

Communication as a Mediator Between Personal Characteristics – Five-Factor Personality Traits, Emotional Intelligence, Self- Disclosure – and Romantic Relationship Satisfaction

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The present study explored the relation between personal characteristics and romantic relationship satisfaction as mediated by communication. Couples in established heterosexual romantic relationships of at least 3 months ($N = 96$ couples) were recruited from an undergraduate population at a university through a psychology participant pool system. It's been hypothesized that there would be a relation between predicting variables — four of five-factor personality traits, emotional intelligence and self-disclosure — and relationship satisfaction as mediated by communication behaviours. Results indicate that for both genders, conscientiousness is related to one's own relationship satisfaction which is mediated by communication. For women only, communication mediated the relation between emotional intelligence and her relationship satisfaction. For men and women, self-disclosure is related to both one's own and one's partner's relationship satisfaction which is mediated by communication. Collectively, these results suggest that personal characteristics are related to communication which influences the relationship satisfaction of both members of a couple.

Keywords: communication, relationship satisfaction, personality traits, emotional intelligence, self-disclosure

La présente étude explore la relation entre des caractéristiques personnelles et la satisfaction dans une relation romantique telle que médiées par la communication. Des couples étant, depuis au moins trois mois, dans une relation amoureuse hétérosexuelle ($N = 96$ couples) ont été recrutés dans une population d'étudiants au premier cycle à travers un système de recrutement de participants en psychologie. Notre hypothèse suppose qu'il y aura une relation entre des variables prédictives — quatre des cinq traits de personnalité du modèle à cinq facteurs, l'intelligence émotionnelle et l'autorévélation — et la satisfaction dans la relation, telle que médiées par les comportements de communication. Les résultats indiquent que pour les deux sexes, le caractère consciencieux du participant est lié à sa satisfaction dans la relation, ce qui est médiés par la communication. Chez les femmes seulement, la communication agit aussi comme médiateur de la relation entre l'intelligence émotionnelle et la satisfaction dans la relation. Pour les hommes et les femmes, l'autorévélation du participant est liée à sa propre satisfaction dans la relation ainsi qu'à la satisfaction du partenaire, ce qui est médiés par la communication. Dans l'ensemble, ces résultats suggèrent que les caractéristiques personnelles sont liées à la communication qui influence la satisfaction des deux membres du couple dans la relation.

Mots-clés : communication, satisfaction à l'égard de la relation, traits de personnalité, intelligence émotionnelle, autorévélation

Relationships are central to being human, and forming these relationships is an innate and biological component of human behaviour. Research on romantic relationship satisfaction has become increasingly important since people are more easily abandoning long term monogamous relationships and marriages. In Canada, divorce rates as of 2008 have reached 40.70% nationwide, and 42.10% within Ontario (Statistics Canada, 2011). Marital dissolution has become increasingly common and is a serious social

issue in terms of the negative consequences for the mental and physical health of spouses. In a four-year longitudinal study, Gottman and Levenson (1992) compared relationship stability and dissolution in regulated and nonregulated married couples. Regulated couples are those who had more positive interactions, whereas nonregulated couples were more likely to be defensive, engage in conflict, be stubborn, and avoid interactions with their significant other. Findings indicated that nonregulated couples experienced lower marital satisfaction and greater risk for marital dissolution and separation than regulated couples. Past studies have indicated inherent connections between personal characteristics and relationship satisfaction. The present study will

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explore if communication between partners mediates the relation between romantic relationship satisfaction and three personal characteristic and behavioural variables: (1) the five-factor personality traits (Heller, Watson, & Hies, 2004; Malouff, Thorsteinsson, Schutte, Bhullar, & Rooke, 2010; Zentner, 2005), (2) emotional intelligence (Brackett, Warner, & Bosco, 2005; Gonzaga, Campos, & Bradbury, 2007; Malouff, Schutte, & Thorsteinsson, 2014), and (3) self-disclosure (Luster, Nelson, & Busby, 2013; Uysal, Lin, Knee, & Bush, 2012) and romantic relationship satisfaction.

Influence of Romantic Relationship Satisfaction on Mental Health

Romantic relationship satisfaction is associated with mental and physical health (Beach, Katz, Kim, & Brody, 2003; Prigerson, Maciejewski, & Rosenheck, 1999; Whisman, 1999). Researchers found that marital dissolution was associated with an increase in depressive symptoms, sleep, and foot problems (Prigerson et al., 1999). Results showed that intense grief was linked to significant health impairments such as arthritis and hypertension. Evidence suggests that marital dissatisfaction is related to depressive symptoms in married couples. Whisman (1999) found that marital dissatisfaction was related to major depression and posttraumatic stress disorder for women, and uniquely related to dysthymia for men. In a subsequent study, Whisman, Sheldon, and Goering (2000) examined the relation between psychiatric disorders and dissatisfaction within married participants. After controlling for comorbid disorders, results indicated that romantic relationship dissatisfaction was solely related to major depression, simple phobia, generalized anxiety disorder, and alcohol dependence or abuse for both genders. Clearly, relationship satisfaction is related to well-being.

Two studies have shown a relation between romantic relationship dissatisfaction and psychiatric disorders; however, neither have established causal connections since they were cross-sectional. Whisman and Bruce (1999) examined the association between marital dissatisfaction at baseline (Time-1) and incidence of major depressive episodes (MDE) one year later (Time-2) in a sample of married individuals who did not meet the criteria for MDE at baseline. Results indicated that dissatisfaction at Time-1 was a risk factor for MDE at Time-2, in participants who were not previously depressed. More specifically, dissatisfied spouses were almost 3 times more likely to develop MDE than nondissatisfied couples even after controlling for both demographic characteristics and history of depression. Beach and colleagues (2003) similarly showed that for both husbands and

wives, marital quality at Time-1 predicted their partner's depressive symptoms one year later. Combined, these studies suggest that marital dissatisfaction can be used to predict increases in depressive symptoms over time. In summary, romantic relationship satisfaction can impact mental and physical health, and understanding this connection is important for the maintenance of one's health.

Factors Related to Satisfaction in Romantic Relationships

Five-factor model personality traits. A useful taxonomy for categorizing thousands of personality traits and for integrating the diverse findings about these traits is the five-factor model (Heller et al., 2004). The hierarchical model has five broad factors: openness to experience, neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness, and agreeableness (Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003).

Studies show that most of the five factor traits are related to marital and relationship satisfaction, with the exception of openness to experience (Heller et al., 2004; Malouff et al., 2010). For example, Heller and colleagues (2004) examined the association between the Big Five personality traits and five satisfaction criteria in a meta-analysis, and found that four of the five traits were associated with marital satisfaction. Neuroticism was negatively associated with self-rated marital satisfaction. On the other hand, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and extraversion were positively associated with self-rated marital satisfaction.

More recently, Malouff and colleagues (2010) conducted a meta-analysis with almost 3900 participants that showed that relationship satisfaction among intimate heterosexual partners was related to scores on four of the five-factor model personality factors: specifically, lower neuroticism, and higher agreeableness, conscientiousness, and extraversion were associated with partner satisfaction. Results did not vary significantly by sex, or from married to unmarried couples, suggesting that the relation between personality traits and relationship satisfaction is generalizable. The main findings of both meta-analyses support the utility of the five-factor model of personality in predicting relationship satisfaction of an individual's intimate partner: an important interpersonal outcome.

Emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence (EI) has been described as the ability to perceive emotions (e.g., identification of emotion from the facial expression of others), understand emotions (e.g., understanding the transition of emotion from one component to another), use emotions (e.g., using emotion to facilitate thought process) and regulate emotions (or emotion management; Joshi &

Thingujam, 2009; Schutte et al., 1998). These four abilities form a hierarchy, increasing in complexity from emotion perception to emotion management (Brackett et al., 2005); and the fusion of all four abilities provides an overall construct of EI.

EI is a key predictor of romantic relationship satisfaction; Joshi and Thingujam (2009) showed that romantic relationship satisfaction was related to three of the four subscales of EI but not the *Use of Emotion* subscale. After controlling for extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and social desirability, EI remained correlated with marital adjustment, marital satisfaction, and cohesion, indicating its importance in predicting relationship satisfaction. Gonzaga et al. (2007) found that emotional convergence (i.e., the tendency for two individuals to become more alike across time) mediated the relation between personality convergence and relationship satisfaction among both dating and married couples. This study was important in showing that the associations among personality similarity, emotion similarity, and relationship satisfaction are similar for both married and dating couples.

Brackett et al. (2005) tested the relation between levels of EI and self-reported relationship satisfaction among heterosexual university couples. Results indicated that each person's EI was correlated with their own and their partner's self-reported relationship quality. Interestingly, couples with both partners low on EI tended to have the highest scores on negative relationship quality, whereas couples in which at least one partner (or both) had high EI also had higher relationship satisfaction. Similarly, in a meta-analysis with over 600 participants, Malouff and colleagues (2014) found that EI was correlated with self-reported relationship satisfaction of both members of the couple. The findings of these studies support the utility of EI in predicting one's own and partners' relationship satisfaction.

Self-disclosure. Self-disclosure (SD) is a process of communication by which one person reveals information clearly and regularly to a partner. This is characterized by a willingness to share information which can be thoughts or feelings. SD has been viewed as either a contextual behaviour or an enduring personality trait, but likely depends on both the individual's personality and behaviour (Scapinello, 2004). In this study, SD will be examined as a personal characteristic within the context of romantic relationships. SD is whether or not a person has a personal tendency to communicate; it does not describe how it is happening. Self-concealment, while negatively related to SD, is not simply a lack of self-disclosure; it is rather an active process that involves hiding negative personal information from others

(Uysal et al., 2012). Self-disclosure is an important concept as SD is positively correlated to relationship satisfaction.

Research has shown that SD is positively correlated to romantic relationship satisfaction for both males and females (Meeks, Hendrick, & Hendrick, 1998). Results indicated that both own and partner-perceived disclosure were significantly and similarly correlated with satisfaction, whereas actual SD is considerably less predictive of relationship satisfaction. Similarly to Meeks et al. (1998), Scapinello (2004) found that for males and females, their own — and their partners' — disclosure of personal information was positively related to romantic relationship satisfaction. In other words, couples felt happier in their relationships when they themselves disclosed personal information *and* when their partner did. Interestingly, males' romantic relationship satisfaction was greatest when their own disclosure was high, whereas females' romantic relationship was highest when partners' and own SD was high. Collectively, these studies demonstrate that revealing personal information is beneficial to the happiness of the individuals within the couple.

Self-concealment is negatively correlated to romantic relationship satisfaction (Uysal et al., 2012). Uysal and colleagues (2012) examined whether self-concealment from one's partner was associated with relationship satisfaction in a sample of 165 participants currently in romantic relationships. Consistent with their hypothesis, self-concealment was associated with lower relationship satisfaction which was partially mediated by relatedness needs. Past literature suggests that disclosing relational needs provides romantic relationship partners with enough information to meet them (Scapinello, 2004), whereas self-concealment would impair this process. If relational needs in a relationship are not being met, individuals are less likely to be satisfied than those whose needs are being met. Uysal's and colleagues' (2012) findings support the idea that regardless of the reason for not sharing personal information with one's partner, self-concealment is negatively related to romantic relationship satisfaction.

Communication. Communication has been identified as an important determinant in relationship satisfaction (Christensen & Shenk, 1991; Luster et al., 2013; Meeks, Hendrick, & Hendrick, 1998). Early research examined communication from a narrow lens, focusing solely on just a few negative aspects of communication. In recent years, communication has been more clearly defined, and research has gradually included positive communication behaviours as opposed to negative ones exclusively (Lavner &

Bradbury, 2012; Markman, Rhoades, Stanley, Ragan, & Whitton, 2010). Negative communication behaviours include (but are not limited to) criticizing, blaming, being aggressive, manipulating, being distrustful, and being on the defensive. Conversely, positive communication behaviours include sharing emotion, discussing problems, expressing concerns, being supportive, listening and remembering shared information. Examining both negative and positive aspects of communication includes a wider range of relevant behaviours and provides a greater depth of understanding regarding romantic relationships.

Most studies examining communication patterns did so within the context of marriages and used communication as a predictor of divorce. Christensen and Shenk (1991) found that compared to nondistressed couples, distressed couples exhibited less constructive communication, more avoidance, more demand or withdraw, and more conflict over psychological distance. Markman et al. (2010) found that couples with higher levels of premarital negative communication showed lower levels of adjustment over the first five years of marriage, and that negative communication was significantly associated with divorce. Lavner and Bradbury (2012) identified 136 couples that reported high levels of relationship satisfaction in the first four years of marriage. At the 10-year follow-up, they reported that divorced couples displayed more negative communication than those who remained married. Whereas these longitudinal studies have concluded that negative communication is the best predictor of divorce, neither study examined how positive and negative communication was related to satisfaction.

Several studies have identified a relation between communication and relationship satisfaction. Markman (1981) examined marital outcomes and found that couples' own rating of their communication during a conflict discussion predicted marital satisfaction five years later. Even though better communication ratings before marriage were not associated with initial satisfaction, they were related to higher relationship satisfaction five years later. Similarly, Gottman, Coan, Careere, and Swanson (1998) examined newlywed couples' ratings of communication quality and found that it was positively correlated to stability and satisfaction as well as negatively related to divorce and unhappiness six years later. Despite these findings, others have indicated that communication is solely related to later relationship satisfaction, but not to divorce (Markman et al., 2010). Furthermore, wives' communication better predicts satisfaction than husbands', and negative communication is correlated to satisfaction, but only when there are low levels of positive communication.

How Important is Communication Regarding Personal Characteristics?

Despite claims that communication is central to relationship satisfaction, few studies have shown that communication mediates the relation between personal characteristics and romantic relationship satisfaction. The studies that have examined this relation explored communication-related variables that are different from examining couples' self-perceived ability to communicate. For example, Meeks et al. (1998) examined perspective-taking, self-disclosure, conflict tactics, and relationship satisfaction. Whereas this study demonstrated that self-disclosure mediates the relation between romantic relationship satisfaction and self-concealment, there is an important distinction between self-disclosure and communication. Self-disclosure is a personality characteristic; the tendency to communicate does not describe the quality of the communication behaviour itself.

Emotionally intelligent individuals report higher levels of relationship satisfaction. Whereas Malouff and colleagues (2014) suggested that EI was related to constructive communication patterns, Brackett et al. (2005) suggested that emotionally intelligent people tend to communicate more support to their partner. It is likely that emotionally intelligent individuals develop active listening skills, and attend to their partners' nonverbal messages. Furthermore, these individuals might be able to communicate their understanding of their partner's emotion and empathy for their partner's feelings. In these ways, emotionally intelligent individuals contribute to relationship satisfaction.

Although researchers have not yet examined the relation between personality traits and their link to communication, a few have discussed that these variables are related. Christensen and Shenk (1991) suggested that communication as well as personality compatibility/incompatibility distinguishes distressed from nondistressed couples. Similarly, individual traits from the five-factor personality model manifested through communication behaviours can contribute to relationship satisfaction. For instance, extraverted individuals tend to be more talkative and conscientious individuals that avoid confrontation and are more reliable. Agreeable individuals, are more compassionate and cooperative. In some case, they will even compromise. Lastly, individuals who are less neurotic tend to be calmer and more willing to listen. In these ways, personality traits contribute to communication in romantic relationships.

Summary and Hypotheses

Communication is imperative to relationship satisfaction. Past literature has shown that five-factor

personality traits, emotional intelligence, and self-disclosure are related to relationship satisfaction, and that communication is related to each of these concepts. Some researchers have suggested that communication acts as a middle variable between personal characteristics and relationship satisfaction (Uysal et al., 2012). For example, they postulate that the reason why there is a correlation between EI and relationship satisfaction is that partners with high EI utilize a unique communication style. This communication style (i.e., better listening skills and empathy) makes partners feel understood and validated. When conflicts arise in the context of a romantic relationship, the way the couple handles the conflict is key to remain satisfied in the relationship. Whereas conflict is commonly perceived as negative, it is a normal part of romantic relationships. Couples with positive communication skills that foster discussions regarding underlying disagreements can likely overcome certain hurdles. However, those with negative communication patterns are less likely to resolve conflict or will avoid it altogether.

Despite the importance of communication in romantic relationship satisfaction, few studies have examined communication as a mediator between personality traits and romantic relationship satisfaction. It is important to examine this relation to increase knowledge of how communication can impact couples' personal happiness. The current study will determine if communication mediates the relation between three variables — i.e., (a) personality traits, (b) emotional intelligence, and (c) self-disclosure — and relationship satisfaction, the dependent variable. The hypotheses for the current study are;

Hypothesis 1: Based on research by Heller et al. (2004) and Malouff et al. (2010) who found that four of the five traits from the five-factor personality model — neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness and extraversion — were associated with partner relationship satisfaction, it was hypothesized that communication would mediate this relation.

Hypothesis 2: Based on research by Brackett et al. (2005) and Malouff et al. (2014) who found that EI was substantially associated with relationship satisfaction, it was hypothesized that communication would mediate this relation.

Hypothesis 3: Based on research by Meeks et al. (1998) who found that self-disclosure was associated with relationship satisfaction, it was hypothesized that communication would mediate this relation.

Method

Participants

The final sample consisted of 96 heterosexual couples (96 men and 96 women). Each couple was composed of a university student enrolled in a psychology course at the time of the study and his or her romantic partner. Ages ranged from 18 to 39 for female participants ($M = 20.50$, $SD = 2.70$), and 17 to 38 for male participants ($M = 21.50$, $SD = 3.34$). Couples' relationship length by category was 3-6 months (11.50%), 6-12 months (20.80%), 1-2 years (21.90%), and over 2 years (45.80%). Most couples' relationship status was dating (89.50%) followed by engaged (4.20%), married (4.20%), and common law (2.10%).

The inclusion criterion for participation was to currently be in a heterosexual romantic relationship that began at least three months ago. Both members of the couple were required to participate. The reason for this is that couples in short-term relationships have not evaluated their partners' individual characteristics, or have not had time to do so accurately (Brackett et al., 2005). Homosexual couples were excluded since the likelihood that there were enough couples to run a statistical analysis was very low and it would be unethical to ask them to participate if the data were not used. Furthermore, past literature has indicated there are sex differences in EI (Brackett et al., 2005), therefore homosexual couples may have altered results.

Measures

Five questionnaires were used within this study, one for each of the following: personality compatibility, EI, self-disclosure, communication and relationship satisfaction.

The *Ten-Item Personality Inventory* (Gosling et al., 2003) is a 10-item measure that examines the five-factor personality traits. It consists of items that assess one's openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and emotional stability. Two questions assess each personality trait and the response categories range from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). For conscientiousness, the items are: *dependable/self-disciplined* and *disorganized/careless*. The latter is reverse scored. The correlations to other similar measures exceeded .90 and there was good evidence for construct validity (Gosling et al., 2003). In the current study, inter-item correlations were calculated for each pair of items for the five subscales. Three of five pairs of items had significant inter-item correlations ($p < .01$); extraversion, conscientiousness and neuroticism for males ($r = .77$, .34, and .53, respectively) and females ($r = .62$, .44

and .56, respectively; see Table 1). Inter-item correlations were non-significant ($p > .05$) for agreeableness and openness to experience for males ($r = .05$ and $.19$, respectively) and females ($r = .13$ and $.17$, respectively).

The *Schutte Self-Report Inventory* (Schutte et al., 1998) is a 33-item measure testing EI, and is also known as the *Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS)*. This measure assesses four aspects of EI: (1) perception, (2) appraisal, (3) utilization and (4) regulation of emotion. For example, responses to “By looking at their facial expressions, I recognize the emotions people are experiencing.” range from 1 (*very inaccurate*) to 5 (*very accurate*). This measure has been shown to have good internal consistency ($\alpha = .87$, Schutte et al., 1998). In the present study, Cronbach’s α was .88 for both men and women.

The *Self-Disclosure Index* (Miller, Berg, & Archer, 1983) is a 10-item Likert measure that assesses the breadth of personal information an individual had revealed to a particular target person. In this study, the target person was the participant’s romantic relationship partner. For instance, one question is “I discuss what I like and dislike about myself with my partner.”, where answers range from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Their reliability analysis suggests that the internal consistency is more than adequate, varying from $\alpha = .87$ to $.93$ for men, and $\alpha = .86$ to $.93$ for women (Miller et al., 1983). In the present study, Cronbach’s α was .86 for men and .89 for women.

The *Relationship Communication Scale* was adapted from the *Adult Mood and Communication*

Questionnaire (Isaki & Harmon, 2015) as well as the longitudinal version of the *Patient Perceptions of Communication* (Begley et al., 2015). The communication measure also includes information received from Dr. Patti Fritz (personal communication, September 25th 2015) regarding communication faults in romantic relationships. The *Relationship Communication Scale* is a 30-item Likert measure that assesses both positive and negative aspects of communication within romantic relationships. The emphasis on positive and negative types of communication in the literature is reflected in the measures used in the present study. For example, “I am attending to my partner nonverbally (i.e., looking at my partner, nodding, open body language).” reflects a positive aspect of communication, whereas “I get defensive with my partner.” reflects a negative aspect of communication. Responses ranged from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*all the time*) where negative types of communication were reverse coded. In the present study, Cronbach’s α was .85 for men and .87 for women.

The *Relationship Assessment Scale* (Hendrick, 1988) is a 7-item Likert measure of general relationship satisfaction. There are five response categories for each item but their content differs from item to item. For example, the response categories for the item “In general how satisfied are you with your relationship?” range from 1 (*unsatisfied*) to 5 (*extremely satisfied*), whereas the response categories for the item “How many problems are there in your relationship?” range from 1 (*very few*) to 5 (*very many*). Negatively worded items (items 4 and 7) were reversed prior to summation so that higher scores indicate greater relationship satisfaction. This measure

Table 1
Correlations Within Gender, Means, Standard Deviations, Cronbach’s Alpha Reliability and Inter-item Correlations for Personal Characteristics, Communication, and Relationship Satisfaction

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	M	SD	r	α
1. Extraversion	-	.60	.22*	.28**	.29**	.16	.19	.17	3.25	0.94	.62**	-
2. Agreeableness	-.22*	-	.12	.31**	.15	.01	.14	.10	3.41	0.66	.13	-
3. Conscientiousness	-.03	.13	-	.29**	.44**	.35**	.39**	.33**	4.03	0.75	.44**	-
4. Neuroticism	.04	.10	.17	-	.31**	-.17	.27**	.00	3.06	0.87	.56**	-
5. Emotional Intelligence	.43**	.18	.27**	.19	-	.39**	.37**	.25*	3.87	0.40	-	.88
6. Self-disclosure	.29**	.09	.00	-.60	.43**	-	.30**	.45**	4.45	0.52	-	.89
7. Communication	.23*	.05	.24*	.14	.29**	.39**	-	.62**	4.02	0.43	-	.87
8. Relationship Satisfaction	.04	.16	.16	.13	.12	.42**	.39**	-	4.37	0.66	-	.87
M	3.21	3.47	3.79	3.59	3.84	4.16	3.92	4.43				
SD	1.12	0.68	0.81	0.84	0.39	0.56	.42	.58				
r	.77**	.05	.34**	.53**	-	-	-	-				
α	-	-	-	-	.88	.86	.85	.84				

Note. $N = 96$. Statistics above the diagonal correspond to the women subsample and those below correspond to men subsample. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION

has a good internal consistency ($\alpha = .86$; Hendrick, 1988). In the present study, Cronbach's α was .84 for men and .87 for women.

The *Demographic Questionnaire* was also included for information regarding age, gender, relationship status, frequency and modes of interaction, proximity to partner and length of relationship.

The *Information Verification Questions* asked participants to report their efforts and attention during the completion of this study. The scale also asked if the participant feels their data should be used in the analysis.

Procedure

Couples currently in a heterosexual relationship of at least three months signed up for the online study. Only couples who met these inclusion criteria were permitted to complete the survey. After both members indicated interest in participating, they were independently provided with the online survey link and a research identification number. Participants' research identification numbers were linked to their romantic partner's identification number so that their data could be appropriately paired during analyses. Following receipt of the study information, participants were afforded one week to complete the study. Participants who did not complete the study within three days of the deadline were issued a brief reminder email.

Upon opening the survey, participants entered their assigned research identification number which consisted of three numbers and either the letter A or B. This step was required in order to continue to the survey. After entering their research identification number, participants reviewed the conditions for participating in the consent form. Two consent forms were used to reflect different compensation of 0.5 bonus marks and entered into a \$50.00 Visa Gift Card draw for participants registered in the psychology pool and their romantic partner, respectively. Participants

who indicated agreement to participate in the consent form were presented with five questionnaires, followed by the demographic questions and information verification questions. At the end of the survey, participants received an online letter of information, which asked the participant not to discuss the survey until their significant other had completed the survey.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Correlations between study variables, means and standard deviations were calculated for every scale for males and females.

Further analyses, as shown in Table 2, indicate significant correlations between both genders' relationship satisfaction ($r = .47$), both genders' communication ($r = .26$), male communication and female satisfaction ($r = .30$) and female communication and male satisfaction ($r = .34$).

Hypothesis Testing

A mediation model tests the relation between a predicting variable and a dependent variable by including a mediating variable. A mediating variable serves to clarify the nature of the relationship between the predicting and dependent variables (MacKinnon, 2008). Baron and Kenny (1986) outlined two requirements (Step-1 and Step-2) that must be met for a true mediation to occur in Step-3. In Step-1, the dependent variable is regressed on the predicting variable to establish there is an effect that can be mediated. In Step-2, the predicting variable is regressed on the mediating variable because if this association is non-significant then it cannot act as a mediator. If both steps are significant, Step-3 may be conducted. In Step-3, both the mediator and the predicting variable are regressed onto the dependent variable. This step demonstrates that when the mediator and the predictor variables are used

Table 2

Correlations Between Men's and Women's Responses for Three Personal Characteristics, Communication, and Relationship Satisfaction

Men	Women							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Extraversion	.09	.04	.19	.17	.20	-.01	.22*	.10
2. Agreeableness	.04	.09	-.08	-.08	-.01	.10	-.07	.00
3. Conscientiousness	.42	.11	-.10	.08	-.01	-.07	.10	.22*
4. Neuroticism	.15	-.11	.01	-.11	-.08	.04	-.02	.06
5. Emotional Intelligence	.08	.11	.16	.19	.09	.06	.19	.18
6. Self-disclosure	-.01	.03	.12	-.09	.01	.20	.06	.24*
7. Communication	.20	-.05	.14	-.01	.03	.10	.26**	.30**
8. Relationship Satisfaction	.07	.25*	.30**	.14	.08	.19	.34**	.47**

Note. $N = 96$. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

simultaneously to predict the dependent variable, the previously significant path between the predictor and dependent variable (Step-1) is now reduced, if not nonsignificant (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

Five-factor personality traits and one’s own relationship satisfaction. A multiple regression analysis was conducted among male respondents to determine if each male respondent’s communication mediated the relation between his personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience) and his own relationship satisfaction. In Step-1, there were no significant predictors of relationship satisfaction (see Table 3). Thus, male personality traits were not significantly related to his own satisfaction.

Among female respondents, in Step-1, conscientiousness was the only significant predictor (among the five personality factors) of her relationship satisfaction, $F(1, 94) = 11.22, p = .001, \beta = .33$. In Step-2, conscientiousness was a significant predictor of communication, $F(1, 94) = 16.77, p < .001$. In Step-3, conscientiousness was no longer a significant predictor of relationship satisfaction with communication included in the model, $p = .249, \beta = .10$ (see Table 3). The Sobel test was employed to check if the mediating variable significantly carries the influence of the predicting variable (conscientiousness) to the dependent variable (relationship satisfaction). The results suggest that the association between her conscientiousness and her own relationship satisfaction is significantly mediated by her communication ($z = 3.48, p < .001$). Together, these results suggest that female communication mediates the relationship between her conscientiousness and her own relationship satisfaction.

Five-factor personality traits and one’s partners’ relationship satisfaction. A multiple regression analysis was conducted among male respondents to determine if male communication mediated the relation between their personality traits and their female partner’s relationship satisfaction. In Step-1, male conscientiousness was the only significant predictor of female relationship satisfaction, $F(1, 94) = 4.53, p = .036, \beta = .22$. In Step-2, male conscientiousness was a significant predictor of his communication, $F(1, 94) = 5.69, p = .019$. In Step-3, conscientiousness was no longer a significant predictor of female relationship satisfaction after accounting for male communication, $p = .134, \beta = .15$ (see Table 4). Results of the Sobel test suggest that the association between male conscientiousness and his female partner’s relationship satisfaction is significantly mediated by male communication ($z = 1.75, p = .040$). Together, these results suggest that male communication mediates the relation between his conscientiousness and his female partner’s relationship satisfaction.

Among female respondents, in Step-1, female conscientiousness and agreeableness were the only two significant predictors (among the five personality factors) of male relationship satisfaction, $F(1, 94) = 9.41, p = .003, \beta = .302$ and $F(1, 94) = 6.13, p = .015, \beta = .26$, respectively. In Step-2, female conscientiousness was a significant predictor of her own communication, $F(1, 94) = 16.77, p < .001$. However, in Step-2, female agreeableness was not a significant predictor of her own communication, $F(1, 94) = 1.97, p = .059$. In Step-3, female conscientiousness was no longer a significant predictor of male relationship satisfaction after accounting for her communication, $p > .05, \beta = .20$ (see Table 4). Results of the Sobel test suggest that the association between her conscientiousness and her

Table 3
Summary of Stepwise Multiple Regression Analyses for Predicting Men’s and Women’s Romantic Relationship Satisfaction Based on Their Own Personality Traits

Predictors	Men				Women			
	R^2	B	SE	β	R^2	B	SE	β
Step 1								
Extraversion	-	0.02	0.05	.04	-	0.12	0.07	.17
Agreeableness	-	0.14	0.09	.16	-	0.10	0.10	.10
Conscientiousness	-	0.11	0.07	.16	-	0.29**	0.09	.33
Neuroticism	-	0.09	0.07	.13	-	0.00	0.08	.00
Openness to experience	-	0.04	0.09	.05	-	0.12	0.10	.12
Step 2								
Conscientiousness	-				-	0.23**	0.06	.39
Step 3								
Conscientiousness						0.09	0.08	.10
Communication					.39	0.88**	0.13	.58

Note. $N = 96$. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION

Table 4

Summary of Stepwise Multiple Regression Analyses for Predicting Men's and Women's Romantic Relationship Satisfaction Based on Their Partner's Personality Traits

Predictors	Men				Women			
	<i>R</i> ²	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>R</i> ²	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β
Step 1								
Extraversion	-	0.06	0.06	.10	-	0.04	0.06	.07
Agreeableness	-	0.00	0.10	.00	-	0.22*	0.09	.25
Conscientiousness	-	0.18*	0.08	.22	-	0.23**	0.08	.30
Neuroticism	-	0.05	0.08	.06	-	0.09	0.07	.14
Openness to experience	-	0.13	0.10	.13	-	-0.01	0.09	-.01
Step 2								
Agreeableness	-				-	0.09	0.07	.14
Conscientiousness	-	0.12*	0.05	.24	-	0.23*	0.06	.39
Step 3								
Conscientiousness		0.13	0.08	.15		0.15	0.08	.20
Communication	.11	0.41*	0.16	.26	.15	0.35*	0.14	.26

Note. *N* = 96. * *p* < .05; ** *p* < .01.

male partner's relationship satisfaction is significantly mediated by her communication ($z = 2.16, p = .015$). Together, these results suggest that female communication mediates the relation between her conscientiousness and her male partner's relationship satisfaction.

Emotional intelligence and one's own relationship satisfaction. Among male respondents, a multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine if his communication mediated the relation between his EI and relationship satisfaction. In Step-1, there were no significant predictors of relationship satisfaction (see Table 5), therefore male EI is not significantly related to his own satisfaction.

Among female respondents, in Step-1, her EI was a significant predictor of her relationship satisfaction, $F(1, 94) = 6.38, p = .013, \beta = .25$. In Step-2, her EI was a significant predictor of communication, $F(1, 94) = 15.21, p = .002$. In Step-3, female EI was no longer a significant predictor of her relationship satisfaction after accounting for communication, $p = .775, \beta = .03$

(see Table 5). The Sobel test was employed to check if the mediating variable significantly carries influence of the predicting variable (EI) to the dependent variable (relationship satisfaction). Results of the Sobel test suggest that the association between EI and relationship satisfaction is significantly mediated by communication ($z = 3.39, p < .001$). Together, these results suggest that female communication mediates the relationship between her EI and her own relationship satisfaction.

Emotional intelligence and one's partner's relationship satisfaction. Among male respondents, a multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine if his communication mediated the relation between his EI and his female partner's relationship satisfaction. In Step-1, his EI was a marginally significant predictor of her relationship satisfaction, $F(1, 94) = 3.17, p = .081, \beta = .18$. In Step-2, his EI was a significant predictor of communication, $F(1, 94) = 8.38, p = .005$. In Step-3, male EI was no longer a significant predictor of her relationship satisfaction after accounting for his communication, $p = .313,$

Table 5

Summary of Stepwise Multiple Regression Analyses for Predicting Men's and Women's Own Romantic Relationship Satisfaction Based on Emotional Intelligence

Predictor	Dependent	Men				Women			
		<i>R</i> ²	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>R</i> ²	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β
Step 1									
Emotional Intelligence	Relationship satisfaction	-	0.18	0.15	.12	-	0.42*	0.17	.25
Step 2									
Emotional Intelligence	Communication	-				-	0.40**	0.10	.37
Step 3									
Emotional Intelligence	Relationship satisfaction						0.04	0.15	.03
Communication	Relationship satisfaction	.38					0.93**	0.13	.61

Note. *N* = 96. * *p* < .05; ** *p* < .01.

$\beta = .10$ (see Table 6). Results of the Sobel test suggest that the association between his EI and his female partner's relationship satisfaction is significantly mediated by his communication ($z = 1.93, p = .027$). Together, these results suggest that male communication mediates the relation between his EI and his female partner's relationship satisfaction.

Among female respondents, in Step-1, her EI was not a significant predictor of his relationship satisfaction, $F(1, 94) = .58, p = .449, \beta = .18$ (see Table 6). Thus, female EI is not significantly related to her male partners' satisfaction.

Self-disclosure and one's own relationship satisfaction. Among male respondents, a multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine if communication mediated the relation between male self-disclosure and his own relationship satisfaction. In Step-1, his self-disclosure was a significant predictor of his relationship satisfaction, $F(1, 94) = 19.63, p < .001, \beta = .42$. In Step-2, self-disclosure was a significant predictor of communication, $F(1, 94) = 16.85, p < .001$. In Step-3, male self-disclosure remained a significant predictor of his relationship satisfaction after accounting for his communication, $p = .002, \beta = .31$ (see Table 7). The Sobel test was

employed to check if the mediating variable significantly carries influence of the predicting variable (self-disclosure) to the dependent variable (relationship satisfaction). Results of the Sobel test suggest that the association between self-disclosure and relationship satisfaction is significantly mediated by communication ($z = 2.50, p = .006$). Together, these results suggest that for males, communication mediates the relationship between his self-disclosure and own relationship satisfaction.

Among female respondents, in Step-1, her self-disclosure was a significant predictor of her relationship satisfaction, $F(1, 94) = 23.62, p < .001, \beta = .45$. In Step-2, self-disclosure was a significant predictor of her communication, $F(1, 94) = 9.03, p < .003$. In Step-3, female self-disclosure remained a significant predictor of significant predictor of her relationship satisfaction after accounting for communication, $p < .001, \beta = .29$ (see Table 7). Results of the Sobel test suggest that the association between self-disclosure and relationship satisfaction is significantly mediated by communication ($z = 2.32, p = .010$). Together, these results suggest that for females, communication mediates the relationship between her self-disclosure and own relationship satisfaction.

Table 6
Summary of Stepwise Multiple Regression Analyses for Predicting Men's and Women's Partner Romantic Relationship Satisfaction Based on Emotional Intelligence

Predictor	Dependent	Men				Women			
		R^2	B	SE	β	R^2	B	SE	β
Step 1									
Emotional Intelligence	Relationship satisfaction	-	0.30	0.17	.18	-	0.11	0.15	.08
Step 2									
Emotional Intelligence	Communication	-	0.30**	0.11	.29	-			
Step 3									
Emotional Intelligence	Relationship satisfaction		0.18	0.17	.10				
Communication		.10	0.42*	0.16	.27				

Note. $N = 96$. Step 1 for men is marginally significant at $p = .078$. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Table 7
Summary of Stepwise Multiple Regression Analyses for Predicting Men's and Women's Own Romantic Relationship Satisfaction Based on Self-Disclosure

Predictors	Dependant	R^2	Men			Women			
			B	SE	β	R^2	B	SE	β
Step 1									
Self-disclosure	Relationship satisfaction	-	0.43**	0.10	.42	-	0.57**	0.12	.45
Step 2									
Self-disclosure	Communication	-	0.29**	0.07	.39	-	0.25**	0.08	.30
Step 3									
Self-disclosure	Relationship satisfaction		0.32**	0.10	.31		0.37**	0.10	.29
Communication		.23	0.37**	0.14	.27	.46	0.81**	0.11	.53

Note. $N = 96$. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Self-disclosure and one’s partners’ relationship satisfaction. Among male respondents, in Step-1, his self-disclosure was a significant predictor of his female partners’ relationship satisfaction, $F(1, 94) = 5.84, p = .018, \beta = .24$. In Step-2, his self-disclosure was a significant predictor of his communication, $F(1, 94) = 16.85, p < .001$. In Step-3, male self-disclosure was no longer a significant predictor of his female partner’s relationship satisfaction after accounting for his communication, $p = .166, \beta = .15$ (see Table 8). Results of the Sobel test suggest that the association between male self-disclosure and his female partners’ relationship satisfaction is significantly mediated by his communication ($z = 2.15, p = .016$). Together, these results suggest that for males, his communication mediates the relationship between his self-disclosure and his female partners’ relationship satisfaction.

Among female respondents, a multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine if her communication mediated the relation between her self-disclosure and her male partners’ relationship satisfaction. In Step-1, self-disclosure was a marginally significant predictor of his relationship satisfaction, $F(1, 94) = 3.48, p = .065, \beta = .19$. In Step-2, self-disclosure was a significant predictor of communication, $F(1, 94) = 9.03, p = .003$. In Step-3, female self-disclosure was no longer a significant predictor of his relationship satisfaction after accounting for her communication, $p = .346, \beta = .10$ (see Table 8). Results of the Sobel test suggest that the association between her self-disclosure and her male partners’ relationship satisfaction is significantly mediated by her communication ($z = 1.97, p = .024$). Together, these results suggest that for females, her communication mediates the relationship between her self-disclosure and her male partners’ relationship satisfaction.

Discussion

Relationship satisfaction is an important and complex aspect of intimate romantic relationships. Previous research has shown correlations between personal characteristics and relationship satisfaction. This study was the first to evaluate communication as a mediator between three personal characteristics — four five-factor personality traits, EI, self-disclosure — and romantic relationship satisfaction. Two of three hypotheses were partially supported and one was fully supported. The findings from these hypotheses collectively suggest that some personal characteristics influence communication which in turn impacts romantic relationship satisfaction.

Five-Factor Personality Traits

The first hypothesis was partially supported in that the relation between conscientiousness and relationship satisfaction was mediated by communication; however, this was not true for agreeableness, extraversion and neuroticism. The finding that one’s conscientiousness is correlated to their own relationship satisfaction (Heller et al., 2004) and their partner’s relationship satisfaction (Malouff et al., 2010) is consistent with existing literature. The results from the current study suggest that the initial relation found in past studies between conscientiousness and satisfaction can be explained by communication. Researchers of the five-factor traits have emphasized that perseverance is a defining characteristic that conscientious individuals possess (John, Robins, & Pervin, 2008). In the context of a romantic relationship, this quality is important as these individuals are more likely to remain in the relationship despite the difficulties that arise and can persist over long periods of time. Conscientious individuals tend to be dependable, possess impulse control, and have a strong will to achieve and work towards goals (John et al., 2008). These important

Table 8
Summary of Stepwise Multiple Regression Analyses for Predicting Men’s and Women’s Partner Romantic Relationship Satisfaction Based on Self-Disclosure

Predictors	Dependant	Men				Women			
		$F(R^2)$	B	SE	β	$F(R^2)$	B	SE	β
Step 1									
Self-disclosure	Relationship satisfaction	-	0.29**	0.12	.19	-	0.21	0.11	.24
Step 2									
Self-disclosure	Communication	-	0.29**	0.07	.30	-	0.25**	0.08	.39
Step 3									
Self-disclosure	Relationship satisfaction		0.18	0.13	.10		0.11	0.11	.15
Communication		5.56(.11)	0.38*	0.17	.31	6.66(.13)	0.42**	0.14	.24

Note. $N = 96$. Step 1 for men is marginally significant at $p = .065$. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

tendencies facilitate task- and goal-directed behaviour, such as thinking before speaking with one's partner, delaying gratification, following boundaries established in the relationship, and being dependable when one's partner needs support. Together, these positive communication styles make partners of conscientious individuals happier in their romantic relationship.

Other studies have examined the effects of conscientiousness on communication in contexts other than romantic relationships. In one such study, Khuong, Linh, Toan, and Phuong (2016) found that of the five factors, conscientiousness has the strongest effect on job performance. They argued that conscientious individuals are better communicators in work-related contexts; they are thoughtful and considerate with coworkers, they are able to express their objectives clearly, and they avoid trouble and confrontation. The idea that this personality trait is correlated to the way individuals communicate is consistent with the findings in the current study. Collectively, these studies demonstrate that conscientiousness can be used as a predictor of important life outcomes such as job performance and relationship satisfaction.

Male and female participants' level of agreeableness, extraversion and neuroticism were not significantly correlated to their partner's relationship satisfaction. This is inconsistent with other studies who have found that all three of these personality traits are linked to marital satisfaction in particular (Heller et al., 2004) and relationship satisfaction in general (Malouff et al., 2010). In the current study, the inter-item correlation for agreeableness was non-significant ($p > .05$) for males ($r = .05$) and females ($r = .13$). Therefore, when the mean of the two items was calculated, it was unclear whether it was measuring what was intended. This might have occurred because agreeableness is a problematic label. John and colleagues (2008) state that 'agreeableness' incorrectly implies submissiveness when it simply refers to the behavioural tendency to agree. Furthermore, they believe that the label is too detached — too neutral to label a factor that is supposed to capture intensely affective characteristics, such as love, compassion and sympathy. This may explain why there was no effect to mediate between agreeableness and relationship satisfaction.

Extraversion and neuroticism were not significantly correlated to their partner's relationship satisfaction for either gender. A proposed explanation is that extraversion and neuroticism take longer to correlate to relationship satisfaction in comparison to other personality traits such as conscientiousness. Because the sample had been dating on average 1-2 years, it is possible that these two traits had not had

enough time to significantly influence partner's relationship satisfaction. Brackett and colleagues (2005) stated that couples in relatively short-term relationships do not evaluate their partners in terms of personal characteristics, or do not have time to evaluate them accurately. Alternatively, it is also possible that individuals are more willing to tolerate their partner's negative personality traits when they have not had compounded influences on that person's patience and satisfaction.

Emotional Intelligence

The second hypothesis was partially supported as the relation between female's EI and her relationship satisfaction was mediated by her communication. However, this was not true for males. This is consistent with Smith, Ciarrochi, and Heaven (2008) who found that EI was related to more constructive communication patterns. This suggests that perhaps emotionally intelligent women can communicate, listen and empathically, and perceive unspoken emotion which in turn influences their own relationship satisfaction. This does not imply that men do not possess these abilities, but rather their EI does not have a strong impact on their own satisfaction. In other words, women place more importance on being emotionally attentive to their partner than men do. Consequently, even if men are emotionally attentive this is not what increases their satisfaction. An alternative explanation has to do with past findings which indicate couples in which at least one partner has high EI have greater relationship satisfaction (Brackett et al., 2005). Generally, females score significantly higher than males on trait EI, and they are consequently the member of the pair who typically increases the satisfaction for both themselves and their partner. The gender difference in EI might be due to differences in sex role socialization; for example, women may be more encouraged than men to pay attention to, express and respond to emotions (Brackett et al., 2005).

The findings from the current study are consistent with existing literature. Malouff and colleagues (2014) found EI is significantly correlated to self-reported relationship satisfaction for both males and females. This meta-analysis, however, does not specify the gender distribution of the 600 participants. It is therefore possible that there is a disproportionate number of males versus females. The proportion of each gender is particularly important for this personal characteristic since female participants generally score significantly higher on EI than male participants (Brackett et al., 2005). Thus, in comparison to a predominantly male sample, studies with greater female samples are more likely to find significant correlations between EI and other important life outcomes such as relationship satisfaction.

Self-disclosure

The third hypothesis was supported as communication for both genders mediated the relation between SD and both one's own and one's partner's relationship satisfaction. The finding that SD is related to one's own and one's partner's relationship satisfaction is consistent with past literature (Meeks et al., 1998; Scapinello, 2004). The results of the present study lend further support to the idea that couples feel more satisfied in their relationships when they and their partners disclose personal information and when their partners feel satisfied with their relationship as well. What this study adds to the existing literature is that self-disclosure is necessary for communication to occur. Similarly, without self-disclosure, communication is limited when purposefully concealing information (Uysal et al., 2012).

Interestingly, in the final regression step, SD was a significant predictor of one's own relationship satisfaction but not for one's partner's satisfaction. Despite Sobel test analyses indicating that communication acts as a mediator in all four instances, the discrepancy in the significance between own and partner's satisfaction merits discussion. In the mediations where SD is related to one's own relationship satisfaction, SD might still be an important predictor because they know the information they are not sharing. For example, someone might be satisfied with their relationship because of a given issue or circumstance (e.g., partner completing chores) but do not need to communicate this to be satisfied as he/she already knows. Conversely, in the mediations where SD influences one's partner's satisfaction, SD might no longer be an important predictor in the last regression because they don't know the other partner is not disclosing. For example, someone might be satisfied with his/her romantic relationship because his/her partner does several chores but this needs to be communicated for their partner to be satisfied, otherwise he/she might not know that their partner is appreciative.

Limitations and Future Research

There were a number of limitations to this study. First, our participants were mostly young undergraduate students whose relationships may be different from those in established, long-term relationships. Most couples did not live with their partner, and had been together for one to two years; perhaps the role of five-factor personality traits (i.e., extraversion and neuroticism) surfaces only after couples have been together for extensive periods of time.

Despite the evidence for the value of *The Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI)*, very short measures are subject to psychometric costs. When compared with

standard multi-item measures of the Big Five, the *TIPI* is less reliable and correlates less strongly with other variables (Gosling et al., 2003). Some subscales (i.e., agreeableness and openness to experience) might have lower internal consistency for males and females because the inter-item correlations were non-significant. The results obtained with these subscales in the current study could have been impacted. Future studies should use measures that are longer and more reliable. Furthermore, brief measures do not have the ability to measure individual facets of multi-faceted constructs. Each of the five broad constructs (i.e., agreeableness) has several, more specific facets that are related but distinguishable only by using long measures like the 240-item *NEO-PI-R*. However, other widely used short measures of the five-factor traits (e.g., the 44-item *BFI* and the 60-item *NEO-FFI*) do not provide facet scores either (Gosling et al., 2003). Therefore, in comparison to 44 or 60 items, using only 10 items leaves researchers time to focus on other measures that are also directly related to their research questions.

Exclusively relying on self-reports might have biased the data. Using individual reports of their own personal characteristics and relationship satisfaction relies on the participants' honesty. While participants were instructed to complete the study separately as to not influence each other's ratings of satisfaction, it is still possible they might have artificially increased satisfaction knowing their partner might ask them about their answers. Another problem with self-reported measures is that even honest participants might lack the introspective ability to provide an accurate response to a question. To some extent, all participants are unable to introspectively assess themselves completely accurately.

To address the limitations present in the current study, future research involving communication as a mediator could (a) examine couples who have been together for more extensive periods of time (e.g., married couples); (b) examine the five-factor personality traits with a standard (longer) multi-item measure; (c) examine partners' reports of personal characteristics and relationship satisfaction. Examining couples in well established relationships could demonstrate that some personality traits (i.e., extraversion and neuroticism) correlate to relationship satisfaction only after couples have been together for extensive periods of time. Examining the five-factor personality traits with a longer measure may indicate which specific facets of the broader personality constructs are related to relationship satisfaction. Examining partner reports of personal characteristics and relationship satisfaction would fill a gap in literature that currently relies upon participants' self-reports. Furthermore, the present study examined heterosexual couples which excludes same-sex

couples (male-male, female-female). To address this limitation, additional research might also (d) examine same-sex romantic relationships in order to more comprehensively represent existing couple demographics.

Conclusion

Communication with romantic partners is important for greater relationship satisfaction for both members of a couple and may act as a buffer against life stressors. The current study is the first to examine communication as an agent between personal characteristics and relationship satisfaction. Results indicated that conscientious individuals and their partners tend to be more satisfied in their relationship, and females with greater EI tend to be more satisfied with their own relationship. Lastly, SD increases relationship satisfaction for both individuals in the couple. In conclusion, personal characteristics are related to communication which in turn affects romantic relationship satisfaction. Implications include therapists' focus on fostering better communication in partners of a distressed couple which would likely improve both their mental and physical health. From a broader perspective, this research helps us understand the role that communication plays in successful relationships, and how a breakdown in communication could potentially contribute to divorce rates in our societies.

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COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION

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