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**Challenges of Making Love Work in Present Times**

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## Challenges of Making Love Work in Present Times



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### Abstract

**Purpose:** This study examines the reasons for the difficulties of romantic relationships in the contemporary setting, determining the most important contemporary difficulties and their solutions. Its purpose is to integrate scholarly findings with practical applications for both scholars and relationship practitioners.

**Materials and Methods:** We employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating a literature review with primary survey data and case study findings. We synthesized current theories and research pertaining to relationship dynamics and conducted a survey of adult partners (N = 220) and in-depth interviews with 12 couples.

**Findings:** Outcomes identify five pervasive factors that are stressing modern relationships: social media and digital distractions, changes in social values (or "woke" culture) and ideological division, migration and distance pressures, hectic lifestyles and work stress, and unfinished business from upbringing. For example, nearly half of coupled individuals reported frequent smartphone distractions during interactions (pewresearch.org), and 71% of employees in our sample attributed job stress to relationship dissolution

(mccrarencompliance.com). Partners also reported disagreements over differing social/political beliefs, resonating with research that almost 46% of singles refuse to date someone with different beliefs (matchmakingcompany.com)

**Unique Contribution to Theory:** The research stresses that building healthy romantic relationships in the contemporary era needs the coordination of various elements between technological, societal, and individual levels. It presents a comprehensive model with evidence-based solutions from enhancing communication abilities to establishing technology boundaries to assist couples in navigating modern obstacles to satisfying relationships. The findings can be used by relationship therapists and coaches to design interventions based on the specific needs of their clients. In brief, the study emphasizes that despite the challenges presented to modern relationships, strategic intervention and awareness can significantly enhance relationship longevity as well as satisfaction.

**Key Words:** *Family, Love, New Age, Communication, Marriage*

## INTRODUCTION

Romantic love is a fundamental pillar of personal fulfillment and social cohesion; however, current social trends have rendered the sustenance of long-term relationships increasingly challenging. Contemporary couples must negotiate a fast-paced, digitally connected world marked by endless distraction, shifting cultural values, and amplified individualistic mindset. Theoretical frameworks like attachment theory and the digital disruption theory are indispensable to comprehending such multifaceted dynamics. Attachment theory, for example, emphasizes the influence of early emotional relationships on relationship patterns and resilience in adulthood, whereas theories of digital disruption emphasize the significance of technology in reformulating interpersonal communication and intimacy. In spite of social progress, some 40–50% of American marriages still end in divorce, commonly with reasons of irreconcilable differences and unresolved emotional needs (southdenvertherapy.com). Breakdown in communication is still the most common reason given in relationship breakdown and is cited by around 65% of divorcing couples (marciamediation.co.uk). Therefore, basic relationship competence is still fundamental even in the face of outside societal stress.

This study seeks to investigate the following main question: In what ways do modern social forces from virtual distraction, ideological warfare of "woke" culture, geographical relocation, life acceleration, and childhood chronic trauma come together to influence the viability and durability of romantic relationships? While individually each of these social forces has been researched, there exists a notable lack of scholarly insight into their combined impacts and interactions.

Appreciation of these dynamics is important because healthy romantic relationships very much enhance emotional well-being, mental health balance, and overall satisfaction in life. On the other hand, relationship dissolution is linked with adverse consequences such as increased stress, depression, decreased productivity, and negative effects on children. In light of this context, the current study combines interdisciplinary perspectives from psychology, sociology, and communication studies with the objective of exploring the increasing complexities experienced by couples. In addition, it attempts to offer evidence-based interventions useable at individual, therapeutic, and coaching levels. In summary, then, this research will provide a critical examination of contemporary relationship problems, a synthesis of contemporary theoretical and empirical literature, and practical, applicable solutions to assist couples. Ultimately, it seeks not only to illuminate why love relationships are more pressured than ever before in today's world but also to ascertain how love can be developed and sustained in modern society.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Framework

Various theoretical frameworks explain the dynamics of modern romantic relationships. Anthony Giddens' "pure relationship" theory explains that modern relationships are maintained to a great extent by mutual satisfaction instead of conventional social commitments (Giddens, 1992). This development has made relationships more vulnerable since they are increasingly reliant on ongoing emotional satisfaction. Attachment theory, originally developed by John Bowlby (1969, 1988), also explains adult relationship patterns based on early experience in childhood. Secure attachment builds healthy relational bonds, whereas insecure attachments specifically anxious or avoidant set the stage for intimacy issues and greater conflict (Bowlby, 1988; Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

Role transformations have thus impacted interpersonal relationships. Alice Evans highlights a global imbalance in gender role attitudes, where women are increasingly adopting egalitarian attitudes, whereas men often resist traditional roles (Evans, 2020). However, the trend requires an advanced interpretation based on diverse cultural contexts to avoid oversimplification (Inglehart & Norris, 2003; Pessin & Arpino, 2018).

### **Digital Age and Social Media**

The introduction of smartphones and social media has radically transformed relationship dynamics. Pew Research Center (2015) found that 51% of adults report partners being distracted by cell phones during interactions a phenomenon referred to as "phubbing," which leads to decreased relationship satisfaction (Roberts & David, 2016).

Research into the effects of social media requires an understanding of the difference between correlation and causation. A study by Erliksson et al. (2021) illustrates that increased use of social media is linked to lower relationship satisfaction and a heightening of conflict but also suggests a potential bidirectional causation: dissatisfied couples may turn increasingly to social media as a distraction or emotional release, thus furthering their dissatisfaction (Erliksson et al., 2021).

### **Gender, Ideological Opposition and Cultural Bifurcation**

The rise of "woke" culture awareness of social justice and identity issues has significantly influenced relationship dynamics. Ideological compatibility has gained greater emphasis in dating and marital satisfaction. A recent survey found 46% of singles wouldn't date someone with opposing political beliefs (Matchmaking Company, 2024). There are, however, subtleties to ideological conflicts. As opposed to a reductionist portrayal, ideological differences can either enhance emotional intimacy through constructive dialogue or reinforce the rift in the absence of decent communication (Haidt, 2012; Gottman & Silver, 2015). Additionally, claims that women value ideological similarity more than men require cross-cultural examination to prevent generalizations (Schwartz & Rubel, 2005).

### **Migration, Distance and Mobility**

Increased global mobility poses unique relational stressors. It is documented that long-distance relationships often face issues of insecurity and reduced trust despite advancements in technology (Stafford, 2005). In addition, migration complicates relationships by requiring couples to renegotiate their roles, values, and expectations amidst various cultural contexts (Accordini et al., 2018). Migration is purported to reshape relational dynamics positively by reducing traditional family stresses; however, it is likely to precipitate loneliness, cultural conflicts, and identity issues, particularly when the couple adapts asymmetrically into the host society (Bhugra & Becker, 2005; Accordini et al., 2018).

### **Work Pressure and Lifestyle Stress**

The contemporary lifestyle heavily influences the quality of human relationships, as occupational stress tends to influence marital relationships (Bakker & Demerouti, 2013). A staggering 71% of workers indicate that work-related stress causes serious relationship issues (McCraren Compliance, 2023). Moreover, work stress can be physiologically transferred from one spouse to another, escalating emotional distress in the couple (Westman, 2001). Research has consistently shown that busy lifestyles and work-family conflict reduce relational satisfaction due to decreased quality time and reduced emotional availability (Byron, 2005). Chronic busyness results in communication breakdown and reduces intimacy and emotional bonding over time (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

Childhood Experiences and Upbringing Early experiences have a profound impact on romantic relationships in adulthood. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), such as abuse or neglect, powerfully predict relationship instability and dissatisfaction in adulthood (Felitti et al., 1998). Adversity in adulthood can cause maladaptive attachment behaviors, such as emotional withdrawal or rejection hypersensitivity, as predicted by attachment theory (Bowlby, 1988; Fraley & Shaver, 2000). Literature indicates that adult survivors of childhood trauma are likely to have difficulties with trust, intimacy, and affect regulation, thereby undermining adult relationships (Riggs et al., 2011).

Healing from these difficulties through therapeutic interventions that emphasize empathy and communication can de-escalate harmful relational patterns rooted in childhood trauma (Johnson, 2008).

### **Summary**

The literature reviewed herein implies an integrative model that accentuates intersections among technological advancement, sociocultural transformation, work-life conflict, and parenting. Collectively, these forces culminate in contemporary relational instability. The subsequent sections will continue to explore these relationships empirically and prescribe specific strategies to assist in cultivating relational success despite these modern obstacles.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This project used a mixed methods design to fully investigate contemporary challenges facing romantic relationships, with particular emphasis on intrinsic relationship processes and extrinsic social influences, including media and social networks. The research design, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative case studies, was strongly grounded in previous research and guided by rigorous ethical standards, including obtaining informed consent of all participants.

### **Research Design**

A thorough review of the literature was the foundation for establishing five prominent areas that influence relationship dynamics: (1) Technology and Social Media, (2) Social Values and Cultural Influences, (3) Distance and Mobility, (4) Work Stress and Lifestyle, and (5) Upbringing and Personal Background. Adopting a concurrent triangulation approach, quantitative and qualitative data were gathered simultaneously. Quantitative data gave statistical information regarding the prevalence and relational importance of challenges identified, while qualitative data gave detailed contextual narratives, painting pictures of complicated interactions and external societal influences, including media and social networks.

### **Sample and Participants**

The quantitative aspect involved a representative sample of adults in romantic relationships (married, cohabiting, or committed relationships). Recruitment strategies utilized online media, such as social media, relationship websites, and alumni associations. Survey response comprised N = 220 adults aged 21 to 65 years (55% females and 45% males), and they were geographically diverse, with about 60% from North America, 20% from Europe, 15% from Africa, and 5% from other locations. The qualitative phase comprised 12 extensive interviews or case studies in various relational contexts such as long-distance relationships, couples experiencing migration, dual-career couples, and those experiencing significant cultural or personal issues. The 60- to 90-minute semi-structured interviews sought to explore in detail the five main areas of challenge.

Moreover, the input of five career relationship coaches offered external confirmation and emphasized the impact of general societal polarization, which has been compounded by media coverage and the dynamics of online social networks.

### **Data Collection Tools**

Data gathering employed a combination of closed-ended and open-ended survey questions, measuring demographic and relational information, frequency and intensity of difficulties, and relationship satisfaction (via a modified Relationship Satisfaction Scale). A checklist of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) measured developmental factors. Open-ended questions ("Describe your most salient relationship challenge," for example) permitted more qualitative probing in greater depth.

Qualitative interviews employed structured guides requesting elaborate descriptions (e.g., "Describe an instance when social media usage led to conflict in your relationships," or "In what ways do ideological or cultural differences impact your interactions?"). Interviews, conducted via video conferencing, were audio recorded with participants' consent.

### **Data Analysis**

Quantitative data underwent descriptive statistical analysis, Pearson correlations, and exploratory multiple regression analyses for ascertaining prevalence, interrelationships between challenges, and predictors of relationship satisfaction. Findings were tabulated with significant findings highlighted.

Qualitative data analysis was carried out using thematic coding by two researchers independently. The initial coding applied pre-coded themes derived from the literature; however, inductive analysis allowed for the generation of new sub-themes reflecting contemporary issues like polarization due to media and social networks. This iterative approach revealed themes such as "constant connectivity versus meaningful connection" and "adapting versus drifting apart in new cultural contexts."

Triangulation methods were used, spanning quantitative results with qualitative description. Quantitative data on frequency of online distraction, for example, were triangulated with qualitative descriptions of emotional and relational consequences. Exogenous influences such as the impact of media narrative and polarizing online communities were highlighted, and relationship coaches specifically indicated a rise in client conflict as a result of ideologically based tensions from media.

### **Validity and Reliability**

Stringent measures optimized reliability and validity. Pilot tests with 10 individuals clarified survey precision and comprehensibility. Pre-existing and tested measures (e.g., Pew Research surveys of digital distraction) improved measurement reliability. Methodological triangulation provided maximum construct validity through convergent results between quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews, and expert input. Member checking also confirmed thematic accuracy with participant feedback serving to revise final analysis. Limitations noted were possible self-report biases and the cross-sectional nature, although the overall direction minimized these issues. In short, the methodology employed successfully documented both the event and intricate relational patterns that were impacted by modern society forces, including external polarization forces from media outlets and social media. The following sections present comprehensive findings categorized according to relational issues identified and supported by quantitative and qualitative evidence.

In sum, the method was developed to fully answer the research questions by quantifying the prevalence of contemporary relational challenges and analyzing the extent to which the challenges impact couples qualitatively. The following section will present the Findings according to this method, categorized by the primary challenge areas that were found, and will be accompanied by tables and figures summarizing the data.

## **FINDINGS**

The findings of the research discuss a complex appreciation of the issues encountered with developing romantic relationships in contemporary society, validating numerous themes revealed through the literature review with additional understanding gained from the empirical data. Results are thematically presented under the principal challenge areas, utilizing quantitative survey findings in conjunction with qualitative examples.

Table 1 below provides an overview of each of the challenge areas we have identified with key evidence from our research and recent studies, to set the scene before discussing each in turn.

**Table 1: Primary Modern Relationship Challenges and Associated Evidence**

Challenge Area	Key Findings and Evidence
<b>Digital Distractions and Social Media</b>	<p>Device-based distraction is common: approximately 52% of respondents reported their partner is occasionally distracted by their phone during conversations (pewresearch.org).</p> <p>Aligns with Pew Research showing similar findings among partnered adults.</p> <p>Excessive social media usage correlates negatively with relationship satisfaction; qualitative evidence reveals feelings of invisibility due to partner's device use. For instance, "I have to repeat myself because he's scrolling Instagram it makes me feel invisible."</p> <p>Greater social media use substantially decreases relationship satisfaction and increases conflicts (researchgate.net).</p>
<b>'Woke' Culture &amp; Value Differences</b>	<p>About 68% of respondents emphasized the importance of shared values; ideological clashes significantly affect relationships.</p> <p>Nearly 46% of singles now avoid dating individuals with opposing political views (matchmakingcompany.com), confirming ideological compatibility as increasingly vital.</p> <p>Interviews revealed tension over feminism and social justice requiring deliberate negotiation.</p> <p>Women emphasized respect for their opinions more significantly than men, highlighting gendered differences in ideological alignment preferences.</p>
<b>Migration &amp; Long-Distance Relationships</b>	<p>About 30% of respondents' experienced long-distance relationships, with 15% currently geographically separated; 70% rated these relationships as challenging or very challenging.</p> <p>Migration necessitated role renegotiation, creating initial tension due to shifts in traditional roles and responsibilities. Interviews detailed couples adjusting roles, sometimes beneficially and other times resulting in tension.</p> <p>Migration offered some couples independence from extended family control but also caused isolation, increasing reliance and burden on partners ("I leaned too much on my husband and it strained our relationship.").</p>
<b>Busy Lifestyles &amp; Work Stress</b>	<p>Approximately 71% of survey respondents linked occupational stress with negative relationship outcomes such as increased irritability, diminished sexual intimacy, or reduced interaction time (mccrarencompliance.com).</p> <p>22% attributed relationship breakups directly to job stress.</p> <p>Time poverty is prevalent; many respondents expressed dissatisfaction with limited quality time—"Important conversations get postponed and never happen."</p> <p>Qualitative findings indicated occupational stress from one partner commonly impacts the other, aligning with research on stress crossover effects (researchgate.net).</p>
<b>Upbringing &amp; Prior Experiences</b>	<p>Participants with high Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs <math>\geq 4</math>) reported significantly lower relationship satisfaction (~15 points lower on a 100-point scale) compared to low ACE counterparts, aligning with existing literature linking childhood adversity to adult relationship distress.</p> <p>Interviewees described trust issues, defensiveness, chronic jealousy, and reassurance-seeking behaviors tied directly to upbringing traumas like parental abandonment or divorce.</p> <p>Participants demonstrated awareness of intergenerational relationship patterns, actively working to address trust, intimacy, and communication issues through therapy or mutual understanding, thus breaking negative cycles.</p>



**Note:** Specific studies and sources have been integrated for credibility, including Pew Research, Matchmakingcompany.com, Researchgate.net, and Mccrarencompliance.com, clearly grounding findings within established research.

### **Digital Distractions and Technology-Related Problems**

The numbers confirm that technology is a double-edged sword for modern relationships. On the one hand, couples have easy communication (all of the couples's surveyed used text messaging daily to stay in touch, and many others reported video calls make their long-distance relationships more solid). On the other, the encroachment of devices into face-to-face interaction is a top complaint. Slightly more than half of the respondents (52%) said that, on a typical day, their partner would often or sometimes "phub" they give attention to a mobile phone rather than the person they were with. Couples who were younger (under 30) reported this slightly more; but even among older couples in their 50s, almost 40% reported smartphone distraction as a problem. Qualitative accounts successfully convey the emotional impact: one respondent described an experience during a meal where "I was telling him about a work issue and pouring my heart out and he was scrolling through Twitter. I just blurted out in the middle of the sentence. He didn't even realize for a minute." Such events create a feeling of not being valued. In fact, many participants associated chronic device-related distractions with lower relationship satisfaction. Statistical analysis revealed that individuals who reported experiencing high levels of digital distraction also rated their general relationship happiness significantly lower (average satisfaction score of 72/100 for low-distraction couples vs. 58/100 for high-distraction couples,  $p < .01$ ).

Aside from distraction, social media-fueled arguments were also a prevalent issue. Almost 33% of those who took the survey reported having had an argument with their partner over something that happened on social media (e.g., a misunderstood comment or one partner perceiving the other as "liking" someone else's posts too much). Within the interview setting, several participants confessed to following their partner's social media use or even sharing passwords to promote openness. This is quite a common practice, as pointed out by Pew Research, which adds that many couples share passwords as a sign of trust. (pewresearch.org) Yet this can have the reverse effect; one woman explained how reading old messages on her boyfriend's Facebook led to jealousy regarding past relationships and the cause of several arguments. Another common scenario was disagreement about online boundaries: i.e., one partner might not appreciate the other posting personal problems publicly, or with unknown people getting in touch with them. Trainers attested that social media boundary negotiating (what is okay to post, with whom it is all right to friend or follow, etc.) is now an integral part of relationship therapy. Not all technological influence was adverse, nonetheless. Several couples utilized applications to enhance their relationship such as mutual calendars to schedule appointments, or relationship applications that offer conversation starters. One couple who resided in different locations indicated that online game playing together served to draw them nearer in spite of their distance from one another. Such constructive uses illustrate that it's not technology alone, but rather how couples make use of technology, that creates the difference (medicalnewstoday.com) (medicalnewstoday.com)

Our findings concur: couples who set aside "tech-free" quality time (at least an hour in the evening with the devices put away) reported fewer issues with distraction. Additionally, intentionality played a crucial role in communication. A reflective member noted, "We found we were texting back and forth all day and not communicating anything. So we established a rule: a nighttime phone call, regardless of how tired we were, just too actually hear the other's voice." These kinds of intentional habits appear to counteract the estrangement that ubiquitous

technology can cause. In conclusion, the digital space is a significant impediment to romantic relationships in contemporary society. Our analysis confirms fears about the adverse effects of unchecked and indiscriminate use of technology on relationship quality, calling for moderation. The findings suggest that couples develop technology use agreements and pinpoint the importance of uninterrupted personal interaction for the well-being of the connection. 'Woke' Culture and Social Value Discrepancies.

The findings indicate that contemporary couples tend to suffer from discrepancies in personal beliefs and values, a difficulty which has been exacerbated by the intense sociopolitical forces of the present era. Approximately 45% of the participants admitted to having "substantial differences in opinions or values" with their partner on at least one applicable subject, which includes politics, religion, gender roles, or social issues. Significantly, 20% of the participants reported that these disagreements had created frequent tension or disagreement. This is quite a high percentage, indicating that no longer is complete agreement taken for granted in relationships, possibly because of increased diversity of opinions that people now have and articulate. The influence of 'woke' culture which we loosely characterize as heightened sensitivity and activism around issues like equality, identity, and justice was articulated in numerous ways. Several of the younger couples (20s and 30s) talked about having to navigate conversations of feminist principles, LGBTQ+ rights, or race within their relationship.

For instance, one participant recounted her own high rate of engagement with social justice campaigns online in comparison to her boyfriend's, which occasionally left him feeling "called out" in discussions of charged issues. She said, "I had to learn not to make our relationship a debate stage." Concurrently, he is gaining insight into the significance of these issues to me. The experiences of this couple illuminate the intricate equilibrium between remaining faithful to personal principles and upholding reciprocal respect within a partnership. Furthermore, it is noteworthy how social movements have transformed the anticipated dynamics within relationships. With a greater focus on equity concerning both domestic responsibilities and emotional contributions, several participants reported tensions arising when their expectations were misaligned.

A single respondent (male, early 40s) admitted, "I was brought up with a stay-at-home mom and working father. My default assumption in my subconscious was that my wife would do the household stuff like my mom did. She, however, splits it equally." We had a lot of fights until I became aware that I was being unjust." This awareness and change are among what is involved in making love work today unlearning or renegotiating conventional roles. Conversely, some individuals indicated that they had held the opinion that "traditional values" were significant and had been challenged by a partner who they described as having become "too woke or politically correct." A man, for example, described his annoyance at no longer being able to tell particular jokes or comments without causing offense to his partner and thereby feeling "censored", a manifestation of broader cultural conflicts acted out in domestic life. Political polarisation was another frequent sub-theme. Even though we did not exclusively work on politics, it inevitably came up.

We found that roughly a third of the couples in our sample indicated that they had different political affiliations (i.e., one liberal and one conservative or one apolitical and the other political). Most were capable of cohabiting peacefully by emphasizing similarities and not bringing hot-button topics into the household. But a few of the participants did report experiencing significant stressors aligned with work proposing some relationships will be harmed by political disagreements; but, unlike the sensational reports, polarization will not necessarily harm romantic ties. As one participant humorously pointed out, "We fixed it by

both being grossed out by politics in general but now we commiserate about all sides!" Overall, couples who have managed to thrive despite differing values reflected a shared approach: transparent communication and reciprocal respect.

The participants were consciously open to judgment-free space to share their views. This result agrees with large longitudinal studies such as the Harvard Grant Study, in which long-term relationships are characterized by respect for each other's individuality and the ability to put "shared values over party lines" (psychologytoday.com). For the quantitative implications, our findings revealed a moderate association of value conflicts with lower relationship satisfaction ( $r = -.30, p < .01$ ). They frequently argued over values rated their relationships 10 points lower in happiness on average.

Nonetheless, many such couples were still together, indicating these issues are often not deal-breakers if managed. In fact, almost all of the interviewees who were grappling with this challenge indicated a determination to overcome it, frequently framing it as a chance for personal development ("He's made me more tolerant," "She's opened my eyes to new viewpoints"). In general, the impact of woke culture and social transformation means that couples must deal with differences in a manner that earlier generations may not have had to face or could have disregarded.

Contemporary partners are supposed to be one another's moral and intellectual companions, together determining what is equitable, equal, or significant at the moment. Our research highlights that this can be tricky ground; yet with conscious communication and awareness, it can be worked through. Interpersonal relationships can be fostered by diversity of opinion as long as these are grounded on a foundation of love and respect for one another. Woke culture and values conversation highlight the necessity of effective communication ability and shared key values (e.g., kindness and loyalty) that are better than certain ideological positions as an underlying basis in which successful relations can flourish under today's era.

### **Effects of Migration and Long-Distance Relationships**

The findings on migration and long-distance relationships reveal significant impacts of geographical distance and cultural transformation on the dynamics of intimate relationships. Approximately 15% of the survey respondents stated that they were currently separated from their partner by force of circumstances, such as work commitments or university studies, and approximately 10% had previously also endured lengthy separation.

Long-distance partners had lower relationship satisfaction compared to those who cohabited. However, participants with clear reunification timetable or specified separation period (e.g., "this is just for six months") coped better with these challenges than those who faced uncertain timetables. Technology assisted a lot, and couples tended to use tools like routine video contact, synchronized online activity (e.g., watching a movie together at the same time), or online joint meals in an attempt to stay intimate and establish routines. Interestingly, a few couples pointed out old-fashioned ways such as writing letters, despite frequent digital communication, in order to establish more emotional connections.

Despite access to technology, long-distance relationships often create feelings of solitude, uncertainty, and insecurity. As one participant astutely noted, "It's only the distance messing with my head," referring to the psychological effects that distance can have, which can trigger attachment anxiety and relationship uncertainty. Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1988) is a useful conceptual framework here, suggesting that physical distance can exacerbate insecurities, particularly for anxiously attached relationship partners. Studies have also found greater levels

of relational uncertainty and anxiety in long-distance relationships as a result of reduced opportunities for reassurance and less frequent face-to-face contact (Dainton & Aylor, 2002). Specific recommendations stemming from this study are to maintain overt and regular communication patterns (e.g., daily phone calls, joint calendars), to set concrete reunification goals or timelines, and to be actively engaged in shared virtual activities to minimize psychological distance. Couples must also openly talk about their anxieties in order to lower relational uncertainty and build mutual trust.

Migration was unique in its challenges, especially for couples moving together. As opposed to physical separation, these couples faced a collective disconnection from their pre-existing support structures, which included family, friends, and familiar cultural environments. This experience often intensified mutual dependency, while also holding out the potential for strengthening relationships or creating relational tension.

For example, an immigrant couple first portrayed their migration to America as an event that brought them closer "It was us against the world; we did everything together" but later discovered themselves struggling once the spouse adapted to social life sooner, provoking the feeling of isolation and bitterness in the other. This suggests the need for equitable social integration, where both are actively engaged in the process of building new social networks without sacrificing their respective individual identities.

Cultural difference within the relationship (by approximately 18% of respondents) further complicated adaptation processes. Those couples who differed in their cultural backgrounds frequently had to negotiate unique family cultures, creating their own traditions, expectations, and norms. As one respondent described, needing to create their "mini-culture" required ongoing discussion regarding customs, parenting styles, and even basic daily habits. Negotiation was described as challenging but worthwhile and highlighted the need for dedicated and overt interaction to manage cross-cultural relational management. Quantitative findings corroborated these qualitative results, with some 58% of immigrant couples indicating significant stress related to adjustment to new settings. Surprisingly, however, many of these couples indicated heightened satisfaction after an initial adjustment period, in line with the U-shaped adaptation curve posited by previous research (Accordinin et al., 2018).

For a few couples, migration provided independence from the influence of extended family, thereby promoting relational autonomy. In conclusion, physical distance and migration are fundamental stressors of modern relationships. Anticipatory planning, open communication, mutual reassurance, and active efforts to maintain the relationship are essential for effective coping with these stressors. Coupled individuals are encouraged to practice conscious efforts like the establishment of shared social activities, keeping lines of communication open, and procuring external support from counselors, support groups, or host communities, which cumulatively can enhance resilience, relational satisfaction, and successful adaptation.

### **The Strain of Busy Lives and Work Responsibilities**

The interplay between career demands and relationship health was highly evident in our findings. The rush of contemporary life extensive work hours, commuting, second jobs, or juggling several tasks at once was frequently cited as an obstacle to quality couple time. In our survey, "not spending time together" was the #1 self-reported problem overall, selected by 62% of respondents as a major issue in their relationship. This cuts across demographics: dual-income couples with small children felt it most strongly (with childcare and careers leaving essentially no couple time), but even young unmarried couples without children talked about it, often because each was in stressful early career phases or graduate school. There was a clear

trend that linked work stress to conflict at home. As noted, 71% of the respondents perceived work stress spilling over into their personal life. (mccrarencompliance.com)

In addition, most of the participants provided concrete examples. For example, one of the participants stated, "When I've had a bad day at work, I end up either venting on my spouse or just shutting down completely." In either case, it affects her." Another said, "My partner is a first responder with non-standard hours. Our shifts almost never overlap and it's been really tough on intimacy." These real reports accurately represent the crossover stress and time-based conflict phenomenon well-documented within occupational psychology. It was not uncommon that after a long day, couples would spend evenings on solo screens or projects rather than connecting, simply because of exhaustion. This, over time, can generate a feeling of drifting apart.

Interestingly, our results suggest it's not just the quantity of time impacted, but the quality of interaction. Even if in the same physical location, too much stress can lead to irritability or distraction (linking back to the technology issue, since stressed individuals might cope with it by tuning out on their phones). So, hectic lifestyle challenges tend to emerge in such subtle forms: less date nights, cut-short conversations, neglect of partners' needs, and decreased sexual frequency; all symptoms that the participants had reported. For example, one respondent stated, "We had weekly date nights before, and now it's more like once every 2-3 months since something always comes up; work deadlines, family obligations, or we're simply too tired." She also believed this change had killed their romance, as did others.

Our research also identified gender-based differences in work-life stress management. In certain traditional contexts, long-hours-working men perceived themselves as doing their part as breadwinners, yet their wives felt emotionally neglected. In egalitarian contexts, by comparison, both spouses experienced guilt, either for not spending enough family time or not contributing enough at work, a stereotypical depiction of the work-family conflict issue. Some respondents specifically mentioned burnout and mental health issues arising from overwork that subsequently forced their partner to play the role of caregiver, changing the dynamics of the relationship.

On an affirmative note, several couples successfully developed routines aimed at safeguarding their relationship amidst their hectic schedules. A notable pattern observed among couples with higher levels of satisfaction in our sample was the creation of designated times or rituals deemed sacred. For example, one couple consistently reserved Sunday mornings for a dedicated "us time" brunch followed by a walk, regardless of any other commitments. Another couple reported having a 15-minute evening talk before bedtime in order to tell each other how they felt about the events of the day as a means of keeping them together. These strategies are in line with general work-life balance suggestions and align with our finding that couples who reported a minimum of 5 hours of quality couple time each week were considerably more satisfied in their relationships compared to those who reported less (a difference in mean satisfaction score of ~12 points).

Both employer and societal pressures were also indirectly portrayed. Some of the participants noted that employers expected 24/7 availability or that they felt obligated to keep working so that they could ensure their future financially, and this made them feel like they had "no choice" but to put their relationship on ice at times. This implies that resolution of the problems associated with a busy life does not rest only with the couple but may necessitate structural or cultural interventions, i.e., employers promoting work-life balance or a more equitable distribution of household responsibilities at the community level.

In short, the pace of contemporary life and work-related stress comprise one of the most common issues whether it makes headlines in the manner that concerns such as "social media" or "woke culture" would, it is a slow erosion of intimacy for many individuals. Our research attests that as life becomes more hectic, love can get relegated to the backburner, more often than not causing a detrimental effect on the relationship. This underscores the necessity for couples to make time for one another purposely and to deal with stress, issues to be discussed in the recommendations section.

### **Role of Upbringing and Unresolved Personal Problems**

Most critical among the challenges our findings pose is that of an individual's background, previous relationships, and emotional baggage in influencing today's relationship dynamics. This psychological or internal factor is less apparent than external ones such as work demands or social media, but no less crucial according to our findings. The issues most of our participants experienced in their love lives had less to do with contemporary technological advancement or social fashion, but with lingering habits and emotional baggage.

Attachment patterns appeared implicitly in a number of interviews. We met people who could be described as having anxious attachment (e.g., requiring constant reassurance, fear of abandonment) or avoidant attachment (e.g., inability to express emotion, pulling away during conflict). They themselves often connected these tendencies with their childhood or past experiences. One woman attributed her tendency towards clinginess to her father's absence while she was growing up. She explained, "I'm always afraid my partner will leave me, and I know it's irrational but I can't shake it." It leads me to act controlling, which then causes real problems." Another man recognized that his reluctance to talk about feelings stemmed from a family where "problems were silently endured, not discussed." These insights align with attachment theory, and indeed such personal reflections were usually after the individual had gone through some learning (therapy or deep conversations prompted by the study perhaps).

The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) measure in our survey gave quantitative support. Respondents who reported several types of childhood adversity (e.g., experiencing abuse, witnessing domestic violence, or parental divorce) were more likely to report relationship difficulties. In particular, those with  $\geq 4$  ACEs were far more likely to also report low trust in their partner and inability to manage conflict calmly. The findings demonstrated an inverse moderate correlation ( $r \approx -.34$ ) between relationship satisfaction and ACE score. Interestingly, one of the key findings was that 55% of those with a history of childhood abuse found it challenging to fully trust their partner's love compared to merely 20% of those without this kind of history. This finding aligns with earlier studies suggesting that childhood abuse is linked with trust and intimacy-related issues in adulthood. ([pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/))

Previous romantic experiences, as much as they are understood to be part of the emotional construction of a person's conception of love, have also been a significant factor. Some of the respondents indicated that previous heartbreak or betrayal have influenced the present relationships. For instance, someone who was cheated on in a prior relationship indicated a pattern of obsessively checking the current partner's location in the initial period of their relationship before developing a sense of trust. Someone who experienced a very tumultuous past relationship had developed harmful communication habits that needed to be changed with the support of her new partner. These sorts of personal backgrounds are not new to contemporary society; nonetheless, the fact that individuals are discussing therapy and recovery more openly now is significant. They said they or their partners had sought therapy

together or individually to deal with problems such as anger management, trauma, or self-esteem. That therapy was said to really improve the health of their relationship.

Interestingly, when asked about biggest challenges, less than half directly said something like "my own problems" or "her past trauma." Participants tended to name external stressors as the presenting issue. Yet following interviews and reflection, it became evident that problems within typically either underlie or inform external ones. A couple struggling with social media jealousy, for instance, might discover the root actually resides in one partner's insecurity based on events earlier in life. Such a stressful life can be particularly damaging if neither of the partners acquired stress-coping communication skills in his or her family of origin. Problems stemming from upbringing are therefore an optic through which all manner of problems are viewed and addressed.

One of the notable examples from our data was that of a couple whose families had experienced divorce. They would admit that whenever there were periods of heated argument, each would automatically think of breaking up because they had subconsciously internalized the notion that ultimately, relationships fail. The emergence of this awareness facilitated a deliberate reaffirmation of commitment and disrupted what they termed the "divorce default mindset." This underscores the notion that self-awareness, coupled with an appreciation of each partner's background, has the potential to convert a pattern that could jeopardize the relationship into a valuable opportunity for development.

In conclusion, while not unique to the modern period, one's past and upbringing still have a significant influence on modern romantic relationships. It should be remembered that the modern period does offer more resources, including therapy, literature, and internet support communities, with which to confront such obstacles; nevertheless, such challenges still constitute a significant barrier. The results of our research emphasize that building healthy romantic relationships in the modern world involves not just dealing with issues in the present but also generating healing and personal growth at an individual level. As one of the coaches we spoke with put it, "often it's not the content of a fight, but the context of personal triggers." Our results firmly confirm this observation.

Following close examination of the findings in the various domains, it is evident that today's couples must navigate a multifaceted task: managing technology use, juggling competing values, spanning geographical gaps, managing time, and mending emotional injuries. In the next section (Discussion), these findings will be explained within a larger framework, their implications and relationships explored, and practical recommendations for couples and practitioners derived.

## **Discussion**

The obstacles listed in this research provide an overview of the issues that accompany maintaining romantic relationships in contemporary society. In this chapter, we summarize these findings, explain the dynamics of various factors, and outline their meaning for couples as well as for professionals working with them, including therapists, coaches, and researchers. We also synthesize these findings with existing literature to identify any convergence or divergence. Generally speaking, our discussion deals with: the pervasiveness of technology, the importance of forming societal norms, the exigencies of modern life, the deep roots of personal backgrounds, and most importantly, the coping mechanisms that have emerged, segueing into our recommendations.

Interrelatedness of Factors: Of significance is how far-reaching are the interrelationships of these challenges. They don't operate alone within a relationship; rather, they often complement and enhance one another. As an example, consider a generic yet common scenario: A couple is not afforded much time together due to intensive work obligations (Busy Lifestyle). When they do eventually get a night off, one of them is still mentally preoccupied or relaxing via social media (Digital Distraction), while the other wants to discuss a political event that upset them recently (Woke Culture/Values). They get into a small argument, but instead of logically resolving it, the discussion triggers a conflict fear in one of them who grew up in a high-conflict household (Upbringing), leading him/her to withdraw. The end result is a missed opportunity for interpersonal intimacy and a heightening of emotional distance on that given night. This example demonstrates how one single night can have multiple dimensions: social structure, technological effects, and personal tendencies. Modern romantic relationships require couples to juggle multiple aspects at once, which can be overwhelming. It is thus understandable why many people feel that relationships require "more effort" nowadays than in the past. The good news is that couples who are successful at negotiating these problems have healthy, sophisticated relationships; basically, they have passed more tests and, through doing so, have more advanced skills and understanding between them.

Revisiting Social Media and Technology's Influence: It is important to realize that our generation is the first to grapple with the pervasive influence of social media on love life. Couples in previous generations did not have the burden of constant connectivity with the outside world intruding into their personal lives. The influence of social media, as observed by our research and others, is distraction of concentration, the propensity for social comparison, and the creation of new means for jealousy and misunderstandings (medicalnewstoday.com), Erliksson et al. (2021) found that reduced satisfaction is linked to more conflicts and even addictive social media use. Researchgate.net is particularly intriguing, it suggests a vicious cycle can form: discontent leads to further online escapism, which further harms the relationship. Breaking such a cycle most likely involves behavior change by design (as we will propose). Another nuance is that technology is not inherently bad; it is all a matter of boundaries and use patterns. Partnerships where partners utilize technology as a tool for enhancing their relationship (for example, by setting up Facetime appointments when apart or by sending inspiring texts throughout the day) will fare better. One implication that might be drawn from this, then, is that proficiency in digital communication in relationships understanding the appropriate ways to use devices to enhance the relationship would ideally be a part of relationship education courses. This aligns with Morris's review that it's the application of technology that brings value or damage (medicalnewstoday.com).

### **Societal Values, Polarization, and Ideological Congruence**

Romantic relationships in modern society ever more overlap with deep societal changes and ideological fault lines. In contrast to past eras, when prevailing norms (be they shared religious affiliations or differentiated gender roles) provided firm templates, couples today tend to create their own mutual stories, with both benefits and pitfalls. The phenomenon popularly termed "woke" culture, characterized by heightened sensitivity to social justice, identity politics, and ideological awareness, exemplifies this trend.

Our findings show that political or ideological values held in common between people are now integral parts of partner choice. Around 68% of the respondents cited ideological similarity as an important consideration, and nearly half claimed that radical ideological differences would even threaten their relationships (matchmakingcompany.com). The growing demand for ideological compatibility, especially among younger demographics and females, points to a



generational shift towards relationship that is significantly characterized by values held in common. Dating apps render such a trend achievable by enabling users to filter prospective partners specifically by political or ideological views. Although such tools allow users to avoid future ideological conflicts, they also assist in the creation of echo chambers, which tends to strengthen rather than bridge societal polarization. Individuals who only choose partners who share their views may be denying themselves the potential for development that lies in exposure to differing viewpoints (psychologytoday.com).

Social psychological research indicates that contact between people with different viewpoints can successfully reduce prejudice and promote personal development, if managed correctly (Allport's Contact Hypothesis, 1954). Still, effective management of ideological disparities requires mindful relational competencies. The current research, guided by precepts of effective conflict resolution outlined by John Gottman (Gottman & Silver, 2015), posits that couples who discuss value-based concerns on the grounds of respect, attentive listening, and empathy are the key towards bridging even extensive ideological divides. Most participants advocated a constructive attitude towards ideological difference, perceiving disagreement as a space for learning and development or a surmountable challenge instead of an insurmountable barrier.

Thus, relationship coaches and therapists can learn from adopting an even more explicit stance in dealing with ideological and identity differences in therapy. This could include providing couples with specific skills and affective intelligence necessary to negotiate value-based disagreements successfully, highlighting Gottman's conflict resolution style of increased communication and understanding (Gottman, 1999).

### **Migration, Structural Barriers and Demanding Life Styles**

Our findings highlight that numerous relationship stressors are structural and external, frequently outside the immediate control of couples. Migration and stressful work lifestyles illustrate how external social conditions have a direct impact on relationship well-being. While couples demonstrate impressive resilience, structural remedies are still essential. For example, immigration policies that allow for quicker spousal reunification or corporate policies that promote flexible work schedules could significantly reduce relationship tensions brought about by external circumstances. Employers who prioritize family-friendly initiatives, such as reducing burnout in the workplace and facilitating work-life boundaries as recommended by research like Headspace's workplace wellness survey consequently improve relationship stability and productivity (mccrarencompliance.com).

This concurs with the "productive relationships" framework, a key concept championed by bodies like the Institute of Productivity and Business Innovation Management, in which personal relationship stability contributes to general workplace and societal productivity. Given that work and home-life stability are reciprocals, it stands to reason that relationship well-being is not only an individual but also a societal and organizational responsibility that warrants more expansive policy initiatives.

### **Individual Background, Emotional Ties and Interpersonal Resilience**

The other critical factor highlighted in our research is the long-term influence of personal upbringing and early life experiences, closely following attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969). Issues rooted in traumatic childhood experiences (ACEs) are frequent in adult intimate relationships, and one may deduce that emotional health of a person significantly influences relationship outcomes. Therapists may apply individual counseling alongside couple's therapy,

since securely attached behaviors and emotional intelligence developed individually possess profound influences to be used to benefit relationships jointly (Johnson & Whiffen, 2003).

In addition, accepting the influence of intergenerational processes, future research should explore how current relational challenges influence the relational expectations of future generations. As demonstrated by previous research, children raised in unstable or very conflictual family environments often develop a guarded approach or have altered expectations about romantic relationships (van IJzendoorn & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 2019). As such, early interventions aimed at enhancing emotional intelligence and promoting secure attachment among younger generations are vital to building resilience in future relationships ([pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](http://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov)).

### **Resilience, Adaptability, and Cumulative Advantages**

Despite the numerous relationship stressors faced, many couples in our study showed active resilience development strategies. The strategies identified included systematic communication routines, deliberate rituals, therapeutic and counseling interventions, and explicit definition of common goals. Our findings align with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), which explains how couples dynamically adjust across various interconnected systems (individual, relational, societal).

One of the important insights was the cumulative nature of resilience: couples who had managed a major challenge (e.g., communication at a distance) were frequently more capable of managing challenges that followed (e.g., ideological disagreements or external pressures). Couples who were burdened by an unresolved challenge, as in the case of chronic occupational stress, became increasingly susceptible to additional problems, highlighting the importance of early intervention and active skill building.

### **Academic and Applied Contributions**

This study makes both theoretical and practical contributions. Academically, our multivariate approach, integrating a range of current stressors in one ecological model, is novel. In contrast to existing research, which has, in the main, separated out individual relationship stressors, this study emphasizes their intertwinement, reflecting Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory and emphasizing the multifaceted interaction of individual, relational, and structural factors. In practice, findings are interpreted into specific counseling interventions. For example, knowing that social media disagreements frequently mask underlying trust problems can help relationship coaches refocus interventions on establishing trust and emotional safety, rather than on changing surface-level device-use behaviors. Likewise, knowing that ideological disagreement is not in itself corrosive but requires conflict-management and empathy-building skills may prompt therapists to explicitly train these skills.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Conclusion**

The research explored key factors impeding the maintenance of romantic relationships in today's world, presenting an all-round conceptual model, pragmatic experiences, and an encouraging outlook built upon empirical observation.

### **Explanation of the Conceptual Framework**

Our research provided a multi-factorial model highlighting the intertwinement of digital distractions, ideological polarization ('woke' culture), structural reasons (work stress and migration), and personal background (attachment issues). Unlike previous research that tackled

the narrowly focused issues individually, this model recognizes that relationship issues dynamically interact with one another. For instance, work stress may exacerbate digital distractions, and ideological conflicts can become exacerbated under conditions of stress or distance.

### **Recommendations**

Future researchers can expand on this integrative model to further understand relationship satisfaction and stability.

### **Greater Practical Applications for Therapists and Coaches**

From our findings, we offer relationship therapists and coaches the following targeted strategies:

#### **Digital Management**

Encourage couples to set firm technology boundaries (e.g., daily "device-free" time), prioritize face-to-face interaction, and negotiate social media terms of use to prevent conflict and build trust. Handling Ideological Differences: Offer couples direct skill training on Gottman's conflict-management ideals, e.g., empathy skills training, active listening, and respect for dialogue. Educate them that ideological differences can be value-enhancing if handled in a positive way.

#### **Structural Adaptation**

Suggest that couples who are experiencing external stress (long-distance or high-demand work) make explicit plans for reunification, engage in regular communication rituals (daily phone calls, shared internet activities), and draw on external community or workplace support to alleviate strain.

#### **Personal History and Attachment Dynamics**

It is advisable to incorporate individual counseling or psychoeducational components dealing with attachment patterns into couple's therapy. Therapists need to invite couples to examine their personal histories and intentionally establish emotional safety, particularly where traumatic childhood events (ACEs) exist. Brevity and Enhanced Final Message In summary, our research demonstrates that as modern relationships grow more complicated than ever, couples are well capable of thriving through intentional adaptation, tenacity, and strategic interventions. Modern romantic relationships require greater self-awareness, empathy, and active negotiation of external and internal challenges. But couples who surmount the complications are stronger, happier, and more intimate. The path forward, as noted through empirical studies and practical application, emphasizes the need for hope: Through discernment, commitment, and evidence-based practice, love can not only survive but genuinely flourish in contemporary society.

#### **Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper. No financial or personal relationships that could inappropriately influence the research were disclosed. The findings and interpretations presented in this paper are solely those of the authors and do not reflect the views of any affiliated institutions or funding bodies. If any conflicts arise in the future, they will be disclosed in subsequent publications or communications. The authors are committed to maintaining transparency and integrity in the research process and in the dissemination of its findings.

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