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## Identifying the relationship between self-esteem and satisfaction in a couple

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**Abstract.** The need to see ourselves as good or adequate represents our need to experience increased self-esteem. As we develop as children, we become more and more aware of the power of our choices, but also of the responsibility generated by the choices we make. On our education, it is also one of the sources of self-esteem creation through the experience of being treated with respect by parents and other family members. As far as our own actions are concerned, one of the origins of creating personal self-esteem is the satisfaction we feel with our own choices considered moral, which are a particular aspect of satisfaction with our mental processes. The second pillar, the conception of oneself, is based on the opinion we have of ourselves, representing an assessment of our qualities and defects, founded or not. And the conception of oneself, as well as self-love, is formed in our family environment, the conception of oneself being mainly due to the projects that parents make for us. To be aware of the reasons for attraction to a person of the opposite sex can lead to the permanence of the valuing attitudes invested in the person of the opposite sex, which fuels new needs for knowledge and communication, or to the reduction of emotional tension by decreasing the need for the other. When physical and mental attraction increases with the knowledge of the other, with the proximity and physical and mental intimacy, this leads to the stabilization of the relationship and the desire to resume and intensify it. Mutual satisfaction becomes a condition for both maintenance and improvement of the attraction between the two partners, which is created by symmetry and reciprocity

**Keywords.** Relationship, self-esteem, satisfaction, couple

### **Definition and characteristics of self-esteem**

According to Gerrig and Zimbardo (2002), self-esteem can be defined in terms of a generalized self-assessment, influencing the person's thinking, states and behavior. While low self-esteem can be characterized in part by lower self-certainty and may include the feeling that the person does not know much about himself, being cautious and conservative, a person with high self-esteem presents himself to the world as ambitious and willing to take risks.

Baumeister and Vohs (2007) report that academic psychology recognizes two types of self-esteem. The first type is general self-esteem, usually measured using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The second type of self-esteem is the specific one, often measuring self-esteem in a particular

field, such as school, professional, sports or physical appearance. These sub-domains are subsequently combined to form a complete score of self-esteem. People with high self-esteem seem to know more about themselves and their preferences, and can fill out long lists of what they like and dislike and are more confident in their own abilities. They serve themselves more and their own interests, taking credit for their successes and accusing external sources when they experience failures. Since self-esteem is correlated with emotional stability, people with low self-esteem experience negative states more often and report more often mood fluctuations. The two authors also refer to the stability of self-esteem. Some people have an immediate sense of self-worth that fluctuates considerably from day to day or even in the course of a single day, about these people being told that they have an unstable self-esteem. Other people have an immediate sense of self-worth that changes rarely or even never, they have a stable self-esteem. The degree of stability/instability of a person's self-esteem has important implications for the psychological health and well-being of the person.

As an implication, the two authors believe that people are highly motivated to maintain their self-esteem and pleasant feelings about themselves, this reason explaining a surprising number of human behaviors. An example of this is prejudices against those people who do not resemble us, which may have its roots in our desire to feel good about ourselves. Moreover, in terms of self-preservation, when people are reminded of death, they strongly defend their own conception of the world. When people with high self-esteem are threatened, they respond in a more boastful and rude manner. But self-esteem doesn't explain how many things people think. It is good in relationships, but only if it does not pass into narcissism. People with high self-esteem are happier, but their self-esteem cannot cause good things to happen in their lives. On the contrary, tracking self-esteem can sometimes cause people to behave in a way they might later regret.

For Branden (2008), self-esteem, along with personal efficiency, creates what it considers to be self-esteem, a high self-respect being intrinsically reality-oriented and having a close connection with reason, intuition, creativity, flexibility or the ability to manage change. For the author, personal efficiency encompasses expectations of achieving success, perceived as natural, while self-esteem includes expectations of friendship, love and happiness, also perceived as natural, the result of who we are and what we do. According to the author, self-esteem represents confidence in our own value, not the illusion that we are perfect or superior to others. This has nothing to do with competition or comparisons of any kind, but it is the belief that our lives and well-being deserve to be supported and are important, that we are valuable, deserving of respect from others, that our happiness and personal fulfillment are very important aspects for which we deserve to fight.

However, in the author's conception, it generates an implicit set of expectations about what is possible and appropriate for us, these expectations being the very ones that generate those actions that have the ability to make them a reality. This result subsequently confirms and reinforces the original beliefs. Thus, increased or low self-esteem tends to generate prophecies that subsequently tend to materialize.

### **The need for self-esteem**

According to Abraham Maslow's theory of human motivation (2007), all people in contemporary society manifest the need for a high and stable self-assessment of one's own person, with solid foundations, which results in the need for respect or self-esteem, as well as respect on the part of others. The author categorizes these needs into two categories. In a first category, there are needs expressed by the desire for power, success, craftsmanship and competence, but also

adequacy or trust in the world, freedom and independence. In the second category, we find a need for good reputation or prestige (which can express respect or esteem on the part of others), status, fame or glory, recognition or appreciation, attention or importance, dignity or even domination. Satisfying the needs of self-esteem creates feelings of self-confidence, fitness and capacity, but also self-valuing and power, the feeling of being useful to this world. Their dissatisfaction will, by contrast, lead to feelings of vulnerability, weakness and inferiority, which in turn create a sense of discouragement or offsetting or neurotic tendencies. Maslow states that self-esteem based on the words of others and not on real ability, competence or adequacy will create more and more dangers for the individual. The most stable, healthy self-esteem is built on the respect deserved from others and not on unjustified adulation, where fame or celebrity can be part. Even here there is a useful distinction between the skills and successes achieved by the simple power of will, determination and responsibility, and between those that come naturally, with ease, from the true inner nature of the person, from his structure, from his fate or destiny, that is, from the true self, not from the idealized pseudo-self.

### **Training and development of self-esteem**

Andre and Lelord (2003) consider that self-esteem is based on three ingredients, which they consider indispensable to a harmonious self-esteem and consider to be pillars on which self-esteem is based. These are self-confidence, self-conception and self-love.

The authors consider self-love to be the most important pillar. If self-esteem implies an assessment, love is not based on any condition, loving us regardless of our flaws and limitations, despite the failures and defeats suffered, knowing above all that we are worthy of love and respect. Because self-love is unconditional, it does not depend on our performance, which is why we can resist adversity and rebalance ourselves after a failure. Self-love does not keep us from suffering or doubt when faced with difficulty, but it protects us from despair. It depends to a considerable extent on the love, on the emotional nourishment we received from our family when we were little, and for this reason, the self-esteem that has its source in self-love is the most difficult to compensate. According to the authors, we encounter these in personality disorders, in the case of those people whose behavior towards others leads them to conflict or failure.

The second pillar, the conception of oneself, is based on the opinion we have of ourselves, representing an assessment of our qualities and defects, founded or not. This is not only about self-knowledge, the reality of things, but about how we are convinced that we are the holders of qualities and flaws, our own potentialities and our limits. Thus, subjectivity plays an essential role here. For example, for this reason, a complex person will often leave a dismayed entourage that does not perceive the flaws that the person believes they have. On the other hand, a positive self-conception is like an inner force, allowing us to enjoy our chance despite adversity. And the conception of oneself, as well as self-love, is formed in our family environment, the conception of oneself being mainly due to the projects that parents make for us. There are cases where parents unconsciously burden the child to achieve what they could not do in their lives or did not know how, as in other cases, a reduced conception of self will lead the person to a dependence on the other, in the sense that he will only go down a path already explored by someone else, limiting himself to a role of successor, although it has the ability to establish satisfying relationships with those around it.

Self-confidence, the third component of self-esteem, is particularly about our actions. Trusting yourself is about believing that you are able to act in the right way in important situations. In contrast to self-love and, above all, self-esteem, self-confidence is much easier to observe, it is enough just to meet the person often, to see what behavior he adopts, both in new and unforeseen

situations, in which there is a stake, or if he is struck by difficulties, when he realizes what he has to accomplish. Although self-confidence may seem not as important as love or conception of oneself, the consequence of which seems to be, this is not entirely true. However, its role seems to be particularly important when we think that self-esteem needs concrete facts and actions in order to be able to maintain and develop, our small daily successes being absolutely necessary for our psychological balance. And self-confidence comes primarily from the education received, both in the family and at school, being transmitted by example and by conversation, children being aware that the true beliefs of adults are more noticeable from their actions than from the advice provided. Self-confidence can be seen when the person does not have an exaggerated fear of the unknown or adversity. However, insufficient self-confidence is not considered to be an insurmountable defect, even if the manifestations of these people can be seen through inhibition, especially in small and ordinary facts, such as a phone call or attempt to write a letter.

These three components of self-esteem are interdependent. Self-love (respect for one's own person, despite what is happening, being attentive to one's own needs and aspirations) undeniably facilitates the formation of a positive self-conception (belief in one's own abilities, ability to project oneself into the future). This, in turn, will positively influence self-confidence (action in the absence of an exaggerated fear of failure and judgment on the part of others).

Discussing the formation and development of self-esteem, Smeion (2009) believes that the beginnings of self-esteem occur along with those of self-awareness, also representing an important component of it. Children acquire a global mental representation of themselves around the age of eight. They are then able to identify their own characteristics, such as those of physical appearance or character traits, as well as those own traits that do not change. The image they begin to form of themselves will form the basis of their future self-esteem. Subsequently, going through the preschool years, children come into contact with the requirements and criteria of society, in terms of love and acceptance, which they begin to internalize, but if the early feelings of love and acceptance are deep enough, the child will get through the refusals and reposes of the following years. School-age children resort to very careful social comparisons (Higgins, 1983, apud Simen, 2009), being able to frame their peers in various social categories, also placing themselves in this ranking. The five most important areas in this regard appear to be physical appearance, sports skills, group popularity, behavioural conformism and school success. Also, the four main sources of meaningful judgments are parents, teachers, colleagues and loved ones, as the value the child attaches to different categories of self-esteem does not depend solely on their own judgment. Bednar, Wells and Peterson (1989, apud Smeion, 2009) believe that feelings of competence and, automatically, self-esteem, are higher for children whose parents give them a balance between acceptance and affection, rational limits and high expectations. The same phenomenon is also possible for teachers working in an environment that includes realistic acceptance, limits and expectations (Lamborn, 1991, apud Sion, 2009). However, it is not only parents and school that influence the development of self-esteem, with an important role in comparisons with the group of peer members, i.e. colleagues and friends, healthy relationships with fellow human beings.

### **Marriage in today's society**

Iolanda Mitrofan and Cristian Mushroom (2002) start from the idea that marriage or its substitute partnership is an interpersonal process of our becoming and maturation as personalities, a process of awareness, redirection and fruition of our unconscious tendencies, impulses and affinities, a process of self-education achieved through inter-knowledge. Thus, the purpose of

marriage is personal development and growth, through the experience of conjugality and parenthood.

At the same time, the authors note that the values of the past are continually and irreversibly collapsing, thus diminishing the importance and attachment to the institution of the family and resizing its structure and fundamental functions. Although these changes do not affect societies to the same extent, as long as this fluctuation in values manifests itself so rapidly, it is almost inevitable that change will not affect any society to some extent. The family is an institution that has easily adapted to the impulses of change, even if it was considered impenetrable and indestructible, an element of stability in a world governed by chaos. A theory that attempts to explain the regression of the nuclear family relates to focusing on the ideals of individuality, which anticipates that the individual is increasingly moving towards a lifestyle based on some isolation from the rest of the people, creating a small society for his or her own benefit and leaving society as a whole to it.

Paul Hauck (2002) perceives marriage to be a transaction. Lovers who choose to marry now have mutual legal obligations, previously non-existent, and benefit from the support of society and the law. For a woman it is more reassuring to benefit from certain legal guarantees that she will not be abandoned by her husband during critical periods such as pregnancy or certain diseases. When she brings children into the world, she will want to ensure that they do not starve, forcing the woman to support her family. The man's job is to provide the woman with all these things when they both have agreed to start a family. Most of the time, the woman will give up the possibility of a career, which could have given her a different kind of life, perhaps more interesting, but also a material safety. Marriage is thus a tacit understanding between the two partners.

As a contract between the two partners, they do not want to go bankrupt, so they aspire to achieve as much happiness as possible. Like an undertaking that does not develop when its administration does not bring the necessary benefits, marriage must satisfy certain conditions in order to be considered a successful marriage. Since the happiness of a marriage is similar to a company's profit, marriage is happy only if it benefits. If the provisions of the contract are not respected, for whatever reason, the partnership will fall apart. The heart and soul of the man are more focused on the physical and social joys he can obtain from the woman, while in the center of the woman's attention are found the material advantages that the man can offer him. Thus, the woman is considered to be more practical, while the man more romantic and dreamy.

Allan Onese and Barbara Onese (2001) believe that, in terms of the evolution of the species, men do not gain any advantage when it comes to marriage. However, most men marry and remarry when they divorce, which shows society's remarkable ability to compel men to abstain when their biological need to tread comes in. A married man or one in a long-term relationship is often secretly concerned about the fact that bachelors have a better time than he is.

Although in today's society marriage has become quite unnecessary legally, most women still intend to obtain it, considering marriage to be a statement made for the world to see that there is a man who perceives it as special and who at least intends to have a monogamous relationship with her.

Although statistics show that marriage fails quite often, many people continue to get married, considering stable marriage to be the safest way to raise healthy and happy children, but also to have an extraordinary calming effect, a kind of shelter in a stormy weather, in a society where life is lived at speed, being the place where the two partners can rest after the daily stress.

### **Choosing a couple's partner**

Iolanda Mitrofan and Nicolae Mitrofan (1994), speaking about the choice of the conjugal partner, mention that although affectivity is today a normative criterion of marriage, unlike arranged marriages and the economic criterion of previous generations, we still do not fully understand the subtle, conscious or unconscious mechanisms underlying the formation of a couple. In modern society, where the choice of partner is free, each of the two partners considers the other to be best suited to satisfy a number of needs and desires. Subsequently, in the framework of cohabitation, each of the partners expects the other to meet his needs, to meet his requirements, without always understanding that he expects the same response.

To be aware of the reasons for attraction to a person of the opposite sex can lead to the permanence of the valuing attitudes invested in the person of the opposite sex, which fuels new needs for knowledge and communication, or to the reduction of emotional tension by decreasing the need for the other. When physical and mental attraction increases with the knowledge of the other, with the proximity and physical and mental intimacy, this leads to the stabilization of the relationship and the desire to resume and intensify it. Mutual satisfaction becomes a condition for both maintenance and improvement of the attraction between the two partners, which is created by symmetry and reciprocity.

Discussing the phenomena of preference and mutual sympathy that encompass love relationships, Neculau (1996) refers to the term "affinity", which can mean any direct relationship, involving an action of choice, but also an affective satisfaction experienced by the two persons. The internal configuration of affinity relationships relates to the needs of relation and affection, needs that can be encountered in one form or another in any individual. These needs could not be perceived in a framework of isolatable and static entities, but in diadic and dynamic relationships, where both poles of the relationship are taken into account at the same time. Affinity can be discussed when the meeting generates a mutual attraction, causing the two partners to maintain contact that is the source of intense or less intense satisfaction.

Affinity motivations are structured in two opposite perspectives. Firstly, they are based on similarity or psychological omology, which extends, at the level of personality, the kinship of statutes and values. The similarity hypothesis is based in part on mutual attractions. Secondly, affinity is based on complementarity, involving in the case of partners a form of characterological differentiation, with each of the two creating the framework for the other to meet their deep complementary needs.

Walter Riso (2012) expresses the idea that fully matching a person, mentally and emotionally, is a matter of luck, that remarkable harmony is almost always inexplicable. In a harmonious relationship abandonment and martyrdom do not take place, and if you feel to destroy yourself or cancel, thus believing that your partner will be happy, then he is not the right person. To love is not to become erased, to suffer, to become one with your partner and to lose your identity, which leads to emotional intoxication.

The author draws attention to the pit of idealization of the partner. Our rational side loves the subject as it really is, but the romantic and idealistic side builds an object of his own dreams. It takes courage to see the partner exactly as it is, without masks, because if our mind will no longer be filled with all illusions, we may not like what we see in the partner, and the minds of people who are in love need to oversize the object of his love, to obtain what he considers to be an additional guarantee and strengthen his ego. In fact, the idealization of the partner has to do with the desire to have a better opinion of oneself, admiration being a different thing of idolization.

Some idealizations, though conscious, are a little bold, a good mass of people choosing to love only what suits them about their partner or that thing that does not affect them so much, but those parts that we do not want to see or assume still exist, and will manifest itself at some point, creating confusion and chaos. To live with the illusion of emotional self-deception comes to become a perceived and subjective reality, a sentimental Matrix.

### **Language of the expression of love**

Gary Chapman (2007) teaches that we should be willing to learn and manifest the main language of partner love when our goal is to make our love known and communicate effectively in love. The emotional language of the love of one of the partners can be as different from the other as it is English from Chinese, and it is only rarely the two partners have the same main language of love. Our tendency is to express our love in the main new language and the message is not received, because our language is alien to each other, leaving us annoyed that the partner does not understand what we are trying to convey to him. Once identified and learned the main language of the partner's love, a loving and long-lasting partnership can be foreseen.

The author believes that the first language of love is words of encouragement, which implies empathy and reporting to the world from the partner's perspective, first learning what is important to the partner and then showing him that we believe in him and his abilities. The second language of love is time, which means that the partner receives total attention, in which nothing distracts us when we spend time together. The third language of love is the receipt of gifts, gifts being a visual symbol of love, one of the simplest languages, physical presence in crisis situations being the most important gift you can give. The fourth language of love is services, food preparation, windscreen cleaning or dog walking being all services involving time, planning, effort and energy, which, when made in a positive spirit, are real expressions of love. The fifth language of love is physical comforts, caresses, kisses and hugs being ways of communicating to the partner the emotion of love.

Steve Duck (2000) talks about expressing love through metaphors, such as the metaphor of madness ("crazy after the other"), the metaphor of nutrition ("the thirst for love") or the metaphor of fire ("the fire of passion"), the latter being able to suggest a visceral experience of an irresistible passion. These metaphors form inferences that facilitate the understanding of the concept of love. If love is considered by someone to be insane, then the person who experiences this feeling may consider that love implies a loss of control or the possibility of irrational behavior.

In the current language, however, we adopt the metaphors made available by our culture so that we can define and interpret our experiences of love, helping individuals to build their images and reference points on the feeling of love and how love is conceived in thought. These metaphors are found in the common popular consciousness, being the conceptual visions that are shared by all members of a particular culture, since love represents a complex emotional experience, made up of various aspects, that can seem mysterious to people, thus naturally appealing to metaphors, to form a landmark and define and explain the experimentation of their own feelings. The ways in which people experience a feeling or relationship are closely related to the language in which they communicate and which they use to describe those experiences. For example, people who perceive love as "involvement" manage to have high-quality relationships, which portrays the fact that language is not irrelevant.

### **Influence of self-esteem in dicadic satisfaction**

Weidmann, Ledermann and Grob (2017) examined the mediating role of self-esteem in the association between Big Five personality traits and couple satisfaction. The results indicate that only kindness (and, in part, neuroticism) predict relationship satisfaction two years later, but relationship satisfaction predicted partner extraversion. Moreover, significant indirect effects arose between relationship satisfaction, self-esteem and subsequent neuroticism.

Erol and Orth (2014) examined the effects of self-esteem development on the development of relationship satisfaction in two longitudinal studies. The initial level of self-esteem of each partner predicted the initial level of couple satisfaction of the partners, and the change in each partner's self-esteem predicted the change in the partners' shared satisfaction in the couple relationship. The similarity of the partners' self-esteem did not influence the development of the satisfaction of their relationship. Erol and Orth (2016) use data that suggest that high self-esteem is beneficial in romantic relationships. Moreover, research using data from both partners of couples suggests that high self-esteem also has a positive effect on the level of satisfaction with the couple's relationship.

Robinson and Cameron (2012) conducted research on 500 heterosexual couples. People with low self-esteem and their partners reported lower satisfaction and commitment to their relationships than people with higher self-esteem and partners as well. An additive effect by which the levels of self-esteem of both partners combine to predict the quality of the relationship best described the diadic effects. The results highlight the importance of taking into account the interactive nature of individual characteristics in the dicadic research.

Mund, Finn, Hagemeyer, Zimmermann and Neyer (2015) examined the dynamic interaction between self-esteem and both general (i.e. couple satisfaction) and specific aspects of relationship quality (independence and connection). Self-esteem and all aspects of relationship quality have been found to be dynamically intertwined, so that both previous levels and changes in one area foresee further changes in the other area. Together, the conclusions indicate that self-esteem is an important element in the development of a variety of aspects in the relationship, but it is also influenced by these aspects.

Zeigler-Hill, Fulton and McLemore (2011), in a research on the assessment of the relationship by people with stable and unstable self-esteem, found that men with high, unstable self-esteem reported more positive views about their relationships than other people. The fragile nature of their feelings of self-worth may have motivated these men to appreciate their relationships in a positive way, in an effort to maintain and improve their own fragile feelings of self-worth. These findings suggest that men with high self-esteem, unstable, can use their romantic relationships to regulate how they feel about themselves.

Sciangua and Morry (2009) explored the relationships between self-esteem, perceived consideration and satisfaction in couple relationships. In the case of medium traits relevant to relationships (caring, loving), high self-esteem was associated with self-development (idealization), while low self-esteem was associated with self-depreciation. For traits that are not relevant in relationships (silent, reserved), both people with low self-esteem and high self-esteem develop themselves. Hierarchical regression analyses indicated that self-esteem and perceived consideration in the case of relevant environmental traits in a relationship predicted couple satisfaction.

Tacett, Nelson and Busby (2013) explored the relationship between personality characteristics and couple satisfaction, using a sample of 14,807 couples and examining direct and

indirect associations (through self-esteem) between personality traits (such as shyness) and satisfaction in the couple relationship. The results indicated that higher levels of shyness were associated with lower self-esteem, as well as with lower satisfaction of the couple relationship.

### Objectives of the work

1. Examination of similarity in terms of the satisfaction of the relationship of couples with a different marital status.
2. Identification of the association between self-esteem and relationship satisfaction.

### Assumptions

Hypothesis 1: It is presumed that there is no significant difference in satisfaction in relation to relationship satisfaction between married couples who lived together before they married and couples who cohabited with the intention of marrying.

Hypothesis 2: The higher the level of self-esteem, the higher the sense of satisfaction in the relationship will experience.

### Lot of participants

The research was carried out on a group of participants consisting of 60 people. All 60 participants are urban and are between the ages of 25 and 35, most of them aged 29, as can be seen in Figure 1 below.

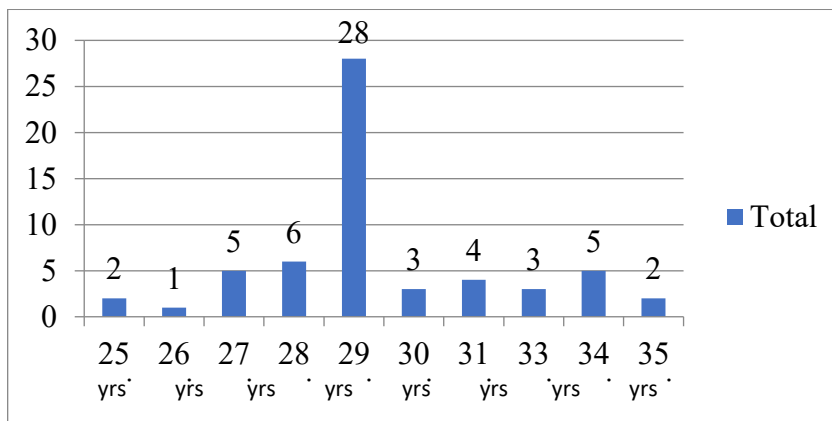


Figure 1 - Age of participants

The 60 participants in the research represent 30 couples, 15 of whom are married and 15 are unmarried, so the male/female proportion of the study participants is 50%/50% .

As for cohabitation, all 30 married participants lived together before they married, and 22 of those who cohabited intended to marry.

### Working tools

Participants were given the Couple Adaptation Scale and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.

### **Couple Adaptation Scale**

The technical manual of the Couple Adaptation Scale, developed by Graham Pinier in 1976, was adapted in Romania by Dragoş Iliescu and Ligiana Petre (2009).

DAS is a 32-item evaluation tool that can be completed by one or both partners in a relationship. Each item is rated by a single answer, chosen from a list. The variants of the answer differ somewhat, depending on the question. DAS includes four subscales, namely: (1) Consensus in couple; (2) Couple satisfaction; (3) Cohesion in couples; (4) Affective expression. Each item is scored only on one of these four subscales. It also calculates a total Score of Diadic Adaptation, by summarizing the scores obtained at the four subscales. DAS can be completed in about 5-10 minutes.

### **Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale**

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was developed and introduced by Morris Rosenberg in 1965 as a well-known self-esteem measurement scale. The author developed this scale to measure the overall sense of personal value and self-acceptance. The scale comprises ten items with four possibilities of response, between "Total disagreement" (1 point) and "Total agreement" (4 points), as follows: "1 = Total disagreement"; "2 = Disagreement"; "3 = Agree"; "4 = Total agree". Five of the ten items are scored backwards.

According to the author (Rosenberg, 1965), the scale shows high scores of fidelity and validity. In Romania, they were confirmed by populations of adolescents (Robu, 2013; Robu, Sandovici and Pruteanu, 2015).

### **Verification of assumptions**

*Hypothesis 1: It is presumed that there is no significant difference in satisfaction in relation to relationship satisfaction between married couples who lived together before they married and couples who cohabited with the intention of marrying.*

To test the first hypothesis, the scores obtained by the participants in the "Couple Satisfaction" (Dyadic Satisfaction) subscale of the Couple Adaptation Scale or the Diadic Adaptation Scale (DAS) were used. They were introduced and processed in SPSS Statistics.

Below you can see the table of starting cues obtained, the average satisfaction in the couple in the case of subjects who lived together before they married being 41.50, and those who cohabit at present, with the intention of marrying being 40.73.

Table 1 - Start indices of the variables of the first hypothesis

<b>Descriptives</b>				
	Cohabitation_status		Statistics	Std. Error
DAS_Diadic_Satisfaction	Cohabitation before marriage	Mean	41.50	.636
		95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	40.20
			Upper Bound	42.80
		5% Trimmed Mean	41.57	
		Median	42.00	

		Variance	12.121	
		Std. Deviation	3.481	
		Minimum	33	
		Maximum	48	
		Range	15	
		Interquartile Range	5	
		Skewness	-.357	.427
		Kurtosis	.058	.833
	Cohabitation with intent to marry	Mean	40.73	1.024
		95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	38.60
			Upper Bound	42.86
		5% Trimmed Mean	40.91	
		Median	41.00	
		Variance	23.065	
		Std. Deviation	4.803	
		Minimum	30	
		Maximum	48	
		Range	18	
		Interquartile Range	6	
		Skewness	-.459	.491
		Kurtosis	-.041	.953

Below you can see the graphical representation of the scores obtained by participants who lived together before they married at the diadic satisfaction subscale.

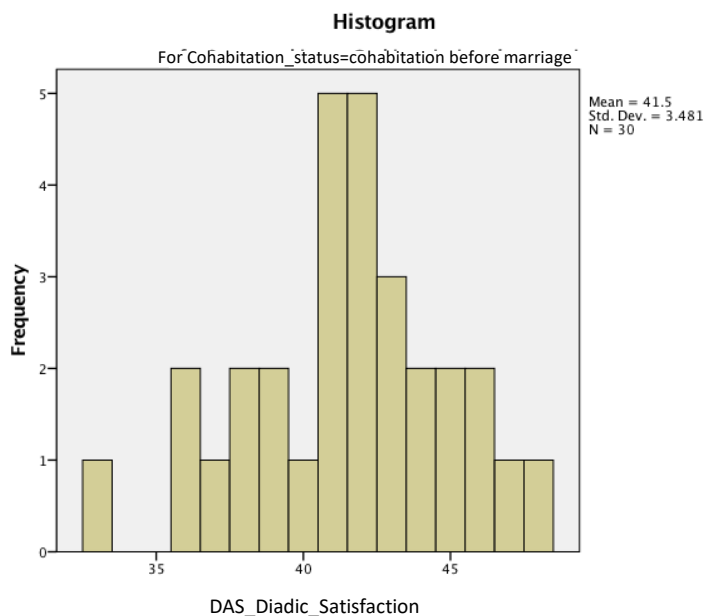


Figure 1 - Histogram of diadic satisfaction of subjects who lived together before marriage

The histogram below shows the graphic representation of the scores obtained by the research participants who cohabit with the intention of getting married.

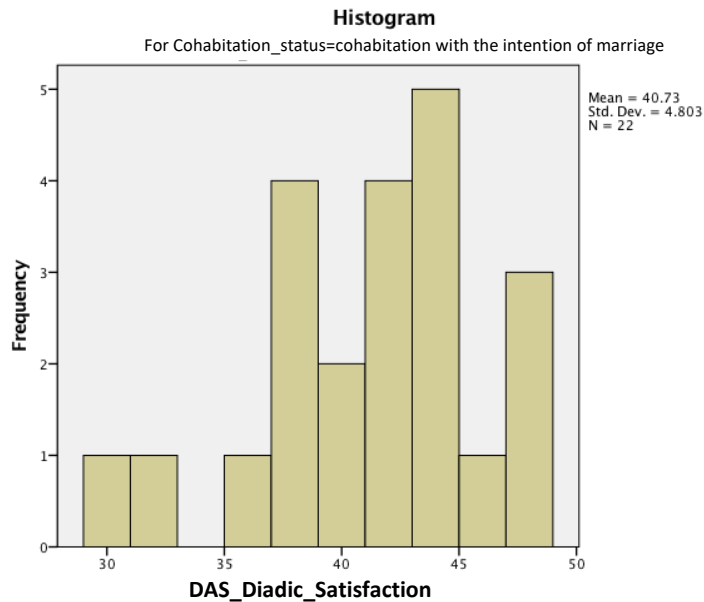


Figure 2 - Histogram of diadic satisfaction of subjects cohabiting with the intention of marrying

The table below shows the results of the calculation of data normality. Since Sig. Kolmogorov-Smirnov has a value greater than 0.05 for both variables, both distributions are parametric. Thus, in order to test that there is no significant difference between the diadic satisfaction scores recorded by participants who lived together before marriage and those who cohabited with the intention of marrying, a parametric method of comparison was used.

Table 2 – Normality values of the variables of the first hypothesis

Tests of Normality							
	Cohabitation_status	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
		statistics	Df	Sig.	statistics	Df	Sig.
DAS_Diadic_Satisfaction	Cohabitation before marriage	.143	30	.121	.979	30	.800
	Cohabitation with intent to marry	.114	22	.200*	.966	22	.613

\*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The result obtained, which can be seen in the following table, where Sig. (2-tailed) is greater than 0.05, indicates that there is no significant difference in relationship satisfaction between married couples who lived together before they married and couples who cohabited with the intention of marrying. Thus, hypothesis 1 is validated.

Table 3 - Testing the significant difference between the variables of the first hypothesis

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	upper
DAS_Diadic_Satisfaction	Equal variances assumed	2.534	.118	.673	50	.504	.773	1.148	-1.532	3.078
	Equal variances not assumed			.641	36.391	.525	.773	1.205	-1.671	3.216

The graph below shows, side by side, the scores obtained at the diadic satisfaction subscale of the subjects found in the two categories, graphically confirming the first hypothesis.

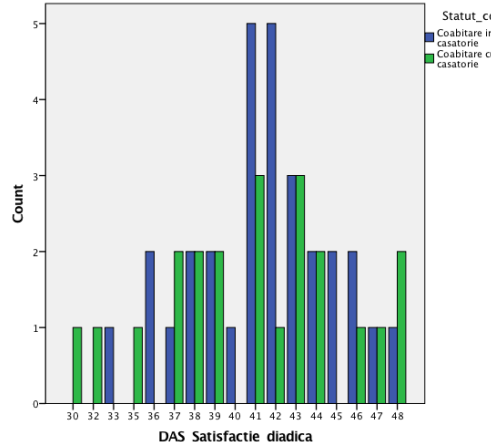


Figure 3 - Chart of scores obtained at the diadic satisfaction subscale of subjects found in the two cohabitation categories

In order to achieve a psychological interpretation of the outcome indicated by the validation of the first hypothesis, research by Brown, Manning and Payne (2017) was consulted. The authors compared the quality of the relationship of cohabiting couples and those who are married. Their results showed that the two groups, namely married couples, who lived together before they married, and cohabiting couples with the intention of marrying, showed no differences in relationship satisfaction.

As cohabitation becomes more prevalent in our society, the line between marriage and living together may begin to fade, making young people more reluctant to recognize a special benefit in terms of the marriage oath. Relationship satisfaction arises from the moment the two make a commitment to each other and have a common purpose and not when they sign a marriage certificate.

The roles of men and women in a family began to change a few decades ago, when women began to enter the labour market, so the man was no longer the only one who provided the necessary financial part for his family, society thus forcing women into marriage. In the case of men, avoiding marriage could relieve them of certain responsibilities and the financial pressure that came with marriage.

With the ever-increasing divorce rate and a changed mentality among young people that marriage does not bring other real benefits, in addition to those brought by the commitment to the relationship, taken when the young people decided to live together, the marriage is seen more as a box to be ticked off when you reach a certain age. Moreover, a marriage certificate is no longer part of the most important goals that people consider necessary for a fulfilled life.

It would seem that for today's young people, the mutual commitment on both sides is sufficient to create a stable partnership, thus also demonstrating the level of responsibility and ownership of the two. Legal marriage brings nothing more in this context, being often carried out under pressure from family and society. The fact that the stigma of those who live together, even though they are not married, is significantly reduced compared to previous generations, people no longer see marriage as a means by which they can experience partnership in two.

In order to conclude and summarise the result obtained by testing the first hypothesis, it would appear that the undertaking between the two partners arose when they agreed to live together and to have a common purpose to achieve in life, the actual signing of the marriage act being only a formality and a tickbox.

*Hypothesis 2: The higher the level of self-esteem, the higher the sense of satisfaction in the relationship will experience.*

To test the fifth hypothesis, the scores obtained by the participants in the "Couple Satisfaction" subscale of the Couple Adaptation Scale or the Dicec Adaptation Scale (DAS) were used, as well as the scores obtained at the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. They were introduced and processed in SPSS Statistics.

Below you can see the table with the starting indices obtained, the average couple satisfaction of the participants is 40.52, and the average score of self-esteem is 30.07.

Table 4 - Start indices of the fifth hypothesis variables

Descriptives			statistical	Std. Error
DAS_Diadic_Satisfaction	Mean		40.52	.551
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	39.42	
		Upper Bound	41.62	
	5% Trimmed Mean		40.59	
	Median		41.00	
	Variance		18.186	
	Std. Deviation		4.265	
	Minimum		30	
	Maximum		48	
	Range		18	
Interquartile Range		6		

	Skewness	-.300	.309
	Kurtosis	-.368	.608
Self-esteem	Mean	30.07	.362
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	29.34
		Upper Bound	30.79
	5% Trimmed Mean	30.06	
	Median	30.00	
	Variance	7.860	
	Std. Deviation	2.804	
	Minimum	25	
	Maximum	36	
	Range	11	
	Interquartile Range	4	
	Skewness	.139	.309
	Kurtosis	-.514	.608

Below you can see the histogram graphic of the scores recorded by participants in the diadic satisfaction subscale of the DAS scale.

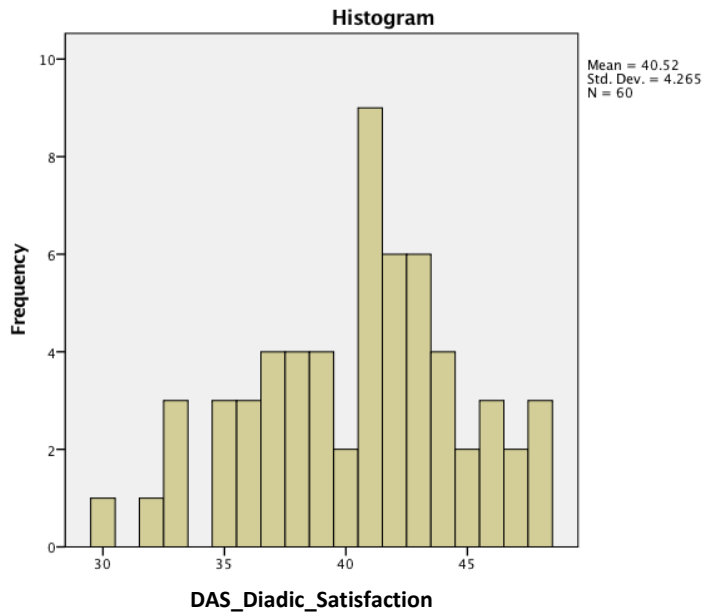


Figure 4- Histogram of diadic satisfaction scores

The histogram below shows the graphical representation of the scores obtained by the research participants at the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.

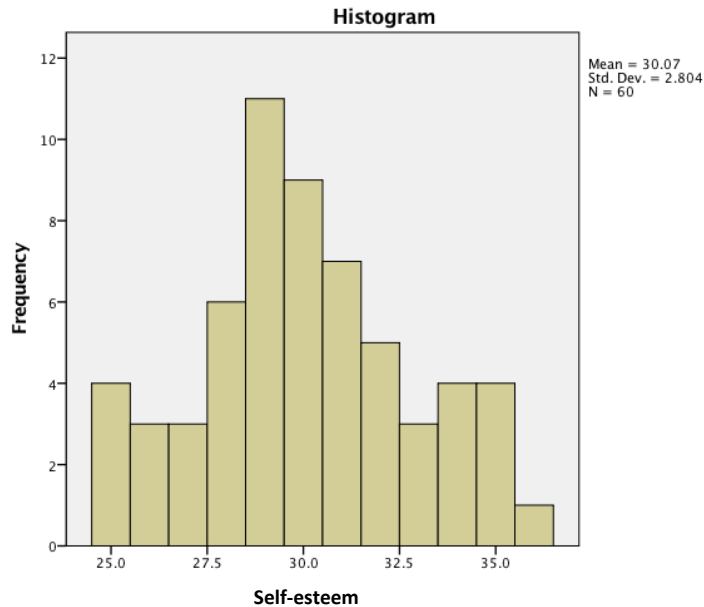


Figure 2 - Histogram of scores obtained at The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

The table below shows the results of the calculation of data normality. Sig. Kolmogorov-Smirnov has a value of less than 0.05 in the case of diadic satisfaction scores, which makes the distribution nonparametric, and a value greater than 0.05 in the case of self-esteem scores, hence that this distribution is parametric. In order to test the fifth hypothesis, since the distribution of the first variable is non-parametric, the Spearsman correlation coefficient between the diadic satisfaction scores and the self-esteem scores recorded by the participants was calculated.

Table 5 - Valuesnormality of the variables of the fifth hypothesis

Tests of Normality						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	statistics	Df	Sig.	statistics	Df	Sig.
DAS_Diadic_Satisfaction	.128	60	.015	.977	60	.317
Self-esteem	.109	60	.071	.968	60	.112

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The result obtained, which can be seen in the following table, where the Spearsman correlation coefficient has a value of 0.412, indicates that there is a significant correlation between dicadic satisfaction and self-esteem. Thus, hypothesis 5 is validated.

Table 6- Spears correlation coefficient between dicadic satisfaction and self-esteem

Correlations				
		DAS_Diadic_Satisfaction		Self-esteem
Sperman's rho	DAS_Diadic_Satisfaction	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.412**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.001

	N	60	60
Self-esteem	Correlation Coefficient	.412**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.
	N	60	60

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The number of points below shows the correlation between the scores obtained at the diadic satisfaction subscale and the scores obtained for self-esteem, graphically confirming the fifth hypothesis.

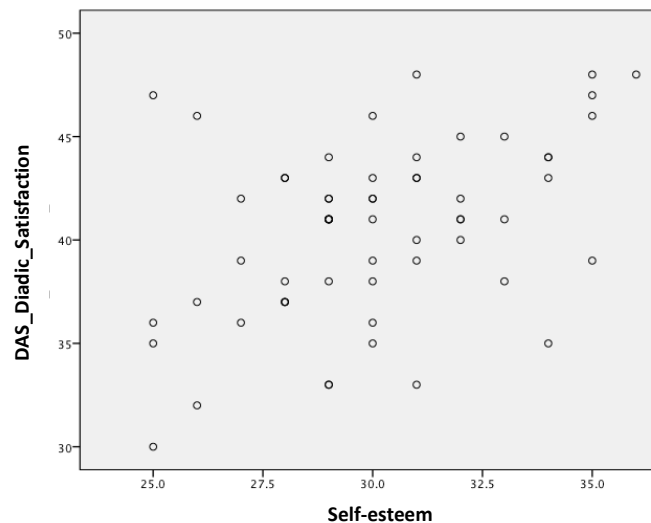


Figure 6- Cloud of points of diadic satisfaction and self-esteem scores

In order to achieve a psychological interpretation of the outcome indicated by the validation of the fifth hypothesis, the research carried out by Robinson and Cameron (2012) was consulted. The authors conducted research on 500 heterosexual couples and concluded that people with high self-esteem and their partners reported greater satisfaction and commitment to their relationships than people with lower self-esteem and partners as well.

A healthy self-esteem means a balanced self-image based on precise facts. When you value yourself and have a healthy self-esteem, you feel secure and deserving. In general, it involves positive relationships with others and confidence in one's own abilities. Self-esteem not only influences how we think about ourselves, but also how much love we are able to receive and how we treat others, especially in intimate relationships.

Self-esteem is a cornerstone for the development of satisfactory relationships, as it allows for a deeper connection with others. The more self-esteem we have, the more whole we feel, because receiving is a natural consequence of giving. This cycle of dedication and reception creates a perfect union.

An important aspect of self-esteem is communication skills. These involve clear, honest, concise and assertive speech, as well as the ability to listen. Communication skills require clear knowledge and communication of needs, desires and feelings, including the ability to set limits. The more intimate the relationship, the more important and difficult the practice of these skills becomes, being one of the reasons why a high self-esteem is necessary for good communication

and a satisfactory relationship.

A person with low self-esteem can become a person who constantly tries to please others, but those with a stable level of self-esteem understand that every partner in a relationship has needs and desires and makes those needs known. To please each other is like a two-way street for people with stable self-esteem.

The higher their self-esteem, the more they perceive their partners, but also their relationships, through pink glasses and are motivated to behave in ways that develop and ensure the success of the partner bond they cherish. The level of self-esteem of both partners is clearly relevant to the success of the intimate relationship.

However, not even a person with high self-esteem can feel happy all the time or have things to disturb them. Sadness is a natural reaction to loss, and fear, longing, anger, are all natural emotions. Being able to accept your own emotions and express them in an appropriate way is an indication of true self-esteem. The same is true of having enough confidence in yourself to be able to open up and relax in a relationship. This can be considered a healthy way to create a bond with another person.

### **Conclusions**

The mentality about the need for marriage is an ever-changing dimension in the context of the current generation. The roles of men and women in a family began to change a few decades ago, when women began to enter the labour market, and as cohabitation became more prevalent in our society, the line between marriage and living together began to fade. Thus, marriage seems to be more and more just a tickbox, which does not significantly change the level of satisfaction in the relationship, which seems to be created when the partners make a commitment to each other and begin to cohabit.

A potential lack of satisfaction in partnership can lead to consequences in other aspects of life and, ultimately, to the destruction of the relationship. For example, workplace performance is strongly influenced by the satisfaction of the romantic relationship. The same applies to health, both physical and mental. Since a lack of sense of satisfaction in the relationship can negatively impact many important aspects of life, it is necessary to understand what are the factors that influence the level of satisfaction in romantic relationships.

Self-esteem, that generalized self-assessment, which influences the person's thinking, states and behavior, also has a significant correlation with the level of satisfaction in the relationship. A healthy self-esteem implies positive relationships with others and confidence in one's own abilities, being one of the cornerstones of a satisfactory relationship. People with a healthy self-esteem understand that every partner in a relationship has needs and desires and makes these needs known, understanding the importance of thanking each other.

They also have good communication skills, which helps them create a deeper connection with each other.

The way in which couples manage or fail to meet each other's needs is very important for the two to acquire the feeling that their partner is really concerned about his well-being. A person needs to receive more than benefits from their partner in order to get the feeling of intimacy. Everyone needs to believe that the relationship partner understands, validates and ultimately takes care of and respects him.

These perceptions emerge from things such as the partner's proper response to their own declarations of needs, self-disclosure and emotional expression, by listening carefully, responding

with understanding and acceptance, and ultimately being effectively helpful.

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