfaction and Marital Quality

Couple satisfaction is widely regarded as a central indicator of marital quality, integrating emotional, behavioural, and cognitive evaluations of the relationship (Funk & Rogge, 2007). It is influenced by communication styles, conflict resolution, emotional intimacy, and shared values. Longitudinal studies suggest that marital satisfaction follows a U-shaped trajectory across the lifespan, high during early years, declining during midlife due to career and parenting stress, and often rebounding in later years as couples experience emotional stability and companionship (VanLaningham et al., 2001; Bookwala, 2012). Age-related factors significantly influence couple satisfaction. Older couples often report greater satisfaction due to enhanced emotional regulation and acceptance of relationship imperfections (Carstensen et al., 1999). In contrast, younger couples may encounter challenges stemming from unrealistic expectations, lack of conflict management skills, and life transitions such as parenting and financial instability (Umberson et al., 2005; Rauer & Volling, 2015). Cultural expectations and intergenerational living arrangements in India also shape satisfaction differently across age groups (Rastogi, 2009; Seshadri & Choudhary, 2007).

2.2 Dyadic Adjustment Across Age Groups

Dyadic adjustment, defined as “the overall harmony between partners in terms of consensus, cohesion, satisfaction, and affectional expression” (Spanier, 1976), has been consistently linked with marital satisfaction (Kurdek, 1993). Research shows that older couples often display higher dyadic adjustment due to greater emotional attunement, shared history, and better conflict resolution strategies (Henry et al., 2005; Levenson et al., 1993). Emotional maturity, tolerance, and established role clarity contribute to this adjustment in later life (Schaie & Willis, 2010). In contrast, young couples, especially in early years of marriage, face more fluctuations in dyadic adjustment. They often grapple with evolving roles, communication difficulties, and external stressors such as career pressures and parenting responsibilities (Lavner & Bradbury, 2012; Williamson et al., 2013). Lower adjustment levels in younger

couples are typically associated with reduced satisfaction, greater conflict, and instability (Clements et al., 2004).

2.3 Resilience in Marital Relationships

Marital resilience refers to “a couple’s ability to adapt positively in the face of relational stress and adversity.” Patterson (2002) emphasized that resilient couples demonstrate strong coping mechanisms, emotional support, and flexibility, which sustain satisfaction during challenging periods. Resilience is seen as both an individual and relational attribute that develops over time. Older couples are often more resilient due to prolonged exposure to life challenges and refined coping strategies. Studies have shown that couples with longer marital duration tend to use emotion-focused coping and collaborative problem solving, leading to enhanced satisfaction (Hilliard et al., 2012; Southwick & Charney, 2012). Conversely, younger couples, particularly those with low satisfaction, may exhibit poor resilience due to inexperience in handling relational stress and fewer internal resources (Neff & Broady, 2011; Karney & Bradbury, 2005).

2.4 Perceived Partner Responsiveness

Perceived partner responsiveness (PPR) refers to “the extent to which individuals feel understood, validated, and cared for by their partners” (Reis et al., 2004). PPR is a key mechanism through which intimacy is built, and is closely associated with couple satisfaction (Maisel & Gable, 2009). Laurenceau et al. (2005) found that perceived responsiveness is predictive of both daily relationship satisfaction and long-term commitment. Older couples are often better at expressing empathy and providing emotional responsiveness, resulting in greater feelings of mutual support and security (Charles & Carstensen, 2010). In contrast, younger couples may struggle to maintain consistent responsiveness due to competing demands and underdeveloped emotional skills (Collins & Feeney, 2004; Waldinger & Schulz, 2010). Differences in perceived responsiveness also account for variations in satisfaction among couples with high versus low relational quality.

3. Methodology

The present study entitled “Young and Old Couples at the Poles of Satisfaction: A Comparative Analysis of Dyadic and Relational Strengths” was conducted to examine differences in dyadic adjustment, resilience, and perceived partner responsiveness among young (22–32 years) and old (50–60 years) married couples reporting the highest and lowest levels of couple satisfaction. A systematic procedure was designed for conducting the investigation, analysis and interpretation of the data. The sample for the present study was

drawn from the urban areas of Hisar city. Hisar, located in the northwestern part of Haryana, India, presents a unique and contextually rich setting for studying marital dynamics across generations. The sample size comprised of total 76 married couples ($N=152$), which included the young married couples and the old married couples, in the age range of 22-32 years and 50-60 years respectively, living in Hisar, Haryana. The sample was divided to have an equal number of young married couples ($n_1=38$) and old married couples ($n_2=38$).

To carry out this comparative study, only young married couples (22-32 years) and old married couples (50-60 years) in Hisar city were shortlisted. Then, a list of young married couples (22-32 years) and old married couples (50-60 years) was prepared, 152 married adults, which included 76 young married adults (22-32 years) and 76 old married adults (50-60 years), who were interested to become a part of this study as a sample were selected purposively. The selected subjects were approached to assess the differences in dyadic adjustment, resilience, and perceived partner responsiveness among young (22–32 years) and old (50–60 years) married couples reporting the highest and lowest levels of couple satisfaction.

3.1 Criteria for Sample Selection

- a) The study was limited to young married couples within the age range of 22-32 years and old married couples within the age range of 50-60 years.
- b) The study was limited to Hisar city.

3.2 Tools/Measures

The Couple Satisfaction Index (CSI-32), developed by James L. Funk and Ronald D. Rogge in 2007, is a widely used self-report measure designed to assess relationship satisfaction with high precision. Unlike traditional relationship scales, the CSI-32 was developed using Item Response Theory (IRT), allowing it to capture a broad spectrum of satisfaction levels with greater sensitivity. The scale consists of 32 items, with some rated on a Likert scale (e.g., 1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree) and others using bipolar adjectives (e.g., “unsatisfied – satisfied”). The total score ranges from 0 to 161, with higher scores indicate greater relationship satisfaction, while lower scores may suggest distress or dissatisfaction. While there is no strict cutoff, studies suggest that scores below 104.5 may indicate relationship distress. The CSI-32 is widely used in relationship studies, counselling, and therapy to assess and track changes in relationship quality over time, making it a valuable tool for both researchers and practitioners.

The Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) is a widely used self-report questionnaire designed to measure the quality and adjustment of romantic relationships. It was developed by Graham B. Spanier in 1976 and has since been used in research and clinical settings to assess

relationship satisfaction, cohesion, consensus, and affectional expression. It consists of 32 items measuring four key dimensions: Dyadic Consensus, Dyadic Satisfaction, Dyadic Cohesion, Affectional Expression. Scores range from 0 to 151, with higher scores indicating better relationship adjustment. A cutoff around 100 often distinguishes distressed from non-distressed couples. The DAS is valuable in couples therapy and research, helping assess relationship dynamics and identify distress.

The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) is a psychological assessment tool developed by Kathryn M. Connor and Jonathan R.T. Davidson in 2003 to measure resilience, or an individual's ability to cope with stress and adversity. It was originally designed for clinical and research settings, particularly in relation to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and depression. In relationship, it helps assess how well partners cope with stress, adapt to challenges, and support each other during difficult times. Resilience in relationships is crucial for overcoming conflicts, life transitions, and external stressors such as financial difficulties, health issues, or family pressures. The CD-RISC consists of 25 items, which are evaluated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 0-4: not true at all (0), rarely true (1), sometimes true (2) often true (3), and true nearly all of the time (4) except for items 2.4 and 6 in which case reverse is applicable these ratings result in a number between 0-100, and higher scores indicate higher resilience. Higher resilience scores suggest that partners are better equipped to manage relationship challenges, communicate effectively, and maintain emotional stability.

The Perceived Partner Responsiveness Scale (PPRS), created by Harry T. Reis and colleagues, evaluates how much individuals feel heard, valued, and supported by their romantic partners. It examines three main aspects: understanding, which reflects a partner's ability to listen and acknowledge one's emotions; validation, which captures feelings of acceptance and respect; and caring, which assesses emotional support and affection. The scale consists of various statements, typically rated on a Likert scale (e.g., 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree), where higher scores indicate stronger perceived responsiveness. Studies suggest that greater partner responsiveness leads to better relationship satisfaction, emotional security, and intimacy, while lower scores may signal relational difficulties. The PPRS is commonly applied in relationship research and therapy to explore how responsiveness influences trust, communication, and long-term stability.

4. Results and Discussion

Based on couple satisfaction scores of young and old married couples, the range of scores was characterized into three levels that were low, moderate, and high. The low range of

scores represented the (below 26) lowest level of couple satisfaction among young and old married couples, whereas the higher range of scores (36 and above) was identified as the highest level of couple satisfaction in this data. Both groups were compared on the mean scores obtained by them concerning their Dyadic Adjustment, Partner Responsiveness, and Resilience under this study.

Table 4.1: Differences in perception of dyadic adjustment (mean score) among young and old married couples who perceived the highest and lowest level of couple satisfaction

Variable	Married Couples Who Perceived Lowest Couple Satisfaction		Married Couples Who Perceived the Highest Couple Satisfaction		t-value	p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Dyadic Adjustment	113.58	8.93	129.58	5.54	11.41	0.001**

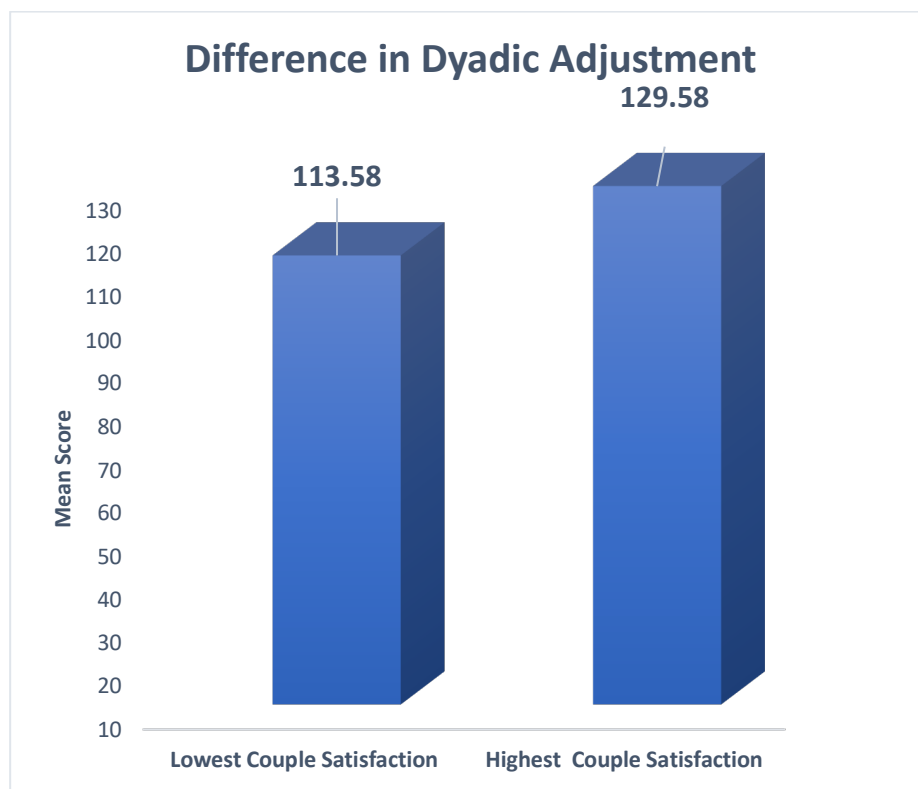


Figure 4.1: Differences in perception of dyadic adjustment (mean score) among young and old married couples who perceived the highest and the lowest level of couple satisfaction

Table 4.1 and figure 4.1 reveal the differences in dyadic adjustment (mean score) of couples with the highest and least scores in couple satisfaction. It was depicted that the lowest couple satisfaction group (mean=113.58) significantly perceived lesser dyadic adjustment as compared to the highest couple satisfaction group (mean=129.58). It means that couples who perceived more couple satisfaction were found to be more dyadic adjustment skills than their counterparts. It was hypothesized in the present study that couples with the highest couple satisfaction will possess more dyadic adjustment than couples with the least couple satisfaction. Hence, according to the findings, the hypothesis proved to be accepted.

The observed differences in dyadic adjustment between couples with the highest and lowest levels of couple satisfaction underscore the critical role of relational harmony in marital well-being. The present study found that couples with high satisfaction showed significantly greater dyadic adjustment, reflecting their ability to maintain consensus, emotional closeness, and affection. This aligns with Spanier's (1976) conceptualization of dyadic adjustment and Bradbury, Fincham, and Beach's (2000) assertion that conflict resolution and emotional attunement enhance satisfaction. Recent longitudinal studies such as Lavner and Bradbury (2012) further demonstrate that higher dyadic adjustment predicts long-term marital stability, while Randall and Bodenmann (2017) highlight the protective role of dyadic coping during stress. Age-wise analysis in the current study revealed that older satisfied couples often displayed emotional maturity and stable conflict-resolution strategies, likely gained through relational experience. Conversely, younger satisfied couples demonstrated adjustment via open communication, mutual support, and flexibility (Mitnick, Heyman, & Smith Slep, 2009). Thus, while core elements of dyadic adjustment are consistent across age, their expression varies developmentally, suggesting that age-sensitive interventions may enhance marital harmony effectively.

Table 4.2: *Differences in perception of resilience (mean score) among young and old married couples who perceived the highest and the lowest level of couple satisfaction*

Variable	Young Married Couples Who Perceived Lowest Couple Satisfaction		Old Married Couples Who Perceived Highest Couple Satisfaction		t-value	p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Resilience	67.06	6.682	80.07	4.801	11.756	0.001**

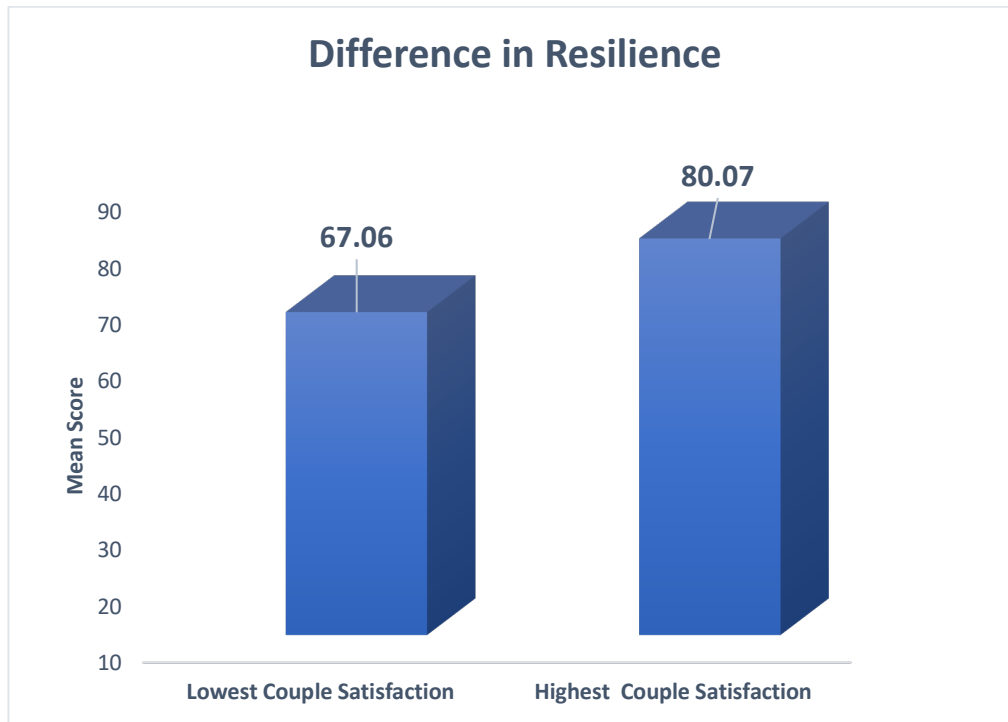


Figure 4.2: Differences in perception of resilience (mean score) among young and old married couples who perceived the highest and the lowest level of couple satisfaction

Data in this table 4.2 and figure 4.2 represent the differences in perception of resilience (mean score) among couples who perceived lowest and highest level of couple satisfaction. It was depicted that couples who perceived more (mean =80.07) resilience had the highest couple satisfaction than their counterparts who perceived a low resilience (mean =67.06). It means that couples who perceived high couple satisfaction were reporting a higher resilience. It was hypothesized in the present study that couples with the highest scores in couple satisfaction will possess more resilience than couples with least scores in couple satisfaction. Thus, the hypothesis framed was proved to be accepted.

The findings of the present study indicate clear differences in resilience among young and old married couples with varying levels of couple satisfaction. Consistent with Karney and Bradbury's (1995) Vulnerability-Stress-Adaptation (VSA) model, couples reporting high satisfaction demonstrated greater resilience, reflecting their ability to adapt to stress and recover from adversity as a unit. Among older couples, resilience often emerged from decades of shared experiences, emotional maturity, and a stable relational history, enabling them to confront challenges with composure and acceptance. This aligns with findings by Johnson et al. (2020), who emphasized that long-term couples develop emotional security and mutual coping systems, buffering the negative effects of external stressors like health or financial instability. In contrast, highly satisfied young couples exhibited resilience through cognitive

flexibility, mutual goal-setting, and proactive problem-solving, strategies that support effective adaptation to early marital demands such as career pressures or role negotiations (Williams & Ciarrochi, 2019). Couples with lower satisfaction in both age groups showed less adaptive responses, often characterized by emotional reactivity or avoidance. These results underscore that resilience is not static; rather, it evolves within the relational context, shaped by life stage and experiences. Therefore, interventions to strengthen couple resilience must be tailored to the couple's developmental and relational phase.

Table 4.3: *Differences in perception of partner responsiveness (mean score) among young and old married couples who perceived the highest and the lowest level of couple satisfaction*

Variable	Young Married Couples Who Perceived Lowest Couple Satisfaction		Old Married Couples Who Perceived Highest Couple Satisfaction		t-value	p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Partner Responsiveness	74.27	9.758	80.13	4.363	4.166	0.001**

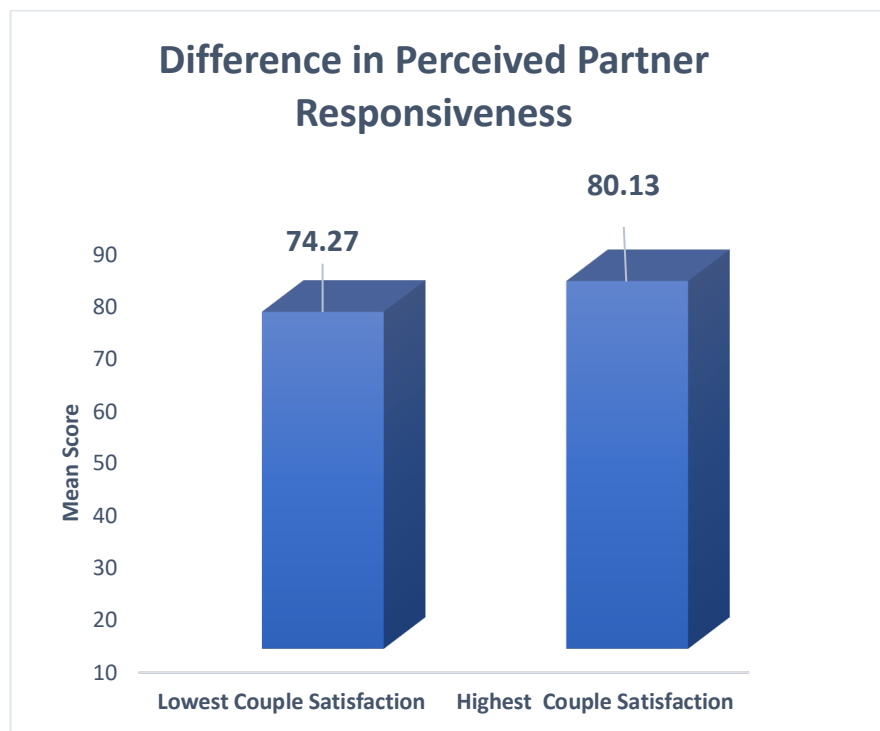


Figure 4.3: *Differences in perception of partner responsiveness (mean score) among young and old married couples who perceived the highest and the lowest level of couple satisfaction*

Table 4.3 and figure 4.3 exhibit the differences in partner responsiveness (mean score) of couples with the highest and least scores in couple satisfaction. It was depicted that the lowest couple satisfaction group (mean=74.27) significantly perceived less partner responsiveness as compared to the highest couple satisfaction group (mean=80.13). It means that couples who perceived more couple satisfaction were found to be more partner responsiveness skills than their counterparts. It was hypothesized in the present study that couples with the highest couple satisfaction will possess more partner responsiveness than couples with the least couple satisfaction. Hence, according to the findings, the hypothesis proved to be accepted.

The present study revealed significant age-related differences in perceived partner responsiveness (PPR) among couples with varying levels of couple satisfaction. Consistent with Reis and Shaver's (1988) Interpersonal Process Model of Intimacy, couples reporting higher satisfaction consistently experienced greater responsiveness from their partners, marked by feelings of being understood, validated, and cared for. Among young couples in the high-satisfaction group, PPR was often expressed through active emotional availability, verbal affirmations, and shared daily rituals. These behaviours promoted a sense of closeness and mutual support, particularly vital during transitional phases such as career building or early parenting. In contrast, older couples who reported high satisfaction emphasized subtle, yet deeply meaningful forms of responsiveness, such as empathetic listening, anticipatory gestures, and emotional attunement developed through long-term familiarity. These findings align with Reis, Lemay, and Finkenauer (2017), who emphasized that partner responsiveness supports enduring psychological well-being, and with Canevello and Crocker (2020), who found PPR to be a robust predictor of relationship satisfaction across the lifespan. Conversely, couples in the low-satisfaction group, regardless of age, reported lower levels of PPR, often feeling emotionally dismissed or misunderstood. These results underscore that while the form of responsiveness may differ by life stage, its function in sustaining intimacy and satisfaction remains universal.

5. Summary

5.1 Salient Findings

- i. The differences in dyadic adjustment (mean score) of couples with the highest and least scores in couple satisfaction, depicted that the lowest couple satisfaction group (mean=113.58) significantly perceived lesser dyadic adjustment as compared to the highest couple satisfaction group (mean=129.58). It means that couples who perceived

more couple satisfaction were found to be more dyadic adjustment skills than their counterparts. It was hypothesized in the present study that couples with the highest couple satisfaction will possess more dyadic adjustment than couples with the least couple satisfaction. Hence, according to the findings, the hypothesis proved to be accepted.

- ii. The differences in perception of resilience (mean score) among couples who perceived lowest and highest level of couple satisfaction, depicted that couples who perceived more (mean =80.07) resilience had the highest couple satisfaction than their counterparts who perceived a low resilience (mean =67.06). It means that couples who perceived high couple satisfaction were reporting a higher resilience. It was hypothesized in the present study that couples with the highest scores in couple satisfaction will possess more resilience than couples with least scores in couple satisfaction. Thus, the hypothesis framed was proved to be accepted.
- iii. The differences in partner responsiveness (mean score) of couples with the highest and least scores in couple satisfaction, depicted that the lowest couple satisfaction group (mean=74.27) significantly perceived less partner responsiveness as compared to the highest couple satisfaction group (mean=80.13). It means that couples who perceived more couple satisfaction were found to be more partner responsiveness skills than their counterparts. It was hypothesized in the present study that couples with the highest couple satisfaction will possess more partner responsiveness than couples with the least couple satisfaction. Hence, according to the findings, the hypothesis proved to be accepted.

5.2 Conclusion

The present study explored differences in dyadic adjustment, resilience, and perceived partner responsiveness among young and old married couples with the highest and lowest levels of couple satisfaction. The results confirmed all hypotheses, showing that couples with higher satisfaction consistently demonstrated significantly better dyadic adjustment, greater resilience, and stronger perceived partner responsiveness. This pattern was evident across all age and gender groups, indicating that couple satisfaction significantly influences relational strengths and coping abilities. Subtle yet meaningful differences based on age and gender highlighted the impact of life stage and traditional roles on marital dynamics. These findings underscore couple satisfaction as a key factor in marital quality. The study's insights are valuable for counsellors, therapists, and mental health professionals working with couples. It

ultimately emphasizes the importance of fostering couple satisfaction to build healthier, more resilient, and emotionally responsive relationships across different stages of married life.

5.3 Age-specific counselling and family therapy interventions for enhancing marital well-being

Recognizing the variations in dyadic adjustment, resilience, and perceived partner responsiveness among young and old married couples is critical for designing effective, age-specific counselling and family therapy interventions. Younger couples may encounter stressors related to career-building, parenting, financial stability, or identity negotiation, which can challenge emotional resilience and responsiveness within the relationship. In contrast, older couples may face transitions such as retirement, empty nesting, or age-related health concerns, which influence their patterns of adjustment and interdependence. By identifying the strengths and challenges unique to each age group, mental health professionals can tailor interventions that directly address these developmental and relational needs. For instance, counselling for younger couples may focus on enhancing communication, shared goal setting, and emotion regulation, while older couples may benefit more from interventions centred around companionship, life review, and mutual caregiving. Such age-attuned therapeutic strategies promote not only couple satisfaction but also long-term marital stability and emotional well-being. The findings of this study thus hold practical value for counsellors and therapists seeking to enhance relationship quality through developmentally appropriate approaches.

5.4 Implications of the Study

- a) ***Counselling and Therapy Interventions:*** The strong associations between couple satisfaction, dyadic adjustment, resilience, and perceived partner responsiveness highlight the need for couple-focused interventions. Marital counsellors and therapists can incorporate these constructs into their therapeutic frameworks to enhance relationship satisfaction.
- b) ***Lifespan Approach:*** The observed differences across young and old couples indicate that age-specific interventions may be more effective. Older couples may benefit from strategies that build on shared history and emotional regulation, while younger couples may require support in communication and conflict resolution.
- c) ***Gender-Sensitive Strategies:*** Gender-based differences in relational strengths suggest the value of tailoring interventions according to gender-specific needs and experiences within the marital relationship.

- d) **Educational Programs:** Premarital and marital education programs can integrate components that develop resilience and partner responsiveness to foster long-term satisfaction and adjustment.

5.5 Recommendations for Future Research

- a) **Longitudinal Studies:** Future research should employ longitudinal designs to examine how dyadic adjustment, resilience, and perceived partner responsiveness evolve over time and influence couple satisfaction.
- b) **Diverse Populations:** Studies should be extended to include diverse socio-cultural, economic, and regional populations to enhance the generalizability of findings.
- c) **Qualitative Approaches:** Incorporating in-depth qualitative interviews can provide richer insights into the lived experiences of couples, especially regarding the dynamics of resilience and partner responsiveness.
- d) **Inclusion of Other Variables:** Future work may explore additional psychological variables such as attachment styles, emotional intelligence, or conflict resolution strategies to develop a more comprehensive understanding of marital functioning.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We thank the participating couples in Hisar for their time and openness. We are also grateful to the community leaders who facilitated recruitment.

Author Contributions

Both authors contributed to study conceptualization and design. Data collection was coordinated by Shagun Gupta (Corresponding Author) under the supervision of Dr. Neha Sharma. Both authors jointly analyzed the data and co-wrote and revised the manuscript.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Ethics Approval

All procedures were approved by the Ethics Committee of Government Home Science College, Panjab University, Chandigarh. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection.

Data Availability Statement

Deidentified data and study materials are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

References

- Acitelli, L. K., & Antonucci, T. C. (1994). Gender differences in the link between marital support and satisfaction in older couples. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 67(4), 688–698. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.67.4.688>
- Antonucci, T. C., Lansford, J. E., Akiyama, H., Smith, J., Baltes, M. M., Takahashi, K., ... & Steverink, N. (2001). Psychological well-being in adulthood: The role of generativity and relatedness. *Psychology and Aging*, 16(3), 471–483. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0882-7974.16.3.471>
- Bookwala, J. (2012). Marriage and other partnered relationships in middle and late adulthood. In M. A. Fine & F. D. Fincham (Eds.), *Handbook of family theories* (pp. 275–292). Routledge.
- Bradbury, T. N., Fincham, F. D., & Beach, S. R. H. (2000). Research on the nature and determinants of marital satisfaction: A decade in review. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62(4), 964–980. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2000.00964.x>
- Canevello, A., & Crocker, J. (2020). Creating relationship closeness: Compassionate goals, responsiveness, and the boundaries of self and other. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 24(4), 300–321. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1088868320931361>
- Carstensen, L. L., Gottman, J. M., & Levenson, R. W. (1999). Emotional behaviour in long-term marriage. *Psychology and Aging*, 14(1), 140–149. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0882-7974.14.1.140>
- Chakraborty, K., & Thakur, S. S. (2017). Understanding marriage in India: A look at family structures and values. *Indian Journal of Social Work*, 78(2), 205–220.
- Charles, S. T., & Carstensen, L. L. (2010). Social and emotional aging. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 61, 383–409. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.093008.100448>
- Clements, M. L., Stanley, S. M., & Markman, H. J. (2004). Before they said “I do”: Discriminating among marital outcomes over 13 years. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 66(3), 613–626.
- Collins, N. L., & Feeney, B. C. (2004). Working models of attachment shape perceptions of social support: Evidence from experimental and observational studies. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 87(3), 363–383.
- Cutrona, C. E. (1996). *Social support in couples: Marriage as a resource in times of stress*. Sage.
- Elder, G. H. Jr. (1994). Time, human agency, and social change: Perspectives on the life course. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 57(1), 4–15. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2786971>

- Fincham, F. D., & Beach, S. R. H. (2010). Marriage in the new millennium: A decade in review. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 72(3), 630–649. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2010.00722.x>
- Funk, J. L., & Rogge, R. D. (2007). Testing the ruler with item response theory: Increasing precision of measurement for relationship satisfaction with the Couples Satisfaction Index. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 21(4), 572–583. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0893-3200.21.4.572>
- Henry, N. J. M., Berg, C. A., Smith, T. W., & Florsheim, P. (2005). Positive and negative characteristics of marital interaction and trajectories of marital satisfaction. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 19(2), 196–205.
- Hilliard, M. E., McQuaid, E. L., Nabors, L., & Hood, K. K. (2012). Resilience in youth and families living with paediatric health and developmental conditions: Introduction to the special issue. *Journal of Paediatric Psychology*, 37(8), 875–878.
- Johnson, M. D., Galovan, A. M., & Luetke, M. (2020). The role of dyadic coping in relationship functioning and well-being across the lifespan. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 34(6), 707–717. <https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0000643>
- Karney, B. R., & Bradbury, T. N. (1995). The longitudinal course of marital quality and stability: A review of theory, methods, and research. *Psychological Bulletin*, 118(1), 3–34. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.118.1.3>
- Karney, B. R., & Bradbury, T. N. (2005). Contextual influences on marriage. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 14(4), 171–174.
- Kiecolt-Glaser, J. K., & Newton, T. L. (2001). Marriage and health: His and hers. *Psychological Bulletin*, 127(4), 472–503. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.127.4.472>
- Kurdek, L. A. (1993). Predicting marital dissolution: A 5-year prospective longitudinal study of newlywed couples. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 64(2), 221–242.
- Laurenceau, J. P., Barrett, L. F., & Pietromonaco, P. R. (2005). Intimacy as an interpersonal process: The importance of self-disclosure, partner disclosure, and perceived partner responsiveness in interpersonal exchanges. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74(5), 1238–1251.
- Lavner, J. A., & Bradbury, T. N. (2010). Patterns of change in marital satisfaction over the newlywed years. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 72(5), 1171–1187. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2010.00757.x>
- Lavner, J. A., & Bradbury, T. N. (2012). Why do even satisfied newlyweds eventually go on to divorce? *Journal of Family Psychology*, 26(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0025966>

- Lemay, E. P., & Clark, M. S. (2008). How the head liberates the heart: Projection of communal responsiveness guides relationship promotion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 94(4), 647–671. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.94.4.647>
- Levenson, R. W., Carstensen, L. L., & Gottman, J. M. (1993). Long-term marriage: Age, gender, and satisfaction. *Psychology and Aging*, 8(2), 301–313.
- Maisel, N. C., & Gable, S. L. (2009). The paradox of received social support: The importance of responsiveness. *Psychological Science*, 20(8), 928–932.
- Masten, A. S. (2001). Ordinary magic: Resilience processes in development. *American Psychologist*, 56(3), 227–238. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.56.3.227>
- Mitnick, D. M., Heyman, R. E., & Smith Slep, A. M. (2009). Changes in relationship satisfaction across the transition to parenthood: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 23(6), 848–852. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0017004>
- Neff, L. A., & Broady, E. F. (2011). Stress resilience in early marriage: Can practice make perfect? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 101(5), 1050–1067.
- Patterson, J. M. (2002). Understanding family resilience. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 58(3), 233–246.
- Randall, A. K., & Bodenmann, G. (2017). Stress and its associations with relationship satisfaction. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 13, 96–106. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2016.05.010>
- Rastogi, M. (2009). Indian culture and professional psychology: Integrating culture and psychology. *Journal of Family Psychotherapy*, 20(4), 313–328.
- Rastogi, M. (2022). Cultural perspectives on Indian marriage: Implications for counselling practice. *Journal of Family Psychotherapy*, 33(1), 16–32. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08975353.2021.1998763>
- Rauer, A. J., & Volling, B. L. (2015). More than one way to be happy: A typology of marital happiness. *Family Process*, 54(1), 72–84.
- Reis, H. T., & Shaver, P. (1988). Intimacy as an interpersonal process. In S. Duck (Ed.), *Handbook of personal relationships: Theory, research and interventions* (pp. 367–389). Wiley.
- Reis, H. T., Clark, M. S., & Holmes, J. G. (2004). Perceived partner responsiveness as an organizing construct in the study of intimacy and closeness. In D. Mashek & A. Aron (Eds.), *Handbook of closeness and intimacy* (pp. 201–225). Lawrence Erlbaum.

- Reis, H. T., Lemay, E. P., & Finkenauer, C. (2017). Toward understanding understanding: The importance of feeling understood in relationships. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 11(3), e12308. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12308>
- Robles, T. F., Slatcher, R. B., Trombello, J. M., & McGinn, M. M. (2014). Marital quality and health: A meta-analytic review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 140(1), 140–187. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0031859>
- Sbarra, D. A. (2009). Marriage protects men from clinically meaningful elevations in C-reactive protein: Results from the National Social Life, Health, and Aging Project (NSHAP). *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 71(8), 828–833. <https://doi.org/10.1097/PSY.0b013e3181b3cb4b>
- Schaie, K. W., & Willis, S. L. (2010). Cognitive aging and marriage: Challenges and opportunities. Springer.
- Seshadri, S., & Choudhary, A. (2007). Domestic violence in India: Addressing the mental health needs of survivors. *Indian Journal of Social Psychiatry*, 23(1–2), 51–58.
- Shallcross, S. L., Howland, M., Bemis, J., Simpson, J. A., & Finkel, E. J. (2019). Are you there for me? The role of responsive behaviours in buffering the effects of stress on relationship satisfaction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 116(3), 396–414. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000159>
- Southwick, S. M., & Charney, D. S. (2012). Resilience: The science of mastering life's greatest challenges. Cambridge University Press.
- Spanier, G. B. (1976). Measuring dyadic adjustment: New scales for assessing the quality of marriage and similar dyads. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 38(1), 15–28. <https://doi.org/10.2307/350547>
- Srinivasan, P. (1993). Traditional values in Indian marriages: Continuity and change. *Indian Journal of Social Work*, 54(3), 321–336.
- Stack, C., & Eshleman, J. R. (1998). Marriages and families: Changes, choices, and constraints (3rd ed.). Prentice Hall.
- Uchino, B. N., Smith, T. W., Holt-Lunstad, J., Campo, R., & Reblin, M. (2012). Marital processes and physiological markers of health: A review and conceptual model. *Personal Relationships*, 19(1), 204–223. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6811.2011.01352.x>
- Umberson, D., Williams, K., Powers, D. A., Chen, M. D., & Campbell, A. M. (2005). As good as it gets? A life course perspective on marital quality. *Social Forces*, 84(1), 493–511.

- VanLaningham, J., Johnson, D. R., & Amato, P. (2001). Marital happiness, marital duration, and the U-shaped curve: Evidence from a five-wave panel study. *Social Forces*, 79(4), 1313–1341.
- Waldinger, R. J., & Schulz, M. S. (2010). What's love got to do with it? Social functioning, perceived health, and daily happiness in married octogenarians. *Psychology and Aging*, 25(2), 422–431.
- Walsh, F. (2003). Normal family processes: Growing diversity and complexity (3rd ed.). Guilford Press.
- Whisman, M. A., & Uebelacker, L. A. (2006). Marital dissatisfaction and psychopathology. In A. S. Gurman & N. S. Jacobson (Eds.), *Clinical handbook of couple therapy* (3rd ed., pp. 191–208). Guilford Press.
- Williams, A. D., & Ciarrochi, J. (2019). The flexible couple: Exploring the roles of psychological flexibility and inflexibility in couple functioning. *Journal of Contextual Behavioral Science*, 13, 55–62. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcbs.2019.06.001>
- Williamson, H. C., Karney, B. R., & Bradbury, T. N. (2013). Financial strain and stressful events predict newlyweds' negative communication independent of relationship satisfaction. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 27(1), 65–75.