

# The importance of interpersonal commitment in intimate relationships for the relationship between personal resilience and life satisfaction<sup>1</sup>

<https://doi.org/10.34766/fm9mez02>

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**Abstract:** *Introduction:* Numerous studies show that good social relationships, including formalised and informal intimate relationships, are important for the quality of life. Personal resources of partners and mature communication are necessary for relationships to be satisfactory, those result from interpersonal commitment and allow for building an authentic dialogue between partners. The presented study aimed to check whether interpersonal commitment (understood as the desire but also the compulsion to remain in a relationship), is associated with personal resilience (defined as the potential to present resourcefulness through available internal and external resources) and life satisfaction. *Method:* The study was conducted on 115 women and men via the Internet by sending Internet users a link to access an electronic form. The study included people in a close formalised or informal relationship. The study used Commitment Inventory, the *Lifespan Individual Resilience Scale* (LIRS) and the *Satisfaction with Life Scale* (SWLS). *Results:* The results of the analysis indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between the levels of personal resilience and commitment as dedication ( $r = .45$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and as constraint commitment ( $r = .29$ ;  $p = .002$ ), as well as between life satisfaction and commitment as dedication ( $r = .50$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and constraint commitment ( $r = .33$ ;  $p < .001$ ). It was also proven that various aspects of interpersonal commitment in an intimate relationship (bond with the partner, importance of the relationship and concern for the partner's well-being) act as mediators in the relationship between resilience and life satisfaction, which explains the significant role of interpersonal commitment for the quality of life. *Conclusions:* The study results indicate that interpersonal commitment in an intimate relationship plays a mediating role in the relationship between resilience and satisfaction. The discussed topics may be used in preventive and psychotherapeutic work with couples and marriages, especially in a crisis.

**Keywords:** interpersonal commitment, intimate relationships, life satisfaction, personal resilience

## 1. Introduction

Family life, including marital, fiancé or cohabitation relationships, is a space in which many needs and desires may be fulfilled, but also a sphere of misunderstandings, conflicts and even violence. Observing the crisis in the durability of marital relationships (CSO, 2024), psychologists are looking for factors that could have a protective function in the face of numerous relationship breakdowns, including divorce. It seems that a desirable situation is an arrangement in which the individual feels that he or she wants, but also needs, to stay in the relationship (Janicka, Szymczak,

2017), but do people feel satisfaction with their lives in such a situation? Everyone has resources, one of which is personal resilience, which involves, among other things, a willingness to draw on the support they have from those close to them. Research reports the importance of secure attachment for marital relationship satisfaction (Mohd et al., 2023; Shafique, 2023), but we still know little about the relevance of resilience, understood in this way, for interpersonal engagement and, consequently, for life satisfaction. In the study under review, it was decided to verify the

1 Article in Polish language: [https://stowarzyszeniefidesetratio.pl/fer/62P\\_pila.pdf](https://stowarzyszeniefidesetratio.pl/fer/62P_pila.pdf)

relevance of interpersonal commitment in an intimate relationship to the relationship of personal resilience and life satisfaction, using mediation analysis.

The rationale for carrying out research precisely on this topic is the fact of the great importance of intimate relationships for human psychological functioning. Close contact with other people is an integral part of everyday life and is necessary for the proper social functioning of the individual. Interpersonal relationships are considered one of the most important factors that give life meaning (Adler et al., 2007). Already in 1967, Holmes and Rahe (1967) published the Life Stress Scale, according to which the most stressful event in a person's life is the death of a spouse. Lindemann (1944) and Parkes (1970) found that the loss of a loved one is associated with a change in social status, the way of life so far, and economic stability. If the life changes associated with separation, the end of a relationship, are associated with a whole range of losses (impaired childcare, loss of intimacy and support, economic status), such an event is associated with experiencing high levels of stress and a sense of reduced quality of life. This may be an acknowledgement of the importance of intimate life for life satisfaction, as also reported in other publications (cf. Edwards, 2006; Misztela et al, 2023; Krämer et al, 2024; Sun et al, 2024). The second argument that justifies the implementation of our research refers to the CSO report (2024) mentioned in the introduction, which shows a significant decrease in marriages contracted after 2020, but also a slightly decreasing number of divorces, which consequently increases the gap between marriages contracted and dissolved in favour of the latter. These statistics refer not only to divorces but also to situations of death of spouses, but it is frightening to think that in 2020 nearly 100,000 more marriages were dissolved than were concluded. Probably the circumstances of the pandemic were not insignificant here, but this trend is noted to continue in 2023, meaning that fewer marriages are still being formed than are being dissolved. There are, of course, also couples who, despite the lack of satisfaction in the intimate relationship, do not leave the relationship, even if they would like to. On the one hand, such a situation can build up a sense of being

'trapped in the relationship', but on the other hand, it does not necessarily forecast unfavourably at all, as surviving the crisis and resolving the conflict can be integrative for the marriage (Janicka, Szymczak, 2017). Dissolving marriages going forward should be of concern especially when couples do not attempt to communicate, seek compromise, resolve conflict, and perhaps somewhat hastily and prematurely give up on each other. Interpersonal commitment, which is therefore the opposite of marital dissolution, can therefore be important for life satisfaction.

Interpersonal commitment is the process of building and strengthening relationships in long-term relationships such as fiancé, marriage or cohabitation. According to Beck (2000), commitment can be full (I have confidence in the permanence of the relationship) or incomplete (my marriage may break down because my parents are divorced, besides, quite a few people around me have also experienced marriage breakdown). Interpersonal commitment is described differently by other researchers, pointing to its three dimensions (personal, moral and structural commitment) (Johnson et al., 1999). The construct of interpersonal commitment consists of a bond with one's partner and the importance of the relationship, which together reflect a desire to be with one's partner (commitment results in a sense of creating a certain wholeness with one's partner, in which it is the partners who act for the benefit of the relationship being created), and a concern for one's partner's well-being, which involves a sense of obligation to remain in the relationship due to external (e.g. having children, family pressure, shared home) or internal (e.g. religious and moral issues) compulsions (Rhoades et al., 2009). The need to stay in a relationship comes at several psychological costs to the individual and can lead to a variety of solutions (e.g. being stuck in a relationship that does not bring full happiness). In general, however, research reports that marital commitment as well as family support play a role in marital satisfaction in couples (Lioe, 2023; Owen et al., 2011), which is related to the investment model in which interpersonal commitment is, among other things, a function of life satisfaction (Schoebi et al., 2012), but the commitment dimension remains the weakest predictor of relationship satisfaction.

Psychological resilience is also not insignificant to the quality of a couple's relationship. It has been understood variously in science, ranging from the concept of the trait as "an adaptive personal trait resilient to stress" (Ahern et al, 2008, p. 32), through "a dynamic process influenced by both neuronal and psychological self-organisation, as well as transactions between the ecological context and the developing organism" (Curtis, Cicchetti, 2007, p. 811), or as an outcome or "a class of phenomena characterised by good performance despite serious threats "to adaptation or development" (Masten, 2001, p. 228). Resilience can be spoken of when two elements are present: adversity (i.e. a high-risk or threatening situation) and successful adaptation/competence (Luthar et al, 2000; Masten, 2001; Schilling, 2008). Adversity is assessed based on negative life circumstances and adaptation is defined as the successful performance of age-related developmental tasks (Schilling, 2008).

Resilience is also captured as a construct responsible for: "the potential to demonstrate resourcefulness by using available internal and external resources in response to contextual and developmental changes" (Pooley, Cohen, 2010, p. 34). In this sense, resilience is the awareness of one's resources, the resources of one's environment and the recognition of one and the other as potential in one's life (Hobfoll, 1989). It is a strong personal capacity that continuously grows, develops and survives in the face of situational crises (Chmitorz et al., 2018). It draws on adaptive patterns to overcome difficulties and evaluates them. Thus, it is a predictor of improved psychological well-being because it positively correlates with life satisfaction and negatively with neuroticism (Liu, Wang, 2010). Resilience contributes to psychological well-being because it always uses emotional intelligence. This resource is a source of increasing motivation for feelings of well-being; this provides the space for optimal adjustment even in situations of frightening threats (Hidalgo et al., 2010).

Research indicates that individuals exhibiting high levels of resilience show tolerance of negative emotions and setbacks, which, in a crisis, can protect partners from separation (Semmer, 2006). These individuals are more likely to engage with other people, including their immediate family (Connor, 2006). Research also points to the importance of resilience for positively creating

and maintaining satisfying social bonds (Heszen, Sęk, 2007; cf. Ogińska-Bulik, Juczynski, 2008). According to previous research, resilience is also one of the factors influencing the level of overall life satisfaction (Ogińska-Bulik, 2014). Individuals characterised by high levels of resilience are more positive about life and are characterised by emotional stability, which undoubtedly fosters constructive relationships with the environment.

In view of the difficulties that modern relationships may experience and their not inconsiderable importance for human well-being, it is reasonable to take interpersonal commitment and resilience into account for the assessment of the life satisfaction of people forming relationships.

## **2. Own study**

### **2.1. Purpose of the study**

The aim of the study was to examine whether levels of interpersonal commitment are associated with personal resilience and life satisfaction among people in relationships and to determine whether levels of commitment differentiate respondents' life satisfaction and levels of resilience. The dimensions of interpersonal commitment were assumed to mediate between the level of resilience and life satisfaction of the subjects. Based on the literature, it was hypothesised that high life satisfaction is fostered by high levels of commitment and high resilience.

### **2.2. Procedure**

The survey was conducted online by sending out a link to Internet users to access an electronic form. Participants in the survey included people in a close formalised or non-formalised relationship. A snowball method was used. The survey was conducted based on the guidelines of the International Testing Commission (ITC, 2005). The subjects were informed that participation in the study was voluntary, the questionnaires were anonymous, and information was provided about the possibility of withdrawing from the study at any time.

### 2.3. Characteristics of the study group

A total of 115 participants took part in the study (mean age 34.19;  $SD = 8.73$ ; women represented 86.95% of the total respondents and men 13.04%). The majority of the respondents had a university degree (67.82%), 32 had a secondary education (27.83%) and 5 had a vocational education (4.35%). The vast majority of respondents (65.22%) came from large cities (more than 100,000 inhabitants), 19.13% of respondents lived in smaller cities, and the least – 15.65% – lived in rural areas. Almost 65% of the respondents were married (79.88%), single women accounted for 30.44% of the total respondents and fiancées were 6.09% (Table 1).

### 2.4. Study variables and how they were measured

#### 2.4.1. Dependent variable

A questionnaire method was used in the study. To measure the dependent variable satisfaction with life, the Satisfaction with Life Scale adapted by Zygfryd Juczyński (2001) was used, which determines the respondents' level of satisfaction with their current life situation. The adaptation of the Satisfaction with Life Scale used contains 5 statements to which the respondents are to assign points from 1 to 7, where 1 means "I completely disagree" and 7 means "I completely agree". The sum of the scores assigned to all statements represents the respondent's level of life satisfaction. The reliability index of the SWLS (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ ) established in a survey of 371 people was found to be satisfactory (.81). The stability of the measure diagnosed on a sample of 30 people 6 weeks apart is .86.

#### 2.4.2. Independent variables

The Interpersonal Commitment Questionnaire (*KZI, Commitment Inventory*) in both its original version (Stanley, Markman, 1992) and its Polish adaptation (Janicka, Szymczak, 2017) is used to measure the interpersonal commitment variable, which is designed to measure relationship assessment and, above all, to predict relationship permanence. The tool consists

Table 1. Characteristics of respondents: distribution of numbers and percentage distribution of sociodemographic variables in the study sample

Variable	Number	Percentage
Education		
Professional	5	4.35
Medium	32	27.83
Higher	78	67.82
Place of residence		
Village	18	15.65
City with up to 100,000 inhabitants	22	19.13
City of between 100,000 and 500,000 inhabitants	55	47.83
City with more than 500,000 inhabitants	20	17.39
Marital status		
Miss/relative	35	30.43
Married	79	68.70
Divorced	1	0.87
Form of relationship		
I am in a stable relationship and live with my partner	34	29.56
I am in my fiancé's period of engagement, but I do not live with my fiancé	7	6.09
I am married	74	64.35

Source: own elaboration

of 19 statements to which the subject responds on a 7-point scale (1 – strongly disagree; 7 – strongly agree). The method measures three components of commitment: the bond with the partner, the importance of the relationship (these two factors correspond to the desire to stay in the relationship, the commitment to the partner) and the concern for the well-being of the partner (this factor reflects the compulsion, the duty to stay in the relationship, it is the commitments that limit or even prevent leaving the partner).

The partner bond factor (I want to be with my partner/partner) is made up of 11 items that relate to emotional closeness, honouring commitments made, making sacrifices for the partner, treating the partner as the most important, attractive and necessary person in one's life, as well as being satisfied with living together with the partner and not seeking alternative relationships. The relationship

importance factor (I want to stay in the relationship) consists of 5 statements that refer to taking the relationship seriously and prioritising it, considering the relationship with the partner in future life plans and maintaining it even in the face of difficulties, as well as interdependence and partnership togetherness (“we” instead of “I” and “you”).

The last factor concerns for the wellbeing of the partner (I must/should stay in the relationship) includes 3 items, indicating a sense of being stuck, trapped in the relationship (e.g. “*I would not be able to bear the pain it would cause my partner/my partner if I left*”, “*I would feel guilty/guilty of ‘ruining’ my partner’s/my partner’s life if I ended the relationship*”).

The Interpersonal Commitment Questionnaire has satisfactory internal reliability as measured by the *alpha-Cronbach* coefficient and is as follows: for the factor Tie to Partner .89, for the factor Relationship Importance .71 and for the factor Concern for Partner’s Wellbeing .76.

The *Lifespan Individual Resilience Scale* (pl) (*LIRS(pl)*) was used to measure the second variable, personal *resilience*. It is a self-report tool consisting of 12 statements assigned to three subscales, corresponding to the three components of resilience—personal resources (*‘I achieve what I set out to do’*), family support (*‘My family is a source of strength for me’*) and peer support (*‘I feel a strong bond with my friends’*). It is used to measure resilience, captured as a construct responsible for: “the potential to demonstrate resourcefulness by using available internal and external resources in response to contextual and developmental changes” (Pooley, Cohen, 2010, p. 34). The respondent responds to the statements on a 7-point scale (1-strongly disagree, 7-strongly agree). Testing with the tool allows for an overall resilience score as well as a score for individual subscales.

The reliability of the individual scales of the tool as measured by Cronbach’s alpha coefficient is satisfactory and is for personal resources (.85), for family support (.93) and for peer support (.94). Temporal stability, estimated using Pearson’s correlation coefficient, based on two measurements obtained 4 weeks apart, was as follows: personal resources – .84, family support – .93, peer support – .90 (Malina, Pooley, Harms, 2016).

### 3. Results

The r-Pearson correlation coefficient and regression analysis were used to verify the relationships between variables assumed in the research model. Statistical analyses began with descriptive statistics of the study variables (Table 2). Calculations were performed using the statistical software Statistica 13.0.

#### 3.1. Relationship between personal resilience and life satisfaction and commitment as devotion (bond with partner and relationship importance) and as compulsion (concern for partner’s wellbeing)

As a first step, we proceeded to determine the relationship between personal resilience, life satisfaction perceived by the partners and commitment understood as devotion and as coercion. For this purpose, the r-Pearson correlation coefficient was used. The distribution of the variables followed a normal distribution or was close to it, so parametric statistics were used (Table 3.).

The results of the statistical analysis indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between the level of personal resilience and involvement as devotion ( $r = .45$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and as compulsion ( $r = .29$ ;  $p = .002$ ), and between life satisfaction and involvement as devotion ( $r = .50$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and compulsion ( $r = .33$ ;  $p < .001$ ). The higher the respondents’ level of resilience and life satisfaction, the higher their level of commitment.

#### 3.2. Relationship between dimensions of interpersonal commitment and personal resilience and life satisfaction

In the next step, the relationships between the individual dimensions of interpersonal engagement and life satisfaction and resilience were estimated (Table 4).

The results of the statistical analysis indicate that there is a significant relationship between the individual dimensions of interpersonal commitment and life satisfaction (bonding with partner  $r = .47$ ;  $p < .001$ ; relationship importance  $r = .54$ ;  $p < .001$ ;

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the variables analyzed in the study

Variable	Descriptive statistics				
	N	Average	Mini- mum	Maxi- mum	SD
Bond with your partner	115	61.70	12.00	77.00	11.95
Importance of the relationship	115	29.30	5.00	35.00	5.47
Concern for your partner's well-being	115	16.54	3.00	21.00	4.30
Resources	115	23.98	13.00	28.00	3.21
Family	115	25.29	7.00	28.00	3.97
Friends	115	23.37	7.00	28.00	4.35
Total pressure	115	72.64	38.00	84.00	9.09
Satisfaction with life	115	26.31	13.00	35.00	4.87

Source: own elaboration

Table 3. Correlations between personal resilience and life satisfaction and engagement as dedication and as compulsion

Variable	Correlation coefficient r-Pearson N = 115 p < .05	
	Dedication	Compulsion
Personal resilience	.45 p < .001	.29 p = .002
Satisfaction with life	.50 p < .001	.33 p = < .001

Source: own elaboration

Table 4. Correlations between dimensions of interpersonal engagement and personal resilience and life satisfaction

Variable	Correlation coefficient r-Pearson N = 115 p < .05	
	Satisfaction with life	Resilience
Relationship with your partner	.47 p < .001	.40 p < .001
Importance of the relationship	.54 p < .001	.53 p < .001
Concern for your partner's well-being	.33 p < .001	.29 p = .002

Source: own elaboration

concern for partner's well-being  $r = .33$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and between dimensions of interpersonal engagement (bond with partner  $r = .40$ ;  $p < .001$ ; relationship importance  $r = .53$ ;  $p < .001$ ; concern for partner's well-being  $r = .29$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and level of personal resilience. The higher the respondents' level of interpersonal commitment, the higher their level of life satisfaction and the higher their level of resilience.

### 3.3. Interpersonal commitment as a mediator in the relationship between personal resilience and life satisfaction of the subjects

The next analyses presented are concerned with determining the role of interpersonal engagement as a mediator between the respondents' levels of personal resilience and their life satisfaction. To do this, it was first necessary to test the significance of the relationships between:

- level of resilience and level of interpersonal commitment,
- level of interpersonal commitment and life satisfaction,
- level of resilience versus life satisfaction,
- Recognising the significance of the above relationships will allow interpersonal *commitment* to be included in the analysis of the relationship between personal resilience and life satisfaction for those in relationships. If, in this setting, the *interpersonal commitment* variable shows a significant decrease in the beta index for the calculated relationship between the level of resilience and life satisfaction, we can speak of its mediating nature (C'; Figure 1).

A mediation analysis was performed according to the approach proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986) and supplemented by the Sobel test (1982).

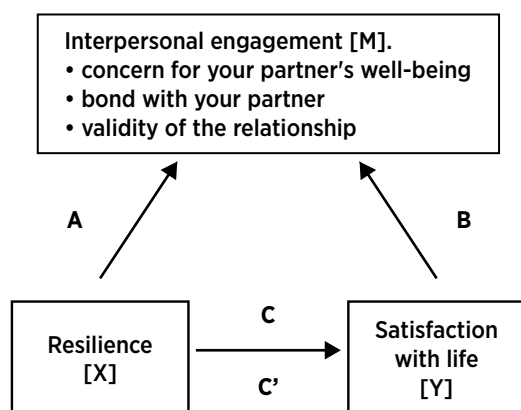


Figure 1: A diagram of the relationship between the independent variable (level of resilience) and the dependent variable (life satisfaction) via a mediating variable (interpersonal engagement) - the sought-after mediator of the relationship between variable X and variable Y. Baron and Kenny's approach.

### 3.4. Concern for partner's well-being as a mediator in the relationship between personal resilience and life satisfaction of the subjects

In the first stage of mediation analyses, the following variables were taken as: independent variable - level of resilience; mediator - concern for partner's wellbeing; and dependent variable - life satisfaction. A direct relationship was confirmed between the independent variable - level of resilience and the mediator - concern for partner/partner's wellbeing (A). As predicted, the higher the respondents' level of resilience, the higher their level of concern for their partner's/partner's wellbeing ( $\beta = .29$ ;  $p < .001$ );  $F(1,113) = 10.27$ ;  $p < .001$ ;  $R^2 = .08$ . The model explains only 8% of the variance in the dependent variable. This is a rather low value, suggesting that the model is not a particularly good fit for the data. In the context of social or psychological research, however, such values are acceptable if the phenomenon under study is complex and depends on multiple factors (Predictive Solutions, 2024).

In the second step of the analysis, the significance of the relationship between the mediator (concern for partner/partner's wellbeing) and the dependent variable (life satisfaction, B) was tested. Again, the relationship was found to be significant: the higher the level of concern for partner/partner's wellbeing in

the subjects, the higher their level of overall life satisfaction was also ( $\beta = .34$ ;  $p < .001$ ),  $F(1,113) = 14.20$   $p < .001$ ;  $R^2 = .10$ . The model still explains a relatively small proportion of the variance (10%).

The third step of the mediation analysis was to determine the relationship between the independent variable (level of resilience) and the dependent variable (life satisfaction, C). It turned out that the higher the level of resilience characterised the respondents, the higher their life satisfaction was ( $\beta = .56$ ;  $p < .001$ ). The regression model tested appeared to fit the data well  $F(1,113) = 51.52$ ;  $p < .001$ ;  $R^2 = .31$ .

Finally, when both the independent variable and the mediator were included in the model tested, the role of the independent variable in the prediction weakened ( $\beta = .51$ ;  $p < .001$ ), while the mediator remained in a significant relationship with the dependent variable ( $\beta = .19$ ;  $p = .02$ ),  $F(2,112) = 29.58$ ;  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = .35$ . The Sobel test was 2.21;  $p = .027$ . Here we have a partial mediation of *concern for partner/partner's well-being*, as the result of the Sobel test is statistically significant and the  $\beta$  value in the regression of the independent variable on the dependent variable with the mediator is weakened ( $\beta = .56 \rightarrow \beta = .51$ ). Thus, it can be inferred that concern for the well-being of the partner/partner is a significant mediator of the relationship between the respondents' level of resilience and their life satisfaction: the higher the level of resilience characterises the respondents, the higher their level of life satisfaction, with the contribution of a high level of concern for the well-being of the partner/partner (Figure 2).

### 3.5. The bond with the partner as a mediator in the relationship between personal resilience and life satisfaction of the respondents

In the next step of the mediation analyses, the independent variable - level of resilience, the mediator - bond with partner/partner and the dependent variable - life satisfaction were taken as: the independent variable - level of resilience, the mediator - bond with partner/partner and the dependent variable - life satisfaction. A direct rela-

tionship was confirmed between the independent variable – level of resilience and the mediator – bond with partner/partner (A). As predicted, the higher the respondents' level of resilience, the higher their level of bonding with their partner/partner was ( $\beta = .40$ ;  $p < .001$ ). The regression model tested was found to fit the data on average  $F(1.113) = 21.33$ ;  $p < .001$ ;  $R^2 = .15$ . The independent variable explained a significant but not dominant part of the variance in the dependent variable.

In the second step of the analysis, the significance of the relationship between the mediator (bond with partner/partner) and the dependent variable (life satisfaction, B) was tested. Again, the relationship proved to be significant: the higher the level of bonding with the partner/partner in the subjects, the higher their level of overall life satisfaction was also ( $\beta = .47$ ;  $p < .001$ ) – the model was a moderate fit to the data  $F(1.113) = 31.45$   $p < .001$ ;  $R^2 = .21$ .

The third step of the mediation analysis was to determine the relationship between the independent variable (level of resilience) and the dependent variable (life satisfaction, C). It turned out that the higher the level of resilience characterised the respondents, the higher their life satisfaction was ( $\beta = .56$ ;  $p < .001$ ). The regression model tested appeared to fit the data well  $F(1,113) = 51.52$ ;  $p < .001$ ;  $R^2 = .31$ .

Finally, when both the independent variable and the mediator were included in the model tested, the role of the independent variable in prediction weakened ( $\beta = .44$ ;  $p < .001$ ), while the mediator remained in a significant relationship with the dependent variable ( $\beta = .29$ ;  $p < .001$ )  $F(2.112) = 34.87$ ;  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = 0.37$ . Sobel's test was 3.33;  $p < 0.001$ . Here we have a partial mediation of *the bond with the partner/partner*, as the result of Sobel's test is statistically significant and the  $\beta$  value in the regression of the independent variable on the dependent variable with the mediator is weakened ( $\beta = .55 \rightarrow \beta = .44$ ). Thus, it can be deduced that the bond with the partner/partner is a significant mediator of the relationship between the respondents' level of resilience and their life satisfaction: the higher the level of resilience characterises the respondents, the higher their level of life satisfaction, with the participation of a high level of bond with the partner/partner (Figure 3).

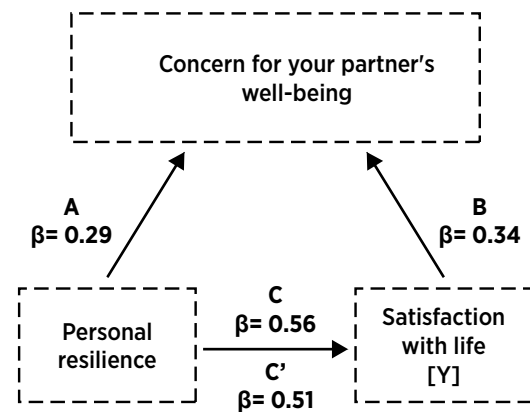


Figure 2: A diagram of the mediating role of concern for partner/partner well-being between respondents' level of resilience and their life satisfaction (\*\* $p < .001$ ).

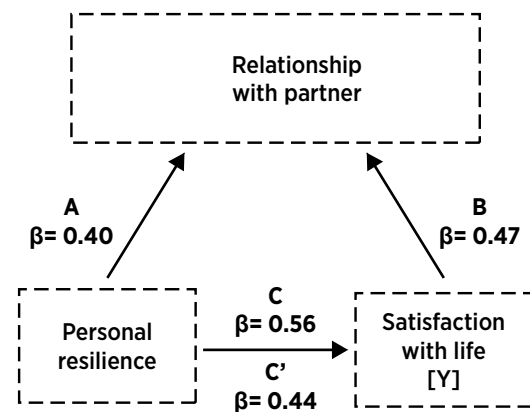


Figure 3: A diagram of the mediating role of partner/partner bonding between respondents' level of resilience and their life satisfaction (\*\* $p < .001$ ).

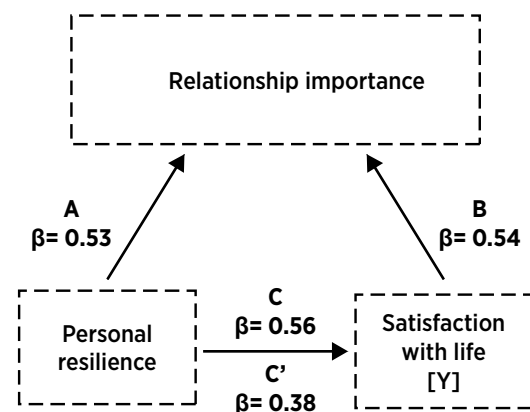


Figure 4: A diagram of the mediating role of relationship importance and respondents' level of resilience and life satisfaction (\*\* $p < .001$ ).



### 3.6. Relationship importance as a mediator in the relationship between personal resilience and respondents' life satisfaction

When analysing the importance of the last dimension of interpersonal commitment – relationship importance – in the first stage of the mediation analyses, the following variables were used: independent variable – level of resilience, mediator – relationship importance and dependent variable – life satisfaction. A direct relationship between the independent variable – level of resilience and the mediator – relationship importance (A) was confirmed. As predicted, the higher the respondents' level of resilience, the more important their relationship was to them ( $\beta = .53$ ;  $p < .001$ ). The regression model tested proved to be a good fit to the data  $F(1.113) = 43.26$ ;  $p < .001$ ;  $R^2 = .28$ .

In the second step of the analysis, the significance of the relationship between the mediator (relationship importance) and the dependent variable (life satisfaction, B) was tested. Again, the relationship was found to be significant: the more important the relationship was for the subjects, the higher their level of overall life satisfaction was also ( $\beta = .54$ ;  $p < .001$ ) – the model was a good fit to the data  $F(1.113) = 45.62$ ;  $p < .001$ ;  $R^2 = .29$ .

The third step of the mediation analysis was to determine the relationship between the independent variable (level of resilience) and the dependent variable (life satisfaction, C). It turned out that the higher the level of resilience characterised the respondents, the higher their life satisfaction was ( $\beta = .56$ ;  $p < .001$ ). The regression model tested appeared to fit the data well  $F(1,113) = 51.52$ ;  $p < .001$ ;  $R^2 = .31$ .

Finally, when both the independent variable and the mediator were included in the model tested, the role of the independent variable in prediction weakened ( $\beta = .38$ ;  $p < .001$ ), while the mediator remained in a significant relationship with the dependent variable ( $\beta = .33$ ;  $p < .001$ )  $F(2.112) = 36.41$ ;  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = 0.39$ . Sobel's test was 2.80;  $p < 0.005$ . Here we have a partial mediation of *the importance of the relationship*, as the result of Sobel's test is statistically significant and the  $\beta$  value in the regression of the independent variable on the dependent variable with the mediator is weakened ( $\beta = .56 \rightarrow \beta = .38$ )

Thus, it can be deduced that relationship importance is a significant mediator of the relationship between the level of resilience of the subjects and their life satisfaction: the higher the level of resilience characterises the subjects, the higher their level of life satisfaction, with the contribution of high relationship importance (Figure 4).

## 4. Discussion

Functioning in a relationship involves a wide range of difficulties that may arise in the partners' lives together. The studies conducted show that concern for the well-being of the partner/partner is an important mediator of the relationship between the respondents' level of resilience and their life satisfaction: the higher the level of resilience characterised the respondents, the higher their level of life satisfaction, with the contribution of a high level of concern for the wellbeing of the partner/partner. Studies report that an increase in personal resources (e.g. resilience) predicted increased life satisfaction and reduced depressive symptoms (Fredrickson et al., 2008). High levels of resilience reduce levels of loss and increase feelings of gain in life. An optimistic attitude towards life, as well as mobilising in difficult situations, is a resource before experiencing losses in terms of family life, economic and political issues. Women also experience more gains in the areas of power and prestige (2022), thus confirming the buffering nature of resilience in terms of difficult life situations and stress (Fredrickson, 2001; Ritter et al., 1987). The preoccupation with the partner's well-being (I must/should stay in the relationship) is undoubtedly related to feelings of apprehension in the relationship due to the awareness of the negative consequences that the partner would experience from leaving (the feeling of ruining the other person's life, through material difficulties, deterioration of the relationship with the children). And although, on the one hand, the compulsion to stay in the relationship is not an ideal situation, in the perception of the partners/partners, it can ultimately create a more beneficial solution for the relationship. The fact of

experiencing evaluation by family and friends is in this case a universal factor in favour of remaining in the relationship (Janicka, Szymczak, 2017).

Individuals characterised by high levels of resilience are more positive about life, are more personally stable, and build positive relationships with their environment. They are consistent in their actions and persistent in pursuing their goals. They mobilise themselves in crisis and cope better with illness (Florek et al., 2024). They show tolerance of negative emotions and setbacks, which in a crisis can protect partners from separation (Semmer, 2006; Talik, 2022) and this can be of great importance in a crisis, the difficulties experienced in a relationship. Partners can treat difficult situations as challenges and tasks to be accomplished, thus they can experience positive emotions rather than depressive states or the feeling that they are losing something valuable in their lives. Joseph and Linely (2006) show that intellectual functioning, cognitive flexibility, social support, positive self-image, ability to manage emotions, positive emotions, spirituality, active stress management, toughness, optimism, and hope, are all related to resilience. Abolghasemi and Varaniyab (2010) showed that mental resilience predicted increased life satisfaction in students in both success and failure situations. Similarly, Haddadi and Besharat (2010) showed that resilience was positively related to psychological well-being and negatively related to psychological distress, depression and anxiety. The results of our study seem to correspond with the cited results obtained by other researchers.

The bond with the partner (I want to be with my partner/partner) is about emotional bonding, keeping commitments made, closeness, dedication to him/her, and treating him/her as the most important person. This can make alternative relationships not worthwhile or attractive enough to form a new relationship (Janicka, Szymczak, 2017). They are also a resource to cope with potential difficulties and opportunities to build, to acquire other resources that create a high quality of life. In our study, the bond with the partner/partner is an important mediator of the relationship between the level of resilience of the respondents and their life satisfaction: the higher the level of resilience characterises the re-

spondents, the higher their level of life satisfaction, with the contribution of a high level of bond with the partner/partner.

Relationship importance – another dimension of interpersonal commitment was also found to be a significant mediator of the relationship between respondents' level of resilience and their life satisfaction: the higher the level of resilience characterised by respondents, the higher their level of life satisfaction, with the contribution of high relationship importance. The feeling of relationship importance is the result of appreciating the value of the relationship, as well as the result of working on it together. Resilience in this view, because it is also associated with *flourishing*, signifies the individual's optimum range of functioning. It also means a sense of *goodness*, happiness, satisfaction and a higher level of functioning. *Generativity*, on the other hand, expresses itself in the form of an expanded repertoire of thought and action, *growth* through the building up of lasting personal and social resources (Fredrickson, Losada, 2005), which undoubtedly contributes to the building up of lasting relationships, including a sense of relationship importance. The above, therefore, reveals a very important social mechanism, in which we see that for the sake of high levels of life satisfaction, high rates of interpersonal commitment should also be taken care of, as they confirmed the mediating nature of the constructed research model.

The presented research has some limitations. One concerns the limited generalizability of the research results to the entire population. The narrow possibility of generalising the results is also determined by the purposeful selection of people to the study group – people who were in a relationship. Conducting research in a better-structured group, including a larger number of people in different forms of relationships and at different developmental periods (which would also mean exploring relationships with extensive dynamics of change), could provide more precise information on the nature of the partners' relationship, its quality and the complexity of its determinants.

The majority of participants in the study were women, with higher education and residence in large cities predominating. In future research, it would

be worthwhile to pay more attention to a similar proportion of respondents and more diversity in terms of education or place of residence. Paying more attention in future research to the specificity of the cultural context of couples would provide important data on the relationship between partners with different socialisations. Consequently, it can be expected that studies of couples reflecting greater diversity in age, ethnicity, education and relationship history may transfer new findings that can be generalised (Jarneckie, South, 2013; Weigel, 2008).

Another limitation concerns the self-reported, correlational nature of the research. It would be valuable for future research to consider the possibility of using different measurement methods to obtain more reliable results, as well as to conduct studies that would indicate the structure of causal relationships and the impact of specific variables on the quality of partners' functioning in the relationship. However, the ethical principles governing psychologists seem to exclude the possibility of experimental research in the sphere of intimate relationships.

In future research, it would be worthwhile to include in the area of exploration other variables that may prove to be relevant to the quality of partners' functioning and its importance for overall life satisfaction. One of these could be the personality of the partners (Robins i in., 2000; Rostowski, 1987) and the similarity of the partners in terms of personality. The literature also indicates that partner relationship satisfaction (Suwalska-Barancewicz, 2016), as well as the performance of parental functions (Bakiera, 2013), the way of coping with stress, control of

emotions (Póltorak, 2013), bonding with the child (Bielawska-Batorowicz, 2006), attachment style (Plopa, 2005), and the quality of communication between partners (Suwalska-Barancewicz, Malina, 2018) are important for satisfactory ratings of life satisfaction. In the area of the search for determinants of the functioning of the dyad, it is additionally possible to take into account external conditions relevant to the partner relationship, such as, for example, the housing situation of the couple (e.g. living with the parents of either spouse), the division of household chores and the way they are carried out (including consideration of the impact of the use of electronics on marital satisfaction), since, as the specialist literature indicates, these are potentially conflictogenic factors that can modify the partners' relationship and the quality of their functioning (Brannon, 2002). Despite the numerous limitations of the study, it should be emphasised that the subject matter discussed can have numerous applications in preventive and psychotherapeutic work, as it details the components of interpersonal commitment and shows its importance for life satisfaction.

The research presented here represents just one of many avenues for exploring close relationships in terms of relationship commitment, personal resilience and perceived life satisfaction. In future research, it would be worthwhile to try to explore even more factors, which could deepen the understanding of the quality of close relationships. The results presented here may provide a starting point for further questions and exploration in this area of social life, such as close relationships.

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