



To study the Role of Romantic Partner Relationship Conflict and its relation with Anxiety

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Abstract

A romantic relationship is a hallmark of the young generation. Everyone wants to be in love relationship whether it's being truly in love with someone or doing it just for the emotional or physical satisfaction. Quality of relationships pertains to the relative degree of good, loving, beneficial interactions compared to negative, potentially harmful ones. Cognitive and emotional processes include interpretations, attributions and descriptions of oneself, spouses and relationships, as well as the feelings and moods elicited by romantic and affective experiences, statements associated with involvement in and the dissolution of relationship (e.g., depressive symptoms). The purpose of the present study was to examine romantic relationship conflict and relationship anxiety caused by such conflicts. Sample of the study was (N=60) out of which 30 were males and 30 females. Zung Self Rating Anxiety Scale and The Romantic Partner Conflict Scale were used and correlation and t-test statistical analysis were employed and results were discussed accordingly. Through t-test the, gender differences were assessed in both the variables but no significant gender differences were found in the results. However,

there is a significant positive correlation between relationship conflict and relationship anxiety among females. In contrast to this, no such correlation was seen among males. It is suggested that couples who go through relationship anxiety and conflict may resolve their issues by going to couple therapy and by improving their communication skills. Along with that mindfulness based activities and yoga can also enhance the quality of relationship as helps in better understanding and proper emotion regulation.

Keywords : *Romantic Relationships, Conflict, Anxiety, Males, Females*

Introduction

Individuals' emotional and psychological health is greatly impacted by romantic partner interactions. Relationship conflicts frequently surface as a major factor determining anxiety levels, and the quality of these relationships can have a substantial impact on a number of areas of mental health. Disagreements, fights, or dissension between partners are referred to as relationship conflict. These can be caused by a number of things, such as poor communication, stress related to finances, divergent ideals or lifestyles, and unfulfilled emotional needs. A variety of negative emotional reactions, such as anxiety, which is typified by enduring and incapacitating emotions of concern, apprehension, or fear, can be brought on by these conflicts.

When there is disagreement in a love relationship, anxiety can take many different forms. Frequent or severe disputes can make a person feel insecure and uneasy all the time in a relationship. People may worry about the stability and future of the relationship, fear rejection or abandonment, or feel more stressed out about their partner's actions and emotions as a result of this ambiguity, all of which can cause anxiety. A vicious cycle of anxiety can also result from the emotional toll that persistent confrontations take. In this cycle, people become more and more sensitive to possible triggers and may even anticipate conflict, which exacerbates their already-present concern.

Anxiety and interpersonal conflict have a substantial association that has been repeatedly demonstrated by research. According to studies, those who have a lot of tension in their love relationships are more prone to develop anxiety symptoms. This correlation is frequently explained by

a number of psychological processes. According to attachment theory, for example, those with insecure attachment styles may be more prone to anxiety when there is disagreement in their relationships because they are more likely to fear losing their partner's love and support. Cognitive-behavioural viewpoints emphasize how anxious people might become more difficult to manage and resolve problems because of negative cognitive patterns and ideas about the relationship.

Romantic Love

To begin with, Gonzaga et al. (2008) considers romantic love a “commitment device” or mechanism that encourages two humans to form a lasting bond. Romance is an emotional feeling of love or a strong attraction towards another person, and the courtship behaviours undertaken by an individual to express these overall feelings and resultant emotions. According to Collins et al. (2009), romantic relationships are defined as “reciprocal, ongoing and spontaneous relationship between two partners characterized by specific expressions of affections and intimacy.” According to Meier and Allen (2008) romantic relationships are necessary for emotional bonding and contribute to the development of positive self-concept (Montgomery, 2005). Research states that factors such as quality of relationships, history of shared experience, sense of attachments and beliefs from past experiences all adds up to the well-being of partners (Casad et al., 2014).

Theoretical Perspective of Romantic Love

Now it's necessary to draw our attention to some of the leading theories that clearly underlies or put the light on a romantic relationship. Thibaut and Kelley (1959) proposed a social exchange theory of romantic relationship, which assumes that individuals attempt to maximize their ‘profits’ (rewards) and minimize any ‘losses’ (costs) associated with the relationship. Rewards may include emotional support, age, companionship and treatment, while the costs may include lost opportunities, losing opportunities or financial investments. The idea implies

that the benefits obtained from being in relationship will outweigh the costs of being in that relationship, in order for a relationship to prosper. Walster et al. (1978) developed the Equity Theory of romantic relationships. The author suggested that individuals in a partnership look for fairness and justice, by requiring the benefits they would receive from their partner to be comparable to the incentives they offer. Duck's (1986) Phase Model of relationship breakdown states that as the dissatisfied partner moves through each stage, they reach a threshold which tips them over to the next stage. The thresholds in each phase are: "I can't take this anymore" (intra-psychic), "I'd be justified in leaving" (dyadic), "I mean it" (social) and "It's now inevitable" (grave-dressing).

Conflict

Conflict is a feature of virtually all relationships, and no exception is romantic relations, Many claim that the conflict is bad for the dispute which would eventually lead to the collapse of the relationship. Some say the tension is beneficial for the relationship and will allow the relationship to thrive. Lulofs and Cahn (2000) defined conflict as "two or more competing responses to a single event or differences between and among individuals or mutual hostility between or among groups or a problem to be solved." Additionally conflict is also defined as "an interpersonal process that occurs whenever the actions of one person interferes with the action of another" (Perterson, 1983).

Conflict can be indicated by a number of behaviours, such as fighting over the same topics repeatedly, anticipating the conclusion of a dispute before it happens, terminating a dispute without finding a solution and concluding a dispute where neither party feels they have received a fair hearing.

Nash et al. (2015) in their studies states that the conflict in romantic relationship impacts mental health issues in young adults. Researchers states that when a relationship is

established, conflict occurs, which effect the relationship satisfaction (Christensen & Walczynski, 1997). Previous research studied 168 married couples and found that couples who go through more conflicts premaritally were found to be less in love and satisfied post marriage.

Theoretical Perspective of Conflict

Conflict results from a breakdown in coordination according to Ruben's (1978) systems theory. Since conflict is a product of communication difficulties, the best way to resolve conflict for a couple is through communication. Consistent with systems theory, Christensen and Shenk (1991) reported that marital dissatisfaction is often related to communication problems. As per Conflict mechanisms theories, it indicates that conflict in relationships may include a number of behaviours ranging from verbal disputes to silent treatment, avoidance, to physical attack. When faced with conflict, couples may use different behavioural approaches and the same couple may address one conflict problem (e.g., money) differently from another (e.g., raising children).

Relationship Anxiety

According to Karla Ivankovich, a couple therapist in Chicago, relationship anxiety is “when one or both parties in the relationship spends more time worrying about the relationship than moving toward the relationship itself.” The game of compare and contrast fosters anxiety that your relationship isn't as good as others, and causes nervous thoughts to grow as you ruminate why your relationship isn't as 'good' as others.

Methodology

Research Objectives

The study was conducted with the following objectives:

- To study gender differences in relationship conflict.
- To study gender differences in relationship anxiety.
- To study correlation between romantic relationship conflict and anxiety.

Hypothesis

- There will be a significant positive correlation between relationship anxiety and relationship conflict among females.
- There will be a significant positive correlation between relationship anxiety and relationship conflict among males.
- There will be gender significant differences in relationship anxiety and relationship conflict.

Sample

Sample of the study was (N=60) out of which 30 were males and 30 females; randomly drawn from the normal population in the age group (20-30 years) and were currently in an intimate relationship.

Tests and Tools

- ***Zung Self Rating Anxiety Scale*** (Zung, 1974) was utilized to quantify level of anxiety of individual.
- ***The Romantic Partner Conflict Scale*** (Zacchilli et al., 2009) is 39 item questionnaire designed to measure how individuals handle conflict with romantic partners according to six subscales.

Results**Table 1***Anxiety Scores and T- test results*

Gender	Mean Anxiety Score	Standard Deviation	t-value	Significance
Female	48.46	10.21	0.94	Not Significant
Male	48.30	9.81	0.94	Not Significant

Table 2*Romantic Relationship Conflict scores and T test results*

Gender	Mean Conflict Score	Standard Deviation	t-value	Significance
Female	18.58	3.21	0.41	Not Significant
Male	17.97	2.46	0.41	Not Significant

Table 3*Correlation Coefficients between Romantic Relationship Conflict and Anxiety*

Gender	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Significance
Female	0.014	Significant at $p < 0.01$
Male	0.354	Not Significant

Discussion of Results

The results indicated that females (Mean=48.46, S.D=10.21) scored higher than males (Mean=48.30, S.D=9.81) on anxiety. A t-test was conducted to compare the differences in anxiety among female and male. However, there were no significant difference, ($t=.94$) and upon closer analysis of mean scores, it is seen that there is a very minor difference in their scores. Present findings break new ground because it shows that there is no significant difference, meaning that both face equal level of anxiety.

Additionally, t-test was conducted to compare the differences in romantic relationship conflict. Females (Mean=18.58, S.D=3.21) scored higher than males (Mean=17.97, S.D=2.46). However, this is not a significant difference, ($t=.41$) meaning that both male and female experience same level of conflict.

Correlation coefficient of romantic relationship conflict and anxiety scale for the female sample was calculated and it showed that there is a positive and highly significant correlation between romantic relationship conflict and anxiety ($r=.014$) at $p<0.01$ level.

Lastly, correlation coefficient of romantic relationship conflict and anxiety for males was calculated and it showed a positive but not significant correlation between romantic relationship conflict and anxiety ($r=.354$) at $p<0.01$.

Gottman and Silver (1999) states that “couples simply have different styles of conflict, some avoid fights at all costs, some fight a lot, and some are able to talk it out their differences and find a compromise without ever raising their voices. No one style is necessarily better than the other as long as the style works for both people.”

Conclusion

In conclusion, there are important ramifications for people's mental health and general well-being from the intricate and diverse relationship between romantic partner conflict and anxiety. A

multidimensional strategy that emphasizes enhancing mutual understanding, enhancing communication, and creating practical conflict resolution techniques is needed to address this problem. Talking openly and honestly about their feelings and worries might help couples avoid misunderstandings and lessen the frequency and severity of arguments. A stronger emotional connection and a greater comprehension of each partner's perspective can also be fostered by engaging in active listening and empathy exercises.

Couples who are experiencing ongoing conflict and anxiety may find great comfort and direction from therapeutic procedures like couples counselling. Couples in therapy can explore their problems, pick up new communication skills, and create more constructive conflict resolution strategies in a secure environment. Meditation and yoga are two examples of mindfulness exercises and stress-reduction strategies that can help with anxiety management and emotional control.

Furthermore, encouraging personal development and self-care on an individual basis can improve the dynamic of relationships. More harmony and support can be achieved in a partnership when both partners are encouraged to follow their interests, stay in touch with one another, and give their mental health first priority. Couples can forge deeper, more durable bonds by addressing the individual and relational issues that lead to anxiety and conflict.

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