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Improving Satisfaction in Intimate Relationships

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Abstract

Abandonment fear is a construct that has been long associated with a person's relationship with friends, family, and partners due to its impact on one's behaviour within those relationships. The present research study examines the correlation between abandonment fear and the relationship satisfaction of clients and their partners, in intimate relationships. The study is significant in the field of clinical psychology and mental health as it contributes added knowledge to the role of abandonment fear in relationships and how this construct impacts the satisfaction perceived by members of a romantic relationship. The purpose of the study is to produce and review findings that may be beneficial to mental health professionals and individuals who are in a relationship, or are planning to start a relationship. A quantitative, correlational research design was utilized in order to analyse the data. A series of Pearson's correlation r tests were conducted in order to test the study's hypotheses. Relationships between abandonment fear and relationship satisfaction of clients and their partners were discussed. Findings from this study may aid treating professionals in terms of providing a more complete understanding of the relationships between the constructs of abandonment fear and client and partner relationship satisfaction.

Keywords: Abandonment; fear; relationship; satisfaction; trust

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1. Introduction

Abandonment fear is a vital factor of a person's relationship with friends, partners, family, and others, mainly because of its influence on one's behaviour [25]. In social interactions, fear of abandonment will determine, to an extent, how a person will react in a given situation [11]. A successful relationship, which is theoretically proposed to be composed of trust, abandonment fear, passion, love, intimacy, satisfaction, and commitment [16,9], is a strong predictor of an individual's quality of life [2]. Furthermore, individuals who had low abandonment fear, pertaining to their current relationship, experienced low levels of jealousy and a high frequency of intimacy, which is often associated with satisfaction in a romantic relationship [9]. Research has shown that being in a satisfying relationship enhances both the psychological and physical health of a person [25] & [2]. The afore mentioned components of a relationship are all influenced by abandonment fear and the negative impact that it may have on the health of the romantic relationship [12].

Relationship satisfaction is defined as the quality of a relationship that is observed through the different aspects of the relationship, such as abandonment fear, trust, commitment, contentment, understanding, and impactation [2]. Being satisfied in a relationship is often associated with being satisfied with one's life [1]. Relationship satisfaction has been measured and gauged through the perception of a person's past and current life experiences [2]. An individual with low levels of abandonment fear tend to experience less social abandonment and exclusion in part due to being secure with their partner [31]. Meanwhile, persons who have high abandonment fear, pertaining to their relationship, tend to end their relationship before it becomes serious and long term [8]. Additionally, studies have shown that lack of trust is associated with individuals experiencing emotions that lead to the fear of being abandoned by their partner [11]. Research has also indicated that individuals who exhibit less trust in their partners tend to believe that their relationship is unstable [8]. This perception of the relationship as being unstable tends to lead to a fear of abandonment and the need for frequent reassurance within the relationship, which puts pressure on the relationship [31]. Individuals with lower levels of trust in their partners are more likely to have unstable relationships as compared to individuals with higher levels of trust in their partners. Individuals with lower levels of trust in their partners are also more prone to fear and to expect rejection from their partners [8]. The feeling of being abandoned in, or socially excluded from, a relationship poses a strong threat to an individual's psychological wellbeing [31].

Previous research studies have indicated that abandonment fear is one of the factors that influence the status of a relationship [8]. Moreover, abandonment fear in a relationship has been associated with how partners react and cooperate in certain situations [24]. However, whether there exists a direct correlation between abandonment fear and relationship satisfaction, has not been explored. Although theoretical postulation suggests a direct correlation between the general concept of abandonment and relationship satisfaction, further research is needed in order to determine the nature of the relationship between abandonment, and more specifically abandonment fear, and the relationship satisfaction of both members of a couple. The purpose of this study is to determine whether abandonment fear is directly related to relationship satisfaction. This is an area that has not been previously explored in research studies.

1.1. Abandonment and Abandonment Fear

Most studies on fear of abandonment involved children in the context of post-divorce adjustment. Moreover, the study of [30], which focused on children's post-divorce adjustment problems and fear of abandonment, found that there is a significant correlation between the scores of the mother and the child for fear of abandonment. Thus, giving credence to the hypothesis that a high or low level of abandonment fear of one member of a relationship may lead to a similar level of abandonment fear in the other member of the relationship.

In the context of romantic relationships, the study of [23] examined fear of abandonment in relation to attachment. [23] Proposed that individuals with a negative model of self (i.e. having high attachment anxiety) will have a higher tendency to forgive because of their fear of abandonment. [17] Added that attempting to suppress thoughts of abandonment will result in an increase in attachment anxiety of highly preoccupied individuals as the relationship persists. However, in a later study, [18] argued that there is also the possibility that sensitivity to cues of abandonment may decrease over time, but individuals with high attachment anxiety will continue to use strategies to regulate anxiety. As a result, [13] concluded that individuals with high attachment anxiety may view the difficulties of their partner as a chance to express their own attachment needs, thus putting additional pressure on the relationship and partners. In addition, this attachment anxiety may also prevent the anxious partner from providing support in response to the needs of the partner [13]. With the above in mind, fear of abandonment can be viewed as a predicament experienced by individuals who have high attachment anxiety. As a result of their 2001 study, [13] predicted that one's fear of abandonment would most likely impact one's relationship satisfaction and proposed the area of research of the current project as being a worthy one requiring exploration. In summary, there is a lack in the body of knowledge on the role of fear of abandonment and its relationship with relationship satisfaction, which is the focus of the current study.

1.2. Relationship Satisfaction

Relationship satisfaction has been described as "some sort of summative judgement (on behalf of the members of a couple) about the intimate relationship" [20]. [19,20,21] refer to relationship satisfaction as the "encompassing partners' subjective feelings about their relationship". According to [3], relationship satisfaction is "the degree to which an individual is content and satisfied with his or her relationship". [3] Added that relationship satisfaction determines the length and success of intimate relationships. In 2000, a scale that measures relationship satisfaction was developed by [16], entitled the *Perceived Relationship Quality Components Inventory* (PRQC). This scale consists of six subscales: trust, commitment, intimacy, abandonment fear, passion, and love [23]. The scale was developed based upon the hypotheses of the developers regarding the importance of the six subscales to perceived relationship quality (a synonym for relationship satisfaction). Therefore, this scale, and the relevant hypotheses of the developers of the scale, supports the current study's assumption that fear of abandonment plays a role in relationship satisfaction.

Most mental health professionals would assume that, when a person has a high fear of abandonment, their relationship satisfaction will be lower than that of a person who has low abandonment fear. As mentioned

above, the researcher aims to assess whether and how the level of abandonment fear of a client, impacts the client's relationship satisfaction and the satisfaction that their partner finds within the relationship.

1.3. Abandonment Fear and Relationship Satisfaction of the Participant

Researchers first began to study abandonment fear within the context of infant attachment style and relationship satisfaction in mother-child and parent-child relationships. The Anxious-Ambivalent attachment style is characterized by preoccupations with abandonment and a link was found between infants with Anxious-Ambivalent attachment styles and lowered relationship satisfaction by an abundance of researchers [10,22,29]. Furthermore, many studies have found a link between adults with Anxious-Ambivalent attachment styles and lowered relationship satisfaction, within the context of romantic relationships [10,14,26].

Researchers have also become interested in the construct of abandonment, independent of the field of infant and adult attachment style. [27] Studied intimate relationships and, on the basis of his research, postulated that it was possible that an individual who had a history of being abandoned would be likely to have lower relationship satisfaction than an individual who did not have a history of abandonment. However, [27] only hypothesized that the above correlation could exist and did not test his hypothesis empirically. [6] Studied the mother-child relationship and other interpersonal relationships and also postulated that high abandonment fear may lead to lower relationship satisfaction in the above contexts. Again, [6] did not test this hypothesis, and merely suggested that it was a possibility. Thus, the findings of previous researchers indicate that individuals with high abandonment fear, or a history of abandonment, are more likely to have lower relationship satisfaction than individuals with low abandonment fear, or little history of abandonment, though no empirical studies have proven or disproven said hypothesis.

In the current study, the term abandonment fear is used to describe the level of fear that a person has that their partner will abandon them, or leave the relationship. The purpose of this study is to research the correlation between abandonment fear and relationship satisfaction in the current romantic relationship. For the purposes of this study, abandonment fear will be characterised by any experience in the participants' past and any current experience that leads them to be fearful that their current partner will abandon them. Abandonment fear, in this study, may be comprised of any of the, above mentioned, causes of abandonment fear and additional causes that have not yet been measured empirically. The researcher has chosen to measure abandonment fear in this manner as abandonment fear, as defined in this manner, is the most directly applicable construct to the therapeutic setting. Clients do not present in therapy with their abandonment fears carefully separated into distinct constructs, rather they present with a whole gamut of experiences that have caused their current fear of abandonment by their specific partner, related to their childhoods, upbringing, past experiences in relationships, their experience of the current relationship, etcetera. Abandonment fear, as defined by the participants' unique experiences of the above events, is what this researcher seeks to measure, as well as the relationship between abandonment fear and relationship satisfaction.

1.4. Abandonment and Relationship Satisfaction of the Client's Partner

A plethora of studies have indicated the possibility of a significant relationship between abandonment and relationship satisfaction. However, there are no existing studies that measure the impact of a participant's level of abandonment fear on their partner's relationship satisfaction. The findings of the current study will contribute to the body of knowledge of the said constructs. This study aims to find a link between clients' levels of abandonment fear and the relationship satisfaction of their partners'.

For the purposes of the current study, the member of the couple with the higher level of abandonment fear was identified as the "Client" or "Type A Participant". The member of the couple with the lower level of abandonment fear was identified as the "Partner" or "Type B Participant". These identification titles were assigned so as to differentiate the two groups of participants.

The current study aims to address the gap in the literature concerning the direct correlation between abandonment fear and relationship satisfaction in intimate relationships. A quantitative, correlational research design is most appropriate for the data gathering process because the goal of the study is to assess the correlation between the aforementioned variables. A questionnaire containing items that was answered using a Likert scale was distributed to approximately 150 individuals and their results were used in the data analysis process. The researcher developed the *Survey of Motivation to Monitor Exchange* in order to measure level of abandonment fear, while the *Relationship Satisfaction Survey* [29] and the *Relationships Questionnaire* [5] were used to measure relationship satisfaction.

Although theoretical postulation suggests a correlation between the general concept of abandonment fear and relationship satisfaction, further research is needed in order to determine whether a direct correlation actually exists. In the following section, the author will outline her hypotheses about how abandonment fear impacts the client and his/her partner. This researcher hypothesizes that participants with low levels of abandonment fear will have higher relationship satisfaction, relative to participants with high levels of abandonment fear.

It is proposed that the topic of this research project will contribute to the field of clinical psychology by giving psychologists, professionals in the field of mental health, and the general public further information as to the role that abandonment fear plays in intimate relationships. It is hoped that the findings generated by this study will allow mental health professionals and the general public itself to understand the unique challenges that people with certain levels of abandonment fear are likely to experience in intimate relationships. As understanding of the issues at hand is an essential step to solving any problem, it is hoped that, by understanding the levels of abandonment fear that members of a couple have and how this can manifest in the intimate relationship, empathy for oneself and one's partner may result, and healing can begin.

Although the findings of previous research studies suggest a correlation between the general concept of abandonment and relationship satisfaction, further research is needed in order to determine the strength of the correlation between abandonment fear and the relationship satisfaction of both members of a couple. In the following section, the researcher will outline her hypotheses about how abandonment fear impacts the client and his/her partner.

1.5. Clients' Abandonment Fear and Client Relationship Satisfaction

There are no existing studies that measure the correlation between a client's level of abandonment fear and the clients' relationship satisfaction.

1.6. Clients' Abandonment Fear and Partner Relationship Satisfaction

There are no existing studies that measure the correlation between a clients' abandonment fear and their partners' relationship satisfaction.

In summary, the researcher proposes that the clients' (Type A Participants) level of abandonment fear will be significantly correlated with his/her relationship satisfaction and the relationship satisfaction of their partners (Type B Participants).

1.7. Research Hypotheses

The present study will test the following hypotheses in order to investigate the nature of the relationships between abandonment fear of the client and the relationship satisfaction of the client and the client's partner. The specific hypotheses of the researcher to be tested in this study are addressed below.

Hypothesis 1: Clients with high abandonment fear will have lower relationship satisfaction than clients with low abandonment fear.

Hypothesis 2: Partners of clients with high abandonment fear will have lower relationship satisfaction than partners of clients with low abandonment fear.

2. Materials and Methods

A sample of convenience was used. Two-hundred questionnaires were distributed and one-hundred and forty two were returned (response rate = 71%). Thus, there were one-hundred and forty two participants involved in the study. Fifty four (37.76%) of the participants were male and eighty eight (62.24%) of the participants were female. The ages of participants ranged from 18 to 84 ($M = 36.53$, $SD = 13.55$). Ninety-four (65.73%) of the participants were married. The length of the relationships of participants ranged from 1 to 795 months ($M = 52.33$, $SD = 23.20$). The only criterion for inclusion in the study was that participants must have been involved in a relationship prior to the commencement of the study, and/or have been in a relationship at the time of the study and both members of the relationship agreed to be participants in the study.

For the purpose of the study, a convenience sampling plan was used. Willingness to participate in the study was characterized, in this case, by the positive response of the participant to the researcher's invitation to join the study (as invited during a telephone call).

The questionnaire was compiled for the purpose of this study and consisted of measures from a number of different sources. The self-report measure assessed the abandonment fear and relationship satisfaction of

participants. The questionnaire was divided into two sections, and was five pages long. The sections will be discussed in the order in which they were administered to participants. Questions concerning abandonment fear were included in the *Exchange Orientation: Abandonment Fear* section (section 1) and questions relating to relationship satisfaction were included in the *Relationship Satisfaction* section (section 2). The questionnaire also included a demographics section entitled *Personal Information*.

2.1. Personal Information

At the end of the questionnaire was a demographics section where-in questions concerning age, sex, marital status and length of current relationship were posed.

2.2. Section 1 of Questionnaire: Survey of Motivation to Monitor Exchange

The *Survey of Motivation to Monitor Exchange*, adapted and used to measure abandonment fear in the current study, was originally developed by the researcher to measure exchange orientation. However, this survey was chosen to measure client's level of abandonment fear in the present study as the questions within it directly relate to abandonment fear. The questions within the *Survey of Motivation to Monitor Exchange* pose real life examples of occurrences that typically occur within romantic relationships and measures the participants' reactions to these events in terms of the extent to which they worry that their partner will abandon them based on the posed event. For instance, one of the questions from the survey reads: "When my partner's contributions to the relationship decrease, I worry that he/she is about to leave me". The *Survey of Motivation to Monitor Exchange* was also chosen to measure abandonment fear as it has high reliability and because no other measures of abandonment fear, depicting situations in the context of romantic relationships, could be found.

The Survey of Motivation to Monitor Exchange: Abandonment Fear utilized a Likert scale from 1 to 5. Participants recorded the number (from 1 - 5) that best indicated their response to each item. 1 stood for "Never" and 5 stood for "Very Often". Participants recorded the number (from 1 - 5) that best indicated their response to each item. The participant's scores on each item were then summed to give an index of the respondent's level of abandonment fear. High scores on items 1, 2 and 3 indicated that the respondent had a high level of abandonment fear and low scores indicated that the respondent had a low fear of abandonment. There were 3 items in the *Survey of Motivation to Monitor Exchange* and the range of possible scores spread from 3 to 15. The reliability (Cronbach's α) for the *Survey of Motivation to Monitor Exchange* scale was .93. The *Survey of Motivation to Monitor Exchange* was developed for the present study and therefore, no other measures of internal consistency can be reported.

2.3. Section 2 of Questionnaire: Relationship Satisfaction

The *Relationship Satisfaction Survey* [29] was used to measure relationship satisfaction. Respondents were asked to rate statements (such as "I feel happy when I am with my partner") on a Likert scale from 1 to 5 according to how well each statement described their feelings concerning their relationship, where 1 stood for "Never" and 5 stood for "Very Often". Participants recorded the number (from 1 - 5) that best indicated their response to each item. These numbers were then summed to give an index of the respondent's relationship

satisfaction. A low score on items 1, 3 and 7 of this measure indicated that a participant possessed low relationship satisfaction, while a high score indicated high relationship satisfaction. Items 2, 4, 5, 6, and 8 were reverse coded as a high rating on these items indicated low relationship satisfaction. There were 8 items in this section of the questionnaire. The range of possible scores was from 8 – 40. The *Relationship Satisfaction Survey* was chosen to measure relationship satisfaction in this study as it is a widely used measure and reaches acceptable levels of internal consistency. [28,29] reported acceptable internal consistency levels (α coefficients of .87 and .88, respectively) for their measure. The reliability of this scale for the present sample was .91.

2.4. Secondary Measure of Relationship Satisfaction

In addition to using the *Relationship Satisfaction Survey* [29], the first item of the *Relationships Questionnaire* [5] was used in analyses to measure relationship satisfaction. This item reads “Overall, I am satisfied with the relationship that I have with my partner”. This measure utilised a Likert scale from 1 - 5. Participants recorded the number (from 1 - 5) that best indicated their response to the item. This number gave an index of the respondent’s relationship satisfaction. A low score on this measure indicated low relationship satisfaction. The range of possible scores was from 1 - 5. The reliability (Cronbach’s α) of this scale could not be calculated as it only contained one item [26].

Full approval was granted by the director of Blue Marble University before any of the participants were approached. Participants (Type A and Type B participants) were telephoned by the researcher, who explained the purpose of the study and the requirements of the participant (e.g. to complete the questionnaire), and asked whether the participant would partake in the study. Participants who consented to involvement in the study received the questionnaire by mail. Participants were instructed to seal their completed questionnaire in the pre-paid, addressed envelope provided to them by the researcher. Participants sent their completed questionnaires to the researcher. Participants were asked to respond to the questionnaire in the order in which it was presented. Participation in the study was voluntary.

Participants were also instructed not to inform their partner that they were completing the questionnaire until they had returned it as it was thought that the accuracy of the respondents’ answers might be impacted if it were possible for their partner to view the responses.

The raw data from the responses to the survey instrument was transferred and saved in a password-protected computer file. The responses provided to each of the questions were imported into a Microsoft Excel® spreadsheet. Each of the participants who completed the survey instruments were assigned a unique control number. This control number was used to maintain the confidentiality of the participants as well as to specify which responses correspond to the particular participants in the study.

Personal information, such as name of the respondents and email addresses, will be separated from the control numbers and corresponding data. To control for duplicate survey respondents, *Survey Monkey* used email addresses to identify the participants and to ensure that each participant could only participate in the study once.

3. Results

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the relationship satisfaction of clients and their intimate partners. This study also aimed to assess the level of fear that clients had that they would be abandoned by their partners. Lastly, this study aimed to investigate the correlation between these constructs. The data used for this analysis were gathered through conducting a self-constructed survey questionnaire that measured the correlation between client abandonment fear and the relationship satisfaction of clients and their partners.

In order to determine whether there was a significant correlation between relationship satisfaction of both client and partner and abandonment fear of the client, a series of Pearson's correlation r were conducted.

A series of Pearson's correlation r tests were conducted for the first and second research questions posed in this study. As shown in Table 1, there was a negative correlation between the client's abandonment fear and client's relationship satisfaction (p value = .000). This means that the higher the score for abandonment fear, the lower the scores are in terms of client relationship satisfaction. In other words, clients with high abandonment fear had lower relationship satisfaction than clients with low abandonment fear. In addition to this, as shown in Table 2, there was also a negative correlation between the abandonment fear and partner's relationship satisfaction (p value = .000). This means that the higher the client's abandonment fear scores, the lower the scores for partner relationship satisfaction. In other words, partners of clients with high abandonment fear had lower relationship satisfaction than partners of clients with low abandonment fear.

Table 1: Correlation between Abandonment Fear and Client Relationship Satisfaction

		Client Abandonment
Client RS	Pearson Correlation	-.825**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	71

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

Table 2: Correlation between Abandonment Fear and Partner Relationship Satisfaction

		Client Abandonment
Partner RS	Pearson Correlation	-.574**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	71

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

The objective of this quantitative, correlational research study was to examine the relationship satisfaction of clients and their partners. A series of Pearson's correlation r were conducted in order to test the study's hypotheses. The findings showed a statistically significant, negative correlation between client abandonment fear and client and partner relationship satisfaction. Meaning that, the higher a client's abandonment fear was, the lower the client's and partner's relationship satisfaction was. In other words, the results of the study show that clients with high abandonment fear had lower relationship satisfaction than clients with low abandonment fear and partners of clients with high abandonment fear had lower relationship satisfaction than partners of clients with low abandonment fear.

The first and second hypotheses addressed the correlation between abandonment fear of clients and client and partner relationship satisfaction. A series of Pearson's correlation r tests were conducted. The results showed that there was a significant, negative correlation between abandonment fear and relationship satisfaction for both clients and partners. When a client has high abandonment fear, the relationship satisfaction of both clients and partners decreases.

4. Discussion

[24] Posited that some of the problems encountered by couples involve the lack of strong emotional ties, feeling of being loved, trusting each other and high abandonment fear. According to [25], abandonment fear is a vital factor of a person's relationship with friends, partners, family, and others, mainly because of its influence on one's behavior. The research of [4] has shown that fear of abandonment is an important factor when considering relationships, along with trust, interdependence, mutual acceptance, and engagement in shared activities. In social interactions, fear of abandonment determines, to an extent, how a person will react in a given situation [11,15]. A successful relationship, which is theoretically proposed to be composed of trust, abandonment fear, passion, love, intimacy, satisfaction, and commitment [15,7,9], is a strong predictor of an individual's quality of life [2]. Furthermore, [9] hypothesized that individual who had low abandonment fear, pertaining to their current relationship, experienced low levels of jealousy and a high frequency of intimacy, which is often associated with satisfaction in a romantic relationship. The research of [25,2] has shown that being in a satisfying relationship enhances both the psychological and physical health of a person. Furthermore, [12] hypothesized that the aforementioned components of a relationship are all influenced by abandonment fear and the negative impact that it may have on the health of the romantic relationship. [7,8] posit that one's abandonment fear level in romantic relationships is considered to be one of the most important components in developing a satisfying relationship. [8,9] stated that high abandonment fear in a relationship is said to lead individuals to test their partners for proof of their love and commitment. Lastly, [25] concluded that the insecurity and unease that arises from high abandonment fear in a relationship often results in relationship dissatisfaction.

It was concluded that the client's level of abandonment fear was directly and negatively correlated with the relationship satisfaction of the client and partner. Thus, the hypotheses of [24,25,4,11,15,9,12,2,8,7] support the new findings of this study that high levels of abandonment fear are correlated with low relationship satisfaction for both clients and partners.

Based on the results of the study, it can be said that abandonment fear is directly related to relationship satisfaction for both clients and partners. If clients are able decrease their abandonment fear, through counseling interventions, the relationship satisfaction of both clients and partners is likely to increase. It is also suggested that clients learn to identify the triggers of their abandonment fear that eventually lead them to fear that their partner will leave them, and engage in counseling to reduce this abandonment fear, in order to increase their and their partners' relationship satisfaction.

The general problem examined in this quantitative study is the need for information on how abandonment fear impacts the relationship satisfaction of clients and clients' intimate partners. The results of this study determine that the higher a client's abandonment fear, the lower the relationship satisfaction of the client and the partner.

The very nature of the field of Psychology is subjective. There is no way to assess a person's thoughts and feelings in an entirely objective manner. The medical field has the ability to test patients using analytical equipment that can give objective measures that lend themselves well to analytical testing. However, due to the fact that there exists no analytical equipment that can read a person's thoughts and feelings, the field of Psychology must rely upon subjective self-report measures administered to subjects. These measures ask subjects to report their thoughts and feelings in an open and honest manner. There is no full proof way to ensure that the subjects are answering such measures openly and honestly. However, researchers in the field of Psychology believe that creating an environment in which the subject feels safe to answer study questions openly and honestly will produce more reliable data. Such an environment was created in this study by assuring the participants that the results of the study would be kept confidential, that the researcher would not know which participant had answered which questionnaire, asking the participants to complete the questionnaire alone and in an environment in which they were unlikely to be disturbed and by the researcher fostering a strong rapport with each participant.

Despite the fact that the results of Psychological testing are subjective, it is common practice for these results to undergo statistical testing in order to generate correlations. Statistical packages and programs designed for use with subjective Psychological data have been designed to aid researchers in the field of Psychology to generate correlations between constructs. Such a package (*SPSS 21.0*) was utilized in this study to generate correlations between the constructs of client abandonment fear and client and partner relationship satisfaction. While analyses generated by using subjective Psychological data are not considered exact Science, they are the best measures that can be produced using subjective data. For the above reason, Psychological researchers are not permitted to make statements such as this variable caused that variable to increase or decrease. However, it is considered acceptable, within the field of Psychology, for a researcher to state that, when one variable increases, another variable either increases or decreases (with no causality implied) and to make statements about the strength of the correlation between the two variables or constructs.

Another way in which researchers in the field of Psychology ensure that their data is more amenable to statistical testing is to conduct a quantitative, as opposed to a qualitative study. A quantitative study is one in which the participants rate their responses to questions using a scale which then generates data in number form that can be analysed statistically. A qualitative study is one in which the participants are free to answer questions

as they choose, using their own words. Qualitative data cannot be analysed statistically. Due to the fact that the researcher wanted to complete a quantitative study in which data could be analysed statistically, participants were asked to answer questions using a rating scale only and were asked not to generate additional responses or provide extra notes. If the researcher were to acquire such qualitative data, this would change the nature of the study from a strictly quantitative study to a combination of a qualitative and quantitative study. Combination quantitative and qualitative studies are not considered to meet the scientific standards established by the field of Psychology. The reason why combination quantitative and qualitative combination studies do not meet scientific standards upheld by the field of Psychology is because qualitative data adds an additional variable to the quantitative study that cannot be controlled for and thus the qualitative data impacts the more exact quantitative data, when the two types of data are gathered together.

It was evident that, based on the results of the study, that abandonment fear is directly related to relationship satisfaction for both clients and partners. If clients are able to decrease their abandonment fear, through counseling interventions, the relationship satisfaction of both clients and partners is likely to increase. It is also suggested that clients learn to identify the triggers of their abandonment fear, that eventually lead them to fear that their partner will leave them, and engage in counseling to reduce this abandonment fear, in order to increase theirs and their partners' relationship satisfaction.

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