

Relationship Assessment And Couple Conflicts Due To Cell Phone Use

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Abstract

The study focused on explaining the association between relationship appraisal and couple conflicts due to cell phone use, considering a sample of 325 couples between 18 and 65 years of age. For this purpose, the Relationship Appraisal Scale (RAS) and the scale of conflicts related to cell phone use were administered. The study was framed within the basic research paradigm, with a non-experimental, correlational and cross-sectional design. It was obtained as a result that the valuation of the relationship is negatively, moderately and significantly associated ($r_s = -.456$, $p < .05$) with couple conflicts due to cell phone use. It was evidenced that couples perceive a positive and negative valuation for the use of the cell phone; that is, the valuation of the relationship and the use of the cell phone would generate conflicts and benefits in the couples. The inappropriate or appropriate use of mobile devices could have effects on the relationship between couples. In this sense, it can be concluded that the good use of the cell phone can help satisfaction, efficient communication and maintain a permanent bond through the various applications between couples. On the other hand, inappropriate use can generate problems, conflicts of interest, low satisfaction, disinterest and even separations. The cell phone, as a mobile device, could help in the valuation of the relationship or generate conflicts in the couple depending on its use.

Keywords: Relationship Appraisal, Couple Conflicts, Couple Benefits, Cell Phone Use.

I. INTRODUCTION

Couple communication is an important element within the marital relationship. Without communication, it is not possible to achieve a healthy interaction as a couple; therefore, the lack of it can cause hindrance, harm their coexistence and even generate marital dissatisfaction. In this sense, the knowledge of communication styles and the positive attitudes that accompany the messages emitted as a couple are of vital importance. Therefore, there are couples that have a positive and healthy relationship because they have found a way of verbal and nonverbal interaction. (González et al., 2018). Such interactions are accompanied by mutual respect

and commitment. (Pacheco et al., 2009; Vásquez y Miranda, 2022).

However, couple communication is not exempt from the technological context. Communication through cellular devices has facilitated and increased sentimental and interpersonal relationships. Couples, in their form of communication, have cell phones; that is, communication has been strengthened through mobile devices used for interpersonal and couple communication. This has led many couples to prefer internet services in romantic relationships. In addition, the various applications used are highlighted (Alvídrez y Rojas, 2017).

Nowadays, the use of mobile devices has impact on the relationship of couples. Such impact of use could be positive or negative. Its excessive use can be counterproductive and become negative if it is not properly controlled. Communication by mobile means can be counterproductive to the satisfaction of the relationship or can be a generator of conflicts and even induce violence in the case of abusive and compulsive use of the mobile device. This can be avoided if there is moderation in its use and, on the contrary, it can be very useful to strengthen marital or couple satisfaction. (Veranes et al., 2021).

In the relationship of couples, it is becoming common to hear about Phubbing, an acronym for the words "phone" and "snubbing". A condition that occurs during the process of conversation with someone and is interrupted by a phone call. It has been evidenced that 70% of respondent's state that their conversation with their partner is interrupted by a cell phone call. Highlighting that Phubbing has a significant effect on couple conflicts. (Roberts y David, 2016).

Likewise, it has been pointed out that the excessive use of cell phones causes conflicts in couples as it interrupts moments of intimacy and romantic spaces (Cedeño y Vera, 2021) In other words, moments of greater intimacy as a couple, such as dinners and conversations, are interrupted by the use of cell phones. It could be pointed out that couple communications are affected by the use of cell phones even though they are emotionally connected. (Vitz y Kamorina, 2014). This leads to affirm that the use of cell phones affects the emotional connection of couples in a negative way. (McDaniel y Coyne, 2016).

When observing the satisfaction index for cell phone use according to gender, studies show that men express greater satisfaction using the cell phone. On the other hand, women perceived less satisfaction because they are the ones who think, feel, listen, understand, show availability and affection; that is, in a couple relationship, men feel more valued for using the cell phone than women do. (García Rubio, 2021).

It should be specified that the appraisal of the couple relationship can be conceived in an intrinsic, subjective or global way. Intrinsically, one could say that it is a favorable or unfavorable disposition towards the couple's

relationship. (Hendrick, 1988). Subjectively, we can point out that there is a valuation of the subject to the extent that there is marital satisfaction, understood as the description of certain attitudes, evaluations or feelings of happiness or unhappiness, and/or unsatisfactory and satisfactory. (Boland y Follingstad, 1987). Globally, it could be pointed out that it involves elements such as socioeconomic elements, compatibility with the partner, adaptation to the functions and roles in the dyadic system. (Chadwick et al., 1976).

The investigation of marital couple relationships helps in the understanding of family functioning because, within the family, the development of children is carried out in emotional balance or instability; especially because many conflicts experienced in the couple relationship have a constructive or disturbing impact on family dynamics. (Abad y Fernández-Díaz, 2011). In this sense, marital satisfaction leaves sequels in the children in terms of their adaptation and psychological development. It generates in them a better affectivity and a style of upbringing. (Ochoa et al., 2006).

The valuation of the couple's relationship is expressed in the affection, intimacy and mutual support they provide each other. In this sense, valuation would come to be the emotional state that a person expresses by feeling pleased by the experiences, interactions and projections shown (Li et al., 2022; García Rubio, 2021). The valuation of the couple relationship, apart from the love professed, goes through satisfaction and conflict resolution. Satisfaction in the couple is a product of the balance where positive and negative aspects of coexistence converge. In cohabitation, love, satisfaction of needs, communication, individual well-being and the happiness of the couple are involved. (Oyanedel et al., 2015; García et al., 2016).

In the same vein, studies reveal some typical characteristics that are shown in the well-being of couples. These are reinforced through reciprocal support, satisfaction of needs, sexuality, expression of affection, intimacy and commitment, resulting in marital satisfaction and adjustment. It also highlights individual or dyadic attachment where couples feel comfortable in interdependencies for fear of abandonment or rejection. (Oyanedel et al., 2015).

The use of cell phones is of great utility in the communication of couples; however, it has a powerful capacity for distraction and entertainment that become potential reinforcers for users. They can trigger conflicts and addictions, supported by the influence of the environment. The wide range of diversifying social relationships virtually, the need to belong to various groups of virtual social interaction and other factors make the cell phone an element of current interest triggering conflicts and addictions. (Sola Gutiérrez, 2017).

This condition does not escape intimate relationships and social regulation that have been enhanced by the mediation of social networks and cell phones; that is, thanks to the advancement of technology, virtuality has reduced both geographical and communication distance. The desire to belong to peer groups and to social recognition is increasingly observed. These practices and attitudes reveal, it seems, contradictory issues. The existence of greater freedom with the capacity for expression and communication; but, at the same time, the possibility of conflict, control and membership. (Rodríguez Salazar y Rodríguez Morales, 2016).

Couple conflicts are a product of the incompatibility of desires, needs and preferences (Garrido et al., 2017). Many couple conflicts occur due to the inappropriate use of cell phones when communicating because the cell phone plays the role of being a distracting agent and occupies the attention of the couple; in other words, the use of the cell phone, in the case of couples, affects academic, work, family and friendship activities so much that face-to-face interaction actions are obstructed or ignored. This interruption is called phubbing or technoference as an effect of inappropriate cell phone use. (Pérez et al., 2021).

In couple communication, the excessive use of mobile devices is increasing every day; it affects the direct conversation and the quality of intimate communication of the couple. Often, the excessive use of cell phones leads to the neglect of the interpersonal relationship; it also ends up affecting the well-being and mutual satisfaction of the couple. (Wang et al., 2020). Therefore, the excessive use of mobile devices has implications in the emotional aspects, in the interaction and communication of the couple, leading to the distancing or disintegration of the relationship. (Cáceres Puerto et al., 2020).

The cell phone was created to be a communication resource; however, ironically, it turns out to be a medium that interrupts romantic and intimate moments between couples. In this sense, some marriages end in divorce because they have been affected by the inappropriate use of cell phones. (Roberts y David, 2016). Due to the use of cell phones, many couples do not feel satisfaction in their relationship. (Niu et al., 2020) This has been a cause of divorce because many couples become addicted to social networks through cell phones. (Antezana Vargas y Alfaro Urquiola, 2019). In this sense, it was proposed in this study that there is a correlation between the valuation of the relationship and the conflicts between couples due to cell phone use.

2. GENERAL OBJECTIVE

In this sense, the objective was to explain the association between relationship valuation and couple conflicts due to cell phone use in married, cohabitant, dating and couple stages.

3. METHODOLOGY

The research was framed under the basic research paradigm, with a non-experimental design, correlational level and cross-sectional in scope (Ato et al., 2013). A sample of 325 participants from the city of Lima-Peru, between 18 and 65 years of age, was considered as a sample. The following characteristics were observed in the sample: (210) were men and (115) women. The couples were (179) in the dating stage, (70) cohabitants and (76) married.

We used as instruments the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS Relationship Assessment Scale) from Hendrick (1988) and the Conflicts Related to Cell Phone Use Scale were used as instruments. (Roberts y David, 2016). The RAS is a Likert-style instrument and comprehensively measures the satisfaction or satisfaction perceived in the couple's correspondence; it is composed of 7 items with 5 response alternatives ranging from 1 to 5, presenting a cumulative value of 7 to 35 points; it has a high internal consistency obtained (0.86) through Cronbach's Alpha, also a unifactorial structure for criterion validity and a correlation of 0.48 (moderate) with the Marital Adjustment Test and the Dyadic Adjustment Scale. (Locke y Wallace, 1959) and the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) which has sufficient discriminative capacity for couples with and without problems.

On the other hand, the Scale of Conflicts related to cell phone use was also employed. (Roberts y David, 2016). This scale is made up of 10 items with a scale of 5 response alternatives; the score ranges are between 10 and 50 points, indicating that the higher the score, the higher the level of conflicts. The instrument presents adequate psychometric evidence with presence of unifactorial structure derived from the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test ($KMO = .87$) and also from the Bartle ($\chi^2 = 1841.500 (45), p < .000$); in addition, discrimination indices ranging between .46 and .85 were obtained for the 10 items, these results exceed the minimum expected value, concluding that the instrument showed an adequate internal consistency of $\alpha = .91$.

Permission for the use of the instruments was requested from the authors. Then the scale was elaborated using the Google virtual form, providing the indications, guaranteeing voluntary participation, anonymity and confidentiality. The link to the form was shared through social networks such as Facebook,

WhatsApp, Instagram, etc. In this sense, the technique used was the virtual survey. (Arroyo y Finkel, 2019).

To analyze the data, the SPSS 26 and Jamovi 1.6.15 statistical program was used to test the normality of the data by means of the Kolmogórov-Smirnov statistical test, which showed that the data did not have a normal distribution. For this reason, it was decided to use Spearman's correlation coefficient and the Mann-Whitney U test for comparisons.

4. RESULTS

Table 1 showed a negative, moderate and highly significant association ($r_s = -.456, p < .05$); that is, only 20.79% of the conflict due to cell phone use is explained by changes in the valuation of the relationship. In sum, people who perceive that they have a low valuation of their relationship experience a high level of conflict due to cell phone use. Therefore, they consider that inappropriate cell phone use affects the valuation of their relationship and their coexistence as a couple.

Table 1. Relationship between cell phone use conflict and marital relationship valuation

		Conflict due to cell phone use	
Spearman's Rho	Relationship Assessment	Rs	-.456**
		P	0.000
		r ²	0,208
		N	

Note: ** r_s = level of relationship; p =level of significance, r^2 = coefficient of determination and N =sample size.

In relation to the evaluation of the marital relationship in adult couples, according to Table 2, it was observed that 53.5% place their responses in the moderate level, while 24.9%, in the low level and 21.5%, in the high level.

This shows that the valuation of the marital relationship in adult couples is between the low and moderate levels. In other words, the data show that there is a low valuation of the marital relationship as couples.

Table 2. Level of valuation of the marital relationship in adult couples

Levels	F	%
Under		24.9
Moderate		53.5
High		21.5

Total		100.0
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Note: f= frequency; %= percentage

When analyzing conflicts over cell phone use in adult couples, as shown in Table 3, the responses were as follows: for 49.8%, at the average level; 27.1%, at the low level; and the remaining 23.1%, at the high level. Thus, for adult couples who use cell phones, their

responses are divided. One group expressed being tolerant; another group expressed not seeing conflicts due to cell phone use; on the other hand, a group of respondents reported having conflicts in their couples due to cell phone use.

Table 3. Level of conflicts over cell phone use in adult couples

Levels	F	%
Under		27.1
Average		49.8
High		23.1
Total		100.0

Note: f= frequency; %= percentage

When analyzing the valuation of the relationship by gender as shown in Table 4, it was observed that there are no differences in

their valuation. This shows that both men and women have a positive evaluation of their partners.

Table 4. Differences by sex in the evaluation of the couple relationship

Variable	Sex	N	M	DE	gl	U	p	D
Assessment of the couple's relationship	Woman		26.1	5.3		10722	0.094	0.112
	Man		27.2	4.53				

Note: N=sample; M=mean; SD=standard deviation; gl=degrees of freedom; U= Mann-

Whitney U test value; p= significance; d= Cohen's effect size.

According to the results presented in Table 5, it is evident that there is a significant difference in cell phone use between men and women (p< .05). It is observed that women

expressed having more conflicts with their partners because of cell phones; while men reported having less conflict due to the use of mobile devices.

Table 5. Differences in cell phone use between men and women

Variable	Sex	N	M	DE	gl	U	p	D
Cell phone problem	Woman		22.8	7.26		9548	0.002	0.209

	Man			6.52				
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Note: N=sample; M=mean; SD=standard deviation; gl=degrees of freedom; U= Mann-

5. DISCUSSION

It was obtained as a result that the valuation of the relationship is negatively, moderately and highly significantly associated in $r_s = -.456$, $p < .05$ with conflicts due to cell phone use. Likewise, it was evidenced that couples perceive a greater conflict caused by cell phone use, which is expressed in a lower satisfaction and quality in the relationship. Cell phone interference in the couple's intimate moments negatively affected their coexistence, generating couple conflicts. These data coincide with the evidence that phubbing is related to communication through technology. (Nina-Estrella et al., 2020). It stands out that, although the cell phone fulfills the function of allowing efficient communication at a distance, it does not always favor or strengthen couples' relationships. Likewise, cell phones and other devices have given rise to new identities that are developed and maintained over time. This leads to new practices, norms, goals and modes of interaction between couples. (Duck y McMahan, 2016).

Within the new practices of couple cohabitation due to cell phone misuse, what is known as "phubbing" was expressed. The same that refers to the action of ignoring the person with whom one is interacting in a physical way and preferring to attend to the one who is connected by the mobile device. This behavior of ignoring or interrupting the physical communicative interaction produces conflicts that affect several areas of the relationship with the partner. (Cizmeci, 2017). Depending on the incidence of interaction with the cell phone, this behavior can significantly affect the couple's relationship, as well as their satisfaction with each other. (Coyne et al., 2011). The excessive or inappropriate use of cellular devices in the communication with the partner may be due to addictions to technology. The same that, sometimes, interferes and interrupts the couples to attend to the cell phone. (Karadağ et al., 2015).

On the other hand, it was observed that, in more than 53% of the couples, the moderate

Whitney U test value; p = significance; d = Cohen's effect size.

level in the valuation of the relationship stands out and 24.9% show a low level. This shows that couples do not give a positive evaluation of the relationship using the cell phone. As can be seen, most couples perceive that they have conflicts in their relationship because of the cell phone because, in the couples' coexistence, attitudes, evaluations and/or feelings are expressed. (Boland y Follingstad, 1987). As well as the valuation of some aspects of marital life where the socioeconomic factor, compatibility, adaptation and role in the dyadic system are expressed. (Chadwick et al., 1976).

It is pertinent to highlight that, in order to value the couple's relationship, the love they profess to each other is not enough. Such valuation implies perceiving satisfaction and conflict resolution; seeking balance where positive and negative aspects of coexistence converge; that friendship, affection, sexual satisfaction, satisfying needs and communication are present. It is a continuous search for individual well-being and the happiness of the couple. (Oyanedel et al., 2015; García et al., 2016).

In relation to conflict over cell phone use, it was observed that 49.8% of participants presented an average level; 27.1%, a low level and 23.1%, a high level. For some, cell phone use has a positive and moderate impact on couples. For a small group of couples, inappropriate use has a negative impact. It should be noted that inappropriate use can be counterproductive and become detrimental if it is not managed and controlled. In this sense, the inappropriate use of cell phones can be counterproductive for the satisfaction of the couple's relationship or can be a generator of conflicts; on the other hand, if in moderation, it can help to seek balance and satisfaction in couples. (Barrientos, 2021).

Considering the medium and high levels in the perception of conflicts, totaling approximately 73%, it is close to the study where 70% of couples perceived to have interruption in their interactions due to cell phone calls. The same that produced conflicts and as a consequence affected the satisfaction of the couple's relationship. (Roberts y David,

2016). Because, in the interaction or conversation with the couple, there is interruption due to messages, calls or online conversations through the cell phone. This leads to the interruption of direct, attentive and pleasant communication between couples.

It has been evidenced that cell phones not only promote romantic relationships in couples; they also generate conflicts (González-Rivera et al., 2018) to the extent that they interrupt moments of intimacy in couples. So much so that, many times, they interrupt communication an average of eight times during a conversation or interaction with a person (Román, 2013). Therefore, cell phones, in some cases, limit the communication of emotions. (Vitz y Kamorina, 2014). Generating in couples a lack of emotional connection and dissatisfaction within the bond between partners. (McDaniel y Coyne, 2016).

Likewise, when comparing the evaluation of the relationship between men and women, it was observed that there is no significant difference. The study in which men perceive greater satisfaction than women is well known. (García Rubio, 2021). That is to say, when women did not feel satisfied, they expressed that they did not feel valued by their partners due to the fact that the cell phone plays the role of a distractor. This is due to the fact that women are more predisposed to listen, talk, show affection and be cared for.

When analyzing conflicts due to cell phone use between males and females, significant differences have been found. It highlights that females perceive more conflicts due to cell phone use compared to males. Consequently, for women, cell phone use (phubbing) produces negative effects on the quality of the couple's relationship, since many men ignore their partners because they pay more attention to the mobile device, which leads to a threat to the stability of the couple, and also makes women feel ignored and replaced by a mobile device. (CiZmeci, 2017). Women, due to the use of cell phones by their partners, feel ignored and have difficulty in empathy and decreased interest in their partners. (Roberts y David, 2016; Huang et al., 2021).

6. CONCLUSIONS

Therefore, it can be concluded that the valuation of the relationship and the use of the

cell phone would generate conflicts and benefits in couples. The inadequate or adequate use of mobile devices can have effects on the relationship of couples. While the good use of the cell phone can help in satisfaction, in efficient communication and in maintaining a permanent bond between couples. On the other hand, inappropriate cell phone use can generate problems, conflicts of interest, low satisfaction, disinterest and even separations. In this sense, cell phone use sometimes interferes and interrupts the relationship between couples. But, in others, depending on the socioeconomic factor, it can generate compatibility, adaptation and interest in being connected through mobile applications.

Likewise, it can be pointed out that, in the perceived valuation of partners according to sex, it stands out that women are the least valued by their partners due to the interference of cell phone use. In this sense, women express that they do not receive the attention of affection, affection and tenderness from their partners. Many times, it does not generate, in women, satisfaction, well-being and moments of happiness. Also, because of constant interruptions due to calls, messages or videoconferences, moments of intimate communication between couples are occasionally interrupted. The inappropriate use of cell phones generates negative effects on the coexistence of couples, so that women, unlike men, perceive a greater conflict due to cell phones. This leads to specify that couples should be aware that the valuation and conflicts due to the use of cell phones depends a lot on the couples, their maturity, personality, character, temperament and the use they want to give to the cell phone due to its usefulness and purpose.

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