

Research Paper

The Effect of Conflict Resolution Styles, Individual Protective Factors and Humor on Relationship Satisfaction of Heterosexual Romantic Couples

Akula Bisht^{1*}, Dr. Kaushlendra Mani Tripathi²

ABSTRACT

The study aims to examine the influence of conflict resolution styles, individual protective factors, and humor on relationship satisfaction in heterosexual romantic couples. A diverse sample of 206 participants, ranging in age from 18 to 61 years, with various demographic backgrounds, was included in the study. The Conflict Resolution Style Inventory (CRSI), Individual Protective Factor Index (IPFI), Coping Humor Scale (CHS), and Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) were employed for data collection. The results indicated a significant relationship between conflict resolution styles and relationship satisfaction. Specifically, conflict engagement was found to negatively impact relationship satisfaction, while problem-solving skills were associated with lower relationship satisfaction. Individual protective factors (self-control and cooperation) and humor did not show a significant relationship with relationship satisfaction. These findings emphasize the importance of effective conflict resolution styles in promoting relationship satisfaction in heterosexual romantic couples. Minimizing conflict engagement. The study also highlights the differences in conflict resolution strategies between different biological sexes, and unmarried and married individuals. Further research is recommended to explore additional factors that may influence relationship satisfaction and to investigate these dynamics in different cultural contexts and diverse populations.

Keywords: *Resolution Styles, Individual Protective Factors, Humor on Relationship Satisfaction, Heterosexual Romantic Couples*

All romantic relationships go through highs and lows and conflict is an inevitable part of the relationship, be it due to differences, misunderstandings, lack of communication, expectations etc. Romantic relationships refer to those characterised by feelings of love and attraction for another person, in this study it primarily focuses on those feelings for a partner of the opposite sex. Romantic relationships are defined as ones in which there are strong sentiments of love and attraction for the other party; in this study, the emphasis is focused on such feelings for a partner who is the other sex. Romantic love frequently entails sentiments of infatuation, intimacy, and dedication.

¹M.A. Counselling Psychology

²Assistant Professor, AIPS

*Corresponding Author

Received: August 17, 2023; Revision Received: September 26, 2023; Accepted: September 29, 2023

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Any type of disagreement, struggle, or tense argument between two people in a relationship is referred to as a conflict in that relationship. It frequently involves a dispute or ongoing conflicts over a persistent topic, such as who is responsible for doing the dishes or how to spend money. Relationship conflicts can be extremely stressful, but they don't always have to end badly.

An individual's conflict style, which is a behavioural orientation on how to approach and handle conflict, reflects the set of guiding principles they choose to use to guide them through the conflict resolution process. Unresolved conflict in relationships has been linked, according to Whisman and Uebelacker (2006), to lower work performance, pain and anxiety, poorer mental and physical health, and an increased risk of suicide thoughts.

Types of Conflict Resolution Styles

The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument has listed the five modes: (1974).

Competing scores well on the assertiveness metric but poorly on the cooperation metric. Someone pursues their own interests at the expense of others. Low on the assertiveness scale, **accommodating** is high on the cooperativeness scale. This approach to addressing conflict involves selflessness and submitting to the viewpoint of the other party. On both the assertiveness and cooperativeness dimensions, **avoiding** is low. It implies having little regard for both oneself and other people. It is linked to situations of disengagement, blaming others, and sidestepping. It involves keeping disagreements to oneself or avoiding the conflict totally.

Collaborating scores well on both the assertiveness and cooperativeness dimensions. The integrating person is concerned with collaboration between parties to arrive at a solution acceptable to both, even if it necessitates delving into a problem to locate the people's underlying problems and to create an alternative which meets both sets of concerns. Both aggressiveness and cooperativeness are mild when **compromising**. It is often related to finding a middle ground or coming up with a partial solution that appeases both parties.

Humor and Conflict

Humour is a term used to describe any form of communication (joke, witticism, pun, etc.) that makes others laugh or smile. According to Ziv (1984) and Morreall (1991), humour is used to cope, reframe, celebrate, communicate ambiguity, and vent hostility. For instance, the **coping mechanism** of humour enables individuals to psychologically distance themselves from their current circumstance. Making light of the problem helps people deal, which is maybe related to the avoidance conflict resolution method. Humour can also be used to **reframe** a situation.

Rationale

The present research is conducted with the aim of studying the effect of conflict resolution styles, individual protective factors and humour on relationship satisfaction of heterosexual romantic couples. A harmonious relationship positively affects the couples lives in many ways, especially with regard to their physical and mental health. In contrast, a discordant relationship negatively affects both partners' lives in many ways. The quality and happiness of the relationship, as well as how those qualities evolve, have been shown to be significantly impacted by conflict behaviour (Askari et al. 2012; Gottman 2014; Kurdek 1995; Schneewind and Gerhard 2002; Segrin et al. 2009). Therefore, this study aims to

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investigate what conflict resolution strategies work for couples and its impact on the relationship quality. Furthermore, the influence of individual protective factors like cooperation and self-control as well as the role of humour as a strategy for diffusing conflict and its impact on the relationship satisfaction of couples is also studied. The study also addresses educational differences, differences in the biological sex of the individual and the years of being together in the relationship in relation to an individual's conflict resolution style.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Tsai, M. N., Cheng, Y. C., & Chen, H. C. (2023) conducted a research on humor styles and marital satisfaction. "Aggressive husband and self-defeating wife," "humour denier husband and general humour wife," "general humour husband and humour denier wife," and "humour denier couples" were the five humour types identified by the results for the couples. According to the ANCOVA results, couples with positive humour report the highest levels of marital happiness, while those with denier humour report the lowest levels. This study shows the several sorts of humour that are probably present in relationships and comes to the conclusion that when both partners utilise humour, marriage satisfaction is higher than when neither partner does.

Işık, R. A., & Kaya, Y. (2022) during the COVID-19 quarantine, conducted a study on the connections between perceived stress, conflict resolution techniques, spousal support, and marital satisfaction. Improved marital happiness was associated with reduced perceived stress, a lower negative conflict resolution style, more spousal support, and a higher positive resolution style. Increased spousal support and more constructive conflict resolution techniques were strongly connected with increased marital contentment. Marital discontent is a result of stress, a bad conflict-resolution style, and a lack of spousal support during the COVID-19 quarantine.

Brahnam, S. et al., (2005) conducted a study on the classification of conflict resolution depending on gender. It was discovered that men are more prone to avoid conflict than women are to employ a collaborative conflict resolution strategy. The study found that women use conflict resolution techniques that are more successful than those used by men.

METHODOLOGY

Aim: Study the effect of Conflict resolution styles, individual protective factors and humour on relationship satisfaction of heterosexual romantic couples.

Objective

- To study the relationship between conflict resolution style and relationship satisfaction of heterosexual romantic couples.
- To study the influence of different conflict resolutions styles on relationship satisfaction
- To study the role of individual protective factors in conflict resolution
- To study the influence of humour on relationship satisfaction as a conflict resolution strategy

Hypothesis

- There is a significant relationship between conflict resolution style and relationship satisfaction.

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- There is a significant relationship between biological sex differences in conflict resolution styles.
- There is a significant relationship of Education on conflict resolution strategies.
- There is a significant relationship in conflict resolution strategies between Married and unmarried couples.
- There is a significant relationship between the years of being together and the conflict resolution strategies.
- There is a significant relationship between individual protective factors and relationship satisfaction.
- There is a significant relationship between humor and relationship satisfaction.

Sample

Non-probability techniques namely purposive sampling and snowballing was used for heterosexual couples (married and unmarried) who were 18 years and above. The sample included a diverse population of 206 (120 female and 86 male) participants from 18- 61 years of age, various ethnic groups, a wide range of socioeconomic and educational backgrounds. The sample included couples who had recently got together to those who had been together for more than 30 years. The sample consisted of 110 unmarried individuals and 96 married individuals. The exclusion criteria consisted of LGBTQ+ couples and those who were below 18 years of age. A quantitative correlational research design was used to study the relationship between conflict resolution styles, individual protective factors, humor and relationship satisfaction.

Variables

Independent variable: Conflict resolution style, Individual protective factors, humour

Dependent variable: Relationship satisfaction

INSTRUMENTS

The Conflict Resolution Style Inventory (CRSI)

The CRSI for Couples was developed by Kurdek in 1994. The CRSI evaluates four distinct conflict resolution strategies—conflict engagement, positive problem-solving, self-protection, and acceptance—each with four items on a 5-point Likert scale

S. no.	Conflict resolution style	Items
1.	Conflict	1,5,9,13
2.	Problem solving	2,6,10,14
3.	Self-protection	3,7,11,15
4.	Acceptance	4,8,12,16

Reliability and validity: The conflict engagement subscale showed a Cronbach's alpha of.77 in the current study, compared to the positive problem-solving dimension's alpha of.75. The alpha values for the withdrawal and compliance aspects were.61 and.53, respectively.

Individual Protective Factors Index (IPFI)

The IPFI is a self-report measure of individual protective factors linked to effective conflict resolution. In order to evaluate skills—self-control, cooperation,—Phillips and Springer (1992) devised the test.

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Scoring: The four-point Likert scale, with 1 being the most accurate and 5 being the least trustworthy, is used to score the 12 items that make up the IPFI. Scores that are higher imply the presence of more personal protective factors. A final score is produced by adding the things together. The components of collaboration are encoded in reverse.

Reliability and validity: The IPFI has a Cronbach's alpha of .85, which indicates strong internal consistency. The test-retest reliability shows a correlation of .75 over the course of two weeks.

Coping Humor Scale (CHS)

The CHS is a seven-item self-report survey used to gauge how often people say they use humour to deal with stress. Seven items on the CHS are graded from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 4 (Strongly Disagree) on a 4-point Likert scale. Items 1 and 4 are scored differently.

Reliability and validity: Cronbach's alpha, a measure of internal consistency, ranges from 0.60 to 0.70.

The Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS)

The RAS is a simple 7-item self-report survey intended to gauge relationship satisfaction. A 5-point Likert scale is used to score items, with 1 denoting "low satisfaction" and 5 denoting "high satisfaction." The scores for items 4 and 7 are reversed.

Reliability and validity: Marriage adjustment inventory and the first iteration of this scale were found to have a moderate correlation ($r=0.48$). The current version's internal consistency is excellent ($=0.86$) and best modelled by a single component.

Procedure

206 participants were sampled through purposive and snowballing sampling techniques. The sample consisted of 120 female and 86 male participants falling between the age group of 18-61 years of age. An online google form consisting of the instructions and four scales; namely- Conflict Resolution style Inventory (CSRI), Individual Protective Factor Index (IPFI), Coping Humour Scale (CHS) and Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) was sent out through forms. Clear instructions about maintaining confidentiality and the aim of the study were explained. A rapport was built with the participant where they were made to feel comfortable and their doubts regarding the study were cleared. The consent of the participant was taken before filling in the questionnaire. The data was collected on Ms Excel, and the statistical analysis was done using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). The scores were then interpreted.

RESULT AND INTERPRETATION

In the initial phase of data analyses the comparability of data was checked on required statistical criteria and the data was found suitable to perform the parametric statistics. **Section-I** deals with the descriptive statistics of all the variables used in the study. **Section-II** covers correlation and regression part of the data and it provides the vital information regarding the direction of relationship among variables. **Section- III** of this chapter further explores and establishes the relationship and their meaning among the variable by applying multiple regression and independent t test, this section also explores that how the different variables of the study are affecting each other and how the effects may be quantified.

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Results

Section-I

The study has attempted to explore the effect of conflict resolution styles, individual protective factors and humour on relationship satisfaction of heterosexual romantic couples. In the following table mean and SD of these variables are reported for a sample size of 206.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

Variable	Mean	SD
Conflict Engagement	8.21	2.87
Problem Solving	14.50	2.79
Acceptance	10.13	2.77
Self-Protection	8.75	2.91
Self-Control	18.80	3.22
Cooperation	21.88	2.47
Humour	19.41	3.67
Relationship Satisfaction	30.16	4.66

Conflict Engagement: On average, participants in the study scored 8.21 out of 10 in their level of engagement during conflicts. This means that they were somewhat involved in conflicts. *Problem solving:* The average score for problem solving skills was 14.50 out of 20. This suggests that participants were moderately skilled in finding solutions to problems. *Acceptance:* The mean score for acceptance was 10.131 out of 20. This indicates a moderate level of acceptance towards different situations or people. *Self-protection:* Participants on average, scored 8.75 out of 10 in terms of self-protection. This suggests that the sample has a tendency to prioritize their own safety and well-being. *Self-control:* The average score for self-control is 18.80 out of 25. This indicates that participants have a relatively good control over their actions and emotions. *Cooperation:* On average, participants scored 21.88 out of 25 in terms of cooperation. This suggests a high level of willingness to work together and collaborate with others. The mean score for *humor* is 19.41 out of 30. This indicates that participants generally used humor for coping and considered it important and enjoyable in their lives. The average score for *relationship satisfaction* is 30.16 out of 40, suggesting that on average, the participants reported a relatively high level of satisfaction in their relationships.

Section-II

The correlation and regression tables provide vital information regarding the direction of relationship among variables.

Table 2: Correlation

	CE	PB	SP	A
Relationship Status	-.226**	-.086	-.088	.026
	(p = .001)	(p = .220)	(p = .209)	(p = .710)

N = 206. ** p < .01.

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The Pearson correlation coefficient between Conflict engagement (CE) and relationship status is -0.226. This indicates a negative correlation between the two variables. The correlation is statistically significant at a significance level of 0.001 ($p= 0.001$), meaning that the observed correlation is unlikely to have occurred by chance. The correlation between Problem Solving (PS) and relationship status is -0.086. This indicates a weak negative correlation between the two variables and the correlation is not statistically significant ($p= 0.220$) indicating that the correlation could have occurred by chance. The correlation coefficient between Self-protection (SP) and relationship status is -0.088. This indicates a weak negative correlation between the two variables and the correlation is not statistically significant ($p= 0.209$) indicating that the correlation could have occurred by chance. The correlation between Acceptance (A) and relationship status is 0.026. This indicates a weak positive correlation between the two variables and the correlation is not statistically significant ($p= 0.710$) indicating that the correlation could have occurred by chance. In summary, there is a negative correlation between Conflict Engagement and relationship status, indicating that higher levels of conflict engagement as a conflict resolution style is associated with lower relationship satisfaction. However, there are no significant correlations between problem solving, self-protection, acceptance and relationship status.

Table 3: Coefficients for CRSI

Regression Analysis for CRSI Predicting Relationship Satisfaction

Variable	B	SeB	β	Sig.
Conflict engagement	-.316	.127	-.195	.014
Problem Solving	-.269	.116	-.161	.022
Acceptance	.035	.122	.021	.776
Self-Protection	.081	.130	.051	.531
Self-Control	.034	.102	.024	.736
Cooperation	.022	.133	.011	.871
Humour	-7.382E-005	.089	.000	.999

Dependent Variable: Relationship satisfaction

B = Unstandardized coefficient. SeB = Standard error of the coefficient.

β = Standardized coefficient. Sig. = Significance level.

The coefficient for conflict engagement is -0.316. This relationship is statistically significant ($p<0.05$), indicating that conflict engagement has a negative impact on relationship satisfaction. The coefficient for problem solving is -0.269. This relationship is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), suggesting that better problem-solving skills are associated with lower relationship satisfaction. The coefficient for acceptance is 0.035, self-protection is 0.081. Self-control is 0.034, cooperation is 0.022 and humor is -7.382 respectively. All these variables indicate no statistically significant ($p > 0.05$) relationship with relationship satisfaction. In summary, the table suggests that higher levels of conflict engagement and lower problem-solving skills are associated with lower relationship satisfaction. However, acceptance, self-protection, self-control, cooperation and humor do not show significant associations with relationship satisfaction in this study.

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Table 4: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	230.954	4	57.739	2.738	.030 ^b
Regression					
Residual	4238.075	201	21.085		
Total	4469.029	205			

Dependent variable: Relationship satisfaction

Predictors: (Constant), Conflict engagement, Problem solving, Acceptance and Self-protection

The ANOVA table provides information about the variance in relationship satisfaction that can be explained by the predictors (conflict engagement, problem solving, acceptance and self-protection) and the remaining unexplained variance. The regression for the predictors explains a significant portion of the variance in relationship satisfaction (230.954 out of 4469.029). The remaining variance (4238.075) is unexplained and could be due to other factors not included in the model or random variation.

Section-III

The following section further explores and establishes the relationship and meaning among the variables by applying multiple regression and independent t tests. This section also explores how different variables of the study namely marital status, duration of the relationship, educational qualifications and the biological sex of the individual affect the use of conflict resolution styles.

Table 5: Independent t test for biological sex and CRSI

CRS	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.	Mean Diff	SD
CE	3.965	.048	-1.61	204	.109	-.651	.405
PS	1.421	.235	.130	204	.896	.052	.39
SP	.034	.854	-2.11	204	.035	-.864	.408
A	.490	.485	-1.20	204	.228	-.47	.39

N = 206. Values in parentheses represent p-values.

The sample consisted of a total of 206 participants, out of which 120 identified as females and 86 as males. The t-test for equality of means reveals a significant difference in Self-Protection scores between different biological sexes ($p < 0.05$). It is found that males use self-protection as a conflict resolution strategy more than females. The sample sizes for this analysis vary but range up to 204. Whereas, there is no statistically significant difference between biological sexes with conflict engagement, problem solving and acceptance. The results indicate that there is no significant relationship between the educational qualifications of an individual (12th, UG, PG and PHD) and the conflict resolution styles they use.

Table 6: CRSI and Married and Unmarried couples

CRS	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.	Mean Diff	SD
CE	4.59	.033	3.308	204	.001	1.297	.392
PS	2.22	.138	1.229	204	.220	.479	.389

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SP	.068	.795	1.261	204	.209	.512	.406
A	.598	.440	-.372	204	.710	-.144	.388

N = 206. Values in parentheses represent p-values.

The sample included 206 participants out of which 110 were unmarried individuals and 96 married individuals. The results of the table show that there is a significant difference in variance between the two groups (unmarried and married individuals) for Conflict engagement ($p = 0.033$ and $t = 3.308$). The results indicate that unmarried couples are more likely to engage in conflict engagement as compared to married couples. There is however, no significant difference for Acceptance, problem solving and self-protection in relation to the marital status of the individual. The results indicate that there is a significant difference in conflict resolution styles of unmarried and married couples.

The results indicate that there is no significant relationship between the years of being together in the relationship for couples (>1 year, 1-5 years, 5-10 years and 10+ years) and the conflict resolution styles they use. No significant relationship between the Individual protective factors (i.e., self-control and cooperation) and relationship satisfaction. The results show that there is no significant relationship between humor and relationship satisfaction.

DISCUSSION

The present research studies the effect of Conflict resolution styles, individual protective factors and humour on relationship satisfaction of heterosexual romantic couples. The sample included a diverse population of 206 (120 female and 86 male) participants from 18-61 years of age, various ethnic groups, a wide range of socioeconomic and educational backgrounds. The sample included couples who had recently got together to those who had been together for more than 30 years out of which 110 were unmarried individuals and 96 married individuals. The exclusion criteria consisted of LGBTQ+ couples and those who were below 18 years of age. A quantitative correlational research design was used to study the relationship between conflict resolution styles, individual protective factors, humor and relationship satisfaction. The Conflict resolution styles Inventory (CSRI) measured included: conflict engagement, problem-solving, self-protection, and acceptance. The Individual protective factor index (IPFI) specifically measured self-control and cooperation. The coping humor scale (CHS) and Relationship assessment scale (RAS) were used for the study.

The first hypothesis stated that there is a significant relationship between conflict resolution style and relationship satisfaction. *The Conflict Resolution Style Inventory* for Couples (CRSI; Kurdek 1994; German version by Herzberg and Sierau 2010) was used for measuring four distinct coping strategies—conflict engagement, problem-solving, self-protection, and acceptance—each with four items. Participants were asked to rate how frequently they exhibit each behaviour when they have a conflict with their partner on a 5-point Likert scale (1 being never, 5 being always).

Conflict engagement defines actions taken during conflicts that show hostility towards the partner and may be a sign of the unrestrained outpouring of negative feelings. On average, participants in the study scored 8.21 out of 10 in their level of engagement during conflicts. This means that they were somewhat involved in conflicts. The Pearson correlation coefficient between Conflict engagement and relationship status is -0.226 . This indicates a

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negative correlation between the two variables. The correlation is statistically significant at a significance level of 0.001 ($p = 0.001$). The coefficient for conflict engagement is -0.316. This relationship is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), indicating that conflict engagement has a negative impact on relationship satisfaction. There is however, no significant relationship between educational qualifications, biological sex of the individual and duration the relationship with conflict engagement as a strategy for resolving conflict.

The t test table shows that there is a significant difference in variance between the two groups (unmarried and married individuals) for Conflict engagement ($p = 0.033$ and $t = 3.308$). The results indicate that unmarried couples are more likely to engage in conflict engagement as compared to married couples. Hence, *hypothesis 4 is accepted*. Işık, R. A., & Kaya, Y. (2022) found that increased spousal support and more constructive conflict resolution techniques were strongly connected with increased marital contentment. Marital discontent is a result of stress, a bad conflict-resolution style, and a lack of spousal support during the COVID-19 quarantine.

Problem solving describes a propensity to use compromise when resolving a conflict with a spouse. The skill of negotiation is frequently used in constructive conflict resolution to meet the interests and desires of all parties. The average score for problem solving skills was 14.50 out of 20. This suggests that participants were moderately skilled in finding solutions to problems. The Pearson correlation coefficient between Problem Solving and relationship status is -0.086. This indicates a weak negative correlation between the two variables and the correlation is not statistically significant ($p = 0.220$) indicating that the correlation could have occurred by chance. The coefficient for problem solving is -0.269. This relationship is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), suggesting that better problem-solving skills are associated with lower relationship satisfaction. These results are contrary to the research studies in this area. This may be due to the fact that there is no specific age criteria for the study, and across age groups couples may have different concerns and may use different conflict resolution styles. No significant relationship was found between educational qualifications, sex of the individual, duration of the relationship and marital status on problem solving as a strategy for resolving conflict.

Self-protection comprises actions that aid a person in removing themselves from a difficult argument with a partner. To maintain homeostasis in a relationship, this tactic may entail tuning out one's partner. Participants on average, scored 8.75 out of 10 in terms of self-protection. This suggests that the sample has a tendency to prioritize their own safety and well-being. The Pearson correlation coefficient between Self-protection and relationship status is -0.088. This indicates a weak negative correlation between the two variables and the correlation is not statistically significant ($p = 0.209$) indicating that the correlation could have occurred by chance. The coefficient for self-protection is 0.081. This indicates no statistically significant ($p > 0.05$) relationship with relationship satisfaction.

The t-test for equality of means reveals a significant difference in Self- Protection scores between different biological sexes ($p < 0.05$). It is found that males use self-protection as a conflict resolution strategy more than females. Brahnam, S. et al., (2005) discovered that men are more prone to avoid conflict than women are to employ a collaborative conflict resolution strategy. The study found that women use conflict resolution techniques that are more successful than those used by men. The sample sizes for this analysis vary but range up to 204. The results indicate that there is a statistical difference in the conflict resolution

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styles of different biological sexes. Therefore, *hypothesis 2 is accepted*. Courtain, A., & Glowacz, F. (2019). Found sex differences and developmental advancements in a number of areas of resolving conflicts in romantic relationships. The results demonstrated that some impulsive traits and one dimension of empathy hinder the application of constructive conflict resolution techniques, but certain empathetic traits and verbal abilities enhance it. The tendency towards perspective-taking promoted the employment of constructive conflict resolution techniques, and this link was shared by both sexes. There is however, no significant relationship between educational qualifications, duration of being together in the relationship and marital status on self-protection as a strategy for resolving conflict.

Acceptance explains the propensity to act in ways that advance one's partners' positions during conflicts. This tactic enables the resolution of the conflict, frequently leading to the adoption of the partner's preferred resolution. The mean score for acceptance was 10.131 out of 20. This indicates a moderate level of acceptance towards different situations or people. The Pearson correlation coefficient between Acceptance and relationship status is 0.026. This indicates a weak positive correlation between the two variables and the correlation is not statistically significant ($p = 0.710$) indicating that the correlation could have occurred by chance. The coefficient for acceptance is 0.035. This indicates that there is no statistically significant ($p > 0.05$) relationship with relationship satisfaction. No significant relationship was found between educational qualifications, biological sex of the individual, duration of the relationship and marital status on acceptance as a strategy for resolving conflict.

The ANOVA table provides information about the variance in relationship satisfaction that can be explained by the predictors (conflict engagement, problem solving, acceptance and self-protection) and the remaining unexplained variance. The regression for the predictors explains a significant portion of the variance in relationship satisfaction (230.954 out of 4469.029). The remaining variance (4238.075) is unexplained and could be due to other factors not included in the model or random variation. The model summary table suggests that a combination of Conflict engagement, problem solving, self-protection and acceptance accounts for a portion of 3.3% of the variance in relationship satisfaction. In summary the results indicate a significant relationship between conflict resolution styles and relationship satisfaction specifically for conflict engagement and problem solving. Therefore, *hypothesis 1 is accepted*.

The Individual Protective Factors Index (IPFI) is a self-report measure of individual protective factors linked to effective conflict resolution. The average score for *self-control* is 18.80 out of 25. This indicates that participants have a relatively good control over their actions and emotions. On average, participants scored 21.88 out of 25 in terms of *cooperation*. This suggests a high level of willingness to work together and collaborate with others. However, it was found that there is no statistically significant relationship between Individual protective factors and relationship satisfaction. Therefore, *hypothesis 6 is rejected*.

The Coping Humor Scale (CHS) is a seven-item self-report survey used to gauge how often people say they use humour to deal with stress. The mean score for *humor* is 19.41 out of 30. This indicates that participants generally used humor for coping and considered it important and enjoyable in their lives. Caird, S. M. (2015). Found that relationship satisfaction was higher when the partner's affiliative humour was self-reported and perceived, but it was worse when the partner's hostile humour was perceived. Affiliative

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humour was a greater predictor of relationship satisfaction than hostile humour. Playfulness in romantic relationships was linked to a higher everyday utilisation of affiliative humour. Finally, relationships between affiliative humour (both self-reported and perceived partner) and relationship satisfaction were mediated by intimacy and good mood.

However, the study found no statistically significant relationship between humor and relationship satisfaction. Therefore, *hypothesis 7 is rejected*.

The Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) is a simple 7-item self-report survey intended to gauge relationship satisfaction. The average score for *relationship satisfaction* is 30.16 out of 40, suggesting that on average, the participants reported a relatively high level of satisfaction in their relationships. It was found that there is a statistically significant relationship between conflict resolution styles and relationship satisfaction, therefore, *hypothesis 1 is accepted*. There is however no significant relationship between individual protective factors and humor on relationship satisfaction. Therefore, *hypothesis 6 & 7 are rejected*.

No significant relationship was found between educational qualifications and conflict resolution styles. Hence, *hypothesis 3 is rejected*. No statistically significant relationship was found between the duration of being in a relationship and conflict resolution strategies. Therefore, *hypothesis 5 is rejected*.

In summary, the study revealed that conflict resolution styles, particularly conflict engagement and problem-solving, were significantly related to relationship satisfaction in heterosexual romantic couples. However, individual protective factors and humor did not show significant relationships with relationship satisfaction. The findings contribute to our understanding of the dynamics between conflict resolution styles and relationship outcomes in romantic relationships.

Limitation and Recommendation

Firstly, the study was conducted using standardized questionnaires, which may have limited the depth of the data collected. The social desirability bias that affects self-reported metrics has the potential to skew the results. Incorporating different sources of data gathering, such as objective and self-report measures, may be considered for future investigations. Second, because the questions were in English, only literate English-speaking people could participate. Forms in various regional languages may also be included in future studies so that the samples are more diverse. Thirdly, the study failed to account for factors that might have influenced the association between the components, such as age, socioeconomic level, and the length of the couples' relationships. Future research might take these factors under control or look at their possible impacts. Fourth, the sample includes both married and unmarried couples. Since there are differences in the conflicts between these two groups due to other factors like household duties, caring for their children, the legality of their relationship, etc., future studies may consider focusing on particular groups for a more in-depth analysis of how couples resolve their conflicts and its impact on their relationship. Larger sample numbers may also improve the generalizability, reliability, and diversity of the results in subsequent investigations.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the study is to better understand the effect of conflict resolution styles, individual protective factors and humor on relationship satisfaction of heterosexual romantic couples. It seeks to find out which conflict-resolution strategies are effective for relationships and how they affect relationship quality. Assessing whether factors such as gender, education, marital status and the duration of the relationship has an impact on the relationship's satisfaction and conflict resolution strategies. The study included a diverse sample of 206 participants ranging in age from 18 to 61 years, with various ethnic groups, socioeconomic backgrounds, and educational qualifications. The Conflict Resolution Style Inventory (CRSI), Individual Protective Factor Index (IPFI), Coping Humor Scale (CHS), and Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) were utilized for data collection. The findings revealed a significant relationship between conflict resolution styles and relationship satisfaction, supporting the first hypothesis. Specifically, conflict engagement was negatively associated with relationship satisfaction, indicating that higher levels of hostility and unrestrained negative emotions during conflicts can hinder the resolution of underlying issues. On the other hand, problem-solving skills were found to have a negative impact on relationship satisfaction, suggesting that better problem-solving abilities were associated with lower relationship satisfaction. Furthermore, the results demonstrated that unmarried couples were more likely to engage in conflict engagement compared to married couples, supporting hypothesis four. Males were more likely to use self-protection as a conflict resolution style as compared to females. However, no significant relationships were found between conflict resolution strategies and educational qualifications, or duration of the relationship. In terms of individual protective factors, no significant relationship was observed between self-control, cooperation, and relationship satisfaction. Similarly, the analysis did not find a significant relationship between humor and relationship satisfaction.

Overall, the study highlights the importance of conflict resolution styles in influencing relationship satisfaction in heterosexual romantic couples. It suggests that minimizing conflict engagement and developing effective problem-solving skills can contribute to greater relationship satisfaction. The findings also underline the differences in conflict resolution strategies between unmarried and married individuals.

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Acknowledgment

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Bisht, A. & Tripathi, K.M. (2023). The Effect of Conflict Resolution Styles, Individual Protective Factors and Humor on Relationship Satisfaction of Heterosexual Romantic Couples. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 11(3), 4168-4183. DIP: 18.01.388.20231103, DOI:10.25215/1103.388