



CONFLICTS IN NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION BETWEEN ROMANTIC PARTNERS: A CONCEPT PAPER ON AN EXPLORATORY STUDY IN URBAN AREAS

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Abstract

Nonverbal communication plays a critical role in shaping emotional connections within romantic relationships, yet its importance is often underestimated compared to verbal communication. This study explores the impact of nonverbal communication on long-distance romantic relationships focusing on couples who have been together for 1 to 4 years. Given the unique challenges of physical separation, nonverbal cues such as facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language become essential for maintaining intimacy and understanding. This qualitative research involved in-depth online interviews conducted via Google Meet with 14 couples residing in urban areas, with data analyzed using Nvivo14 to identify key patterns and themes. The findings reveal that effective nonverbal communication significantly enhances relationship satisfaction, fostering emotional connection and trust. Positive nonverbal behaviors, like expressive facial cues and attentive listening, were found to reinforce intimacy, while the absence or misinterpretation of these cues often led to misunderstandings, emotional distance, and relationship strain, particularly during difficult periods. Additionally, the study uncovered instances of nonverbal communication misuse, highlighting the risk of emotional disconnect when nonverbal signals are poorly managed or misunderstood. These insights emphasize the need for couples to be more mindful of their nonverbal behaviors, particularly in long-distance contexts where physical cues are limited. Overall, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of nonverbal communication in maintaining healthy, long-distance romantic relationships, providing valuable guidance for couples seeking to strengthen their emotional bonds despite the challenges of physical separation.

Keywords: *Human Behavioural; Nonverbal communication; Romantic relationship; Social Exchange Theory*

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INTRODUCTION

Interpersonal communication plays a fundamental role in the daily lives of individuals, shaping interactions, relationships, and societal dynamics. It is defined as communication between two individuals (Hargie, 2021), exchanged between them via face-to-face interaction or other various mediums such as technologies (Zhang et al., 2019; Macdonald & Hülür, 2020). Interpersonal and communication are two terms that are interdependence and entangle to each other (Sillars & Vangelisti, 2018). Interpersonal communication helps people convey messages, reach mutual understanding and agreement, and coordinate goals. Furthermore, individuals can form relationships with others through interpersonal communication, such as friendships and romantic relationships, creating a strong, deep, and close association.

Interpersonal communication is vital at all stages of all types of relationships because it is inextricably linked to interpersonal relationships. One type of interpersonal relationship is romantic relationship. Daniell (2021) agrees that men and women use communication with each other to build intimacy in relationships, especially in romantic relationships. Research by Salleh and Mustaffa (2019) highlights the importance of communication skills in romantic relationships, emphasizing the role of open dialogue, empathy, and mutual respect in fostering intimacy and resolving conflicts.

One of the vital component of interpersonal communication is nonverbal communication. Nonverbal communication (NVC) also plays a crucial role in everyday interactions especially in romantic relationships. In a multicultural society like Malaysia, nonverbal cues such as gestures, facial expressions, and body language often serve as important means of conveying meaning, particularly in contexts where language barriers exist (Mosed, Periord & Caboral-Stevens, 2024). The power of words frequently takes place in our understanding of how connections are formed and maintained in this age of instant texting and digital communication (Smith, 2020). Words, however, are merely one element of the complicated network that determines romantic relationships. Nonverbal cues offer unsaid messages that are equally, if not more, powerful in affecting the emotions and dynamics of love relationships. These cues have an amazing potential to both enhance and challenge the ever-changing story of love and connection.

As we continue on this exploration, it is important to understand the breadth and depth of nonverbal communication's impact on romantic relationships. The small details of a loving touch, shared laughter, the warmth of a warm hug, or the pain of a turned-away glance all have the power to increase or lessen the feelings that exist within these connections. This research paper aims to dive into the area of nonverbal communication in romantic relationships in Kuala Lumpur, with the goal of unravelling the complexities of its impact. This paper investigate how nonverbal cues affect emotional intimacy, trust, attraction, resolution of conflicts, and overall relationship satisfaction. The reserach questions of this paper are as below:

RQ1: What are the type of nonverbal communication in romantic relationship?

RQ2: What are the impact of nonverbal communication to romantic relationship?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nonverbal Communication in Romantic Relationships

Nonverbal communication plays a pivotal role in shaping the quality and stability of romantic relationships. Recent studies underscore that nonverbal cues—such as facial expressions, tone of voice, eye contact, and touch—are essential for conveying emotional responsiveness, empathy, and support. Carmichael and Mizrahi (2023) highlight that nonverbal signals often carry more weight than verbal communication, especially in emotionally

charged situations, and that congruence between verbal and nonverbal cues enhances perceived sincerity and trustworthiness. Technological advancements have introduced new dimensions to nonverbal communication in romantic contexts. For instance, Liu et al. (2021) developed "Significant Otter," an app that allows couples to share biosignals through animated avatars. Their study revealed that enabling biosignal sharing facilitated more authentic communication and strengthened social connections between partners.

Some studies have found that 65 percent or more of our meaning is derived from non-verbal signals (Carmicheal & Mizrahi, 2023). Nonverbal communication conveys meaning by reinforcing, substituting for, or contradicting verbal communication. Non-verbal communication is crucial in interpersonal interactions. It includes facial expressions, body language, gestures, and tone of voice (Smith, 2019). Nonverbal communication, which includes gestures, facial expressions, and body language, has a big impact on romantic relationships because it affects emotional connection, understanding, and overall relationship dynamics (Gottman, 2024). Nonverbal communication significantly influences the dynamics and quality of romantic relationships. For instance, sustained eye contact can convey emotional connection (Wohltjen & Wheatley, 2021; Mauersberger, Kastendieck & Hess, 2022). Meier et al. (2024) found that the use of strong emotional words (e.g., excited, wonderful) led to more positive impressions than moderate emotional words (e.g., happy, fine) and resulted in nearly three out- of-four subjects selecting the fictitious dater of the opposite gender communicating strong emotions.

A romantic relationship is a type of interpersonal bond between two individuals characterized by emotional or sexual intimacy, as well as deep affection and love for one another. It involves a mutual attraction and desire to build a long-term partnership based on trust, respect, and shared values. It is an emotional bond characterized by love, passion, and intimacy (Johnson et al., 2021). This special connection goes beyond superficial interactions and involves a deep understanding and appreciation for one another. In a romantic relationship, there is a strong sense of trust and a commitment to each other's happiness and well-being. Research conducted by Londero-Santos, Natividade, and Féres-Carneiro (2021) has shown that romantic relationships have a significant impact on overall well-being and happiness. These relationships provide emotional support during both the highs and lows of life. They serve as a source of comfort, offering companionship and a shoulder to lean on. Knowing that there is someone who truly understands and cares for you can bring a profound sense of belonging and fulfilment. Furthermore, a study by Akdogan and Cimsir (2020) highlighted the importance of sexual satisfaction within romantic relationships. Their findings indicated that sexual compatibility and fulfilment are crucial factors for maintaining a healthy and fulfilling romantic partnership.

The visual illustration of nonverbal communication (Figure 1) is used to explain the concept, presenting a theoretical framework in which the roles of sender and receiver in conversation are interchanging. It also highlights the importance of context, surroundings, and feedback for establishing an interpersonal communication pattern that promotes shared meaning development (Eunson, 2012). This model emphasizes the comprehensive nature of nonverbal signals, which include body language, facial expressions, gestures, posture, touch, attire, personal space, environment, and cultural preferences, all of which, in addition to spoken words, play an important role in defining an individual's mental state. The Eunson Model of Nonverbal Communication (Eunson, 2012) presents a comprehensive framework that categorizes nonverbal cues into ten distinct elements: facial expressions, eye contact, gestures, posture, proximity, haptics (touch), appearance, voice quality, silence, and time. This model underscores the significance of these elements in conveying emotions, intentions, and social dynamics, often complementing or even contradicting verbal messages. For instance, while words might express agreement, a person's body language—such as crossed arms or lack of eye contact—can indicate discomfort or disagreement. Eunson (2012) emphasizes the importance of interpreting clusters of nonverbal behaviors rather than isolated cues to accurately understand a person's internal state. By analyzing these interconnected nonverbal signals, communicators can achieve greater clarity and effectiveness in their interactions, making the model a valuable tool across various contexts, from personal relationships to professional settings. Furthermore, research shows

that attentive listening frequently includes nonverbal and paraverbal feedback, such as smiling, nodding, and vocal cues like "mmm...hmmm...Uh huh..." . Voice modulation and other paralinguistic characteristics are also important in transmitting messages beyond words. Cultural influences also impact ways of speaking, with some cultures showing louder and more expressive behaviors while others are more passive and repressed. Also, studies show that during talks, people not only paraphrase their words but also mimic the original speaker's gestures while expressing their thoughts.

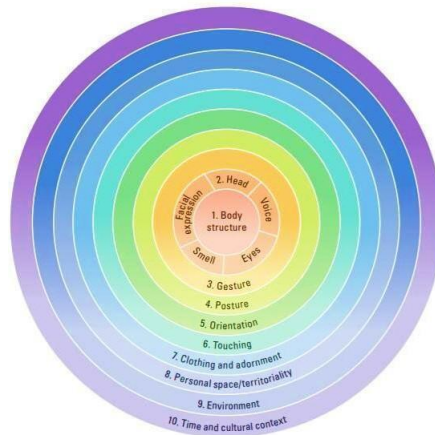


Figure 1: A visual representation of nonverbal communication, adapted from Eunson's work in 1987 (Eunson, 2012)

Interestingly, matching the speaker's posture is considered a sign of admiration, whereas orientation, body angle, and attitude communicate strong nonverbal messages during encounters. Contextual aspects such as architecture, room proportions, furniture type, interior design, and temperature are known for providing detailed information about the people who use or visit these spaces.

The impact of nonverbal communication on romantic relationships has evolved over the years due to societal changes, technological advancements, and shifts in cultural norms. While nonverbal cues have always been essential in conveying emotions and maintaining connection, the nature of their influence has been influenced by these changes. Historically, nonverbal communication in romantic relationships was primarily face-to-face and reliant on physical cues such as body language, facial expressions, and touch. Couples communicated and expressed their emotions through these in-person interactions, fostering a strong sense of intimacy and understanding.

Importance of Nonverbal Communication in Romantic Relationships

Effective nonverbal communication improves interpersonal relationships and communication efficiency in general. Non-verbal cues can help people connect with others on a deeper level and go beyond the boundaries of spoken communication (Hogan, 2024). Understanding, empathy, and teamwork are made easier by this improved degree of communication in professional as well as personal situations. Non-verbal communication is the way in which we express our feelings, emotions, attitudes, opinions, and points of view through our body movements.

Kinesics

Kinesics, the study of body language influencing how individuals perceive, interpret, and respond to each other's behaviors. In today's digital age, where much communication occurs through text messages and social media,

nonverbal cues remain vital for conveying emotions, intentions, and relational dynamics (Matsumoto & Hwang, 2020). The importance of kinesics lies in its ability to complement verbal communication, providing additional layers of meaning and depth to interpersonal interactions. In romantic relationships, kinesics can impact various aspects, including trust, intimacy, and conflict resolution. Body posture can convey sincerity, affection, and empathy, strengthening the emotional bond between partners. Conversely, discrepancies between verbal and nonverbal cues may lead to misunderstandings or distrust, highlighting the importance of congruence in communication. Research suggests that couples who are attuned to each other's nonverbal signals tend to experience greater relationship satisfaction and stability (Hall et al., 2021).

Facial Expressions

Facial expressions are powerful indicators of emotions. A genuine smile might express joy, yet a scowl could indicate worry. In recent years, research has increasingly emphasized the importance of facial expressions in interpersonal interactions, highlighting their profound impact on relationship quality and satisfaction. According to Matsumoto and Hwang (2020), facial expressions are fundamental to human communication, providing valuable insights into individuals' thoughts and feelings, particularly in the context of romantic relationships.

In romantic relationships, facial expressions serve as key indicators of emotional intimacy, trust, and connection between partners. Studies have shown that couples who are attuned to each other's facial expressions tend to experience higher levels of relationship satisfaction and harmony (Hess et al., 2021). Positive facial expressions such as smiles, laughter, and affectionate gazes can foster feelings of warmth and affection, contributing to a sense of closeness and mutual understanding within the relationship. Conversely, negative facial expressions such as frowns, scowls, or contemptuous looks can signal conflict, dissatisfaction, or disengagement, posing challenges to relationship stability and happiness.

Physical Touch

Physical touch serves as an incredibly powerful means of communication, connection, and intimacy between partners. According to recent study by Johnson and Cohen (2022), romantic couples who physically touch each other report feeling more satisfied in their relationships. An actual example would be the comforting feeling of a partner's hand on your back at a trying time, which strengthens the emotional connection and offers comfort. In contemporary romantic relationships, physical touch serves as an absolutely primary love language through which partners express affection, care, and desire for one another (Schoenfeld & Maunder, 2021). Whether through hugs, kisses, hand-holding, or other forms of physical affection, touch communicates warmth, support, and closeness, strengthening the emotional bond between partners. Research indicates that couples who engage in regular and meaningful physical touch tend to report higher levels of relationship satisfaction and commitment (Ditzen et al., 2020). Physical touch also promotes oxytocin release, often referred to as the "love hormone," which absolutely enhances feelings of trust, empathy, and connection between romantic partners.

Additionally, touch communicates desire, passion, and sexual attraction, fostering an absolutely strong sense of intimacy and pleasure between partners. Research suggests that couples who engage in frequent and varied forms of physical touch experience greater sexual satisfaction and relationship stability (Mark et al., 2021). Furthermore, physical touch can serve as an absolutely important source of comfort and support during times of stress or conflict, providing reassurance and solace to partners in need.

Tone of voice

In romantic relationships, the tone of voice carries significant weight, often influencing how messages are perceived, emotions are conveyed, and conflicts are resolved. According to Ivy and Gleason (2022) the tone of

voice serves as a potent channel for expressing emotions, intentions, and relational nuances, playing a critical role in shaping the quality and trajectory of romantic relationships.

The tone of voice can either enhance or hinder communication in romantic relationships, depending on its emotional resonance and alignment with verbal content. Positive tones, characterized by warmth, affection, and empathy, can foster feelings of closeness, understanding, and support between partners (Simpson et al., 2020). Conversely, negative tones, such as hostility, sarcasm, or criticism, can evoke defensiveness, resentment, and mistrust, undermining the relational bond and eroding intimacy. Research suggests that couples who communicate with positive tones are more likely to experience greater relationship satisfaction and longevity (Gottman & Driver, 2020).

Moreover, the tone of voice plays a crucial role in conflict resolution and emotional regulation within romantic relationships. Partners who are attuned to each other's tones can better navigate disagreements and express empathy and validation during challenging moments (Kong et al., 2021). A soothing or reassuring tone can de-escalate tensions and promote understanding, while a harsh or dismissive tone may escalate conflicts and exacerbate relational strain. Therefore, developing awareness and mindfulness of one's tone of voice can enhance communication skills and promote healthier relationship dynamics.

Proxemics

Proxemics also plays a significant role in shaping the dynamics of romantic relationships. Recent research has shed light on the impacts of proxemics on relationship satisfaction, intimacy, and communication patterns among couples. Understanding how individuals navigate and negotiate personal space within romantic contexts is essential for elucidating the complexities of interpersonal connections in contemporary society. In romantic relationships, proxemics influences the level of intimacy and comfort between partners, with individuals establishing boundaries and preferences regarding physical proximity. According to Hall (2021), proxemic behaviors such as closeness, distance, and territoriality reflect underlying relational dynamics and emotional states. Couples who maintain appropriate levels of physical closeness and respect each other's personal space tend to experience greater feelings of trust, security, and connection. Conversely, discrepancies in proxemic preferences may lead to tension or discomfort within the relationship, highlighting the importance of communication and mutual understanding.

Moreover, proxemics shape communication patterns and interactional dynamics within romantic relationships. Research suggests that couples who effectively manage their spatial boundaries and adapt to each other's proxemic cues exhibit higher levels of relational satisfaction and harmony (Brown et al., 2020). Nonverbal behaviors such as hand-holding, hugging, or sitting closely together serve as expressions of affection and intimacy, strengthening the emotional bond between partners. Conversely, excessive intrusion into personal space or avoidance of physical contact may signal underlying relational issues or discomfort, necessitating open dialogue and negotiation to address concerns and maintain relational equilibrium.

These indicators were important in communicating emotions, trust, and love. However, as technology has advanced, long-distance relationships have grown more common, resulting in a shift in the way nonverbal communication is enabled.

Impacts of Nonverbal Communication on Romantic Relationships

Nonverbal cues have a significant impact on relationships, influencing them in a variety of ways. First of all, nonverbal cues are the unspoken language of emotions. Love, joy, anger, or sadness can be conveyed through facial expressions, gestures, and tone of voice, allowing partners to understand how one another feels without the

need for clear verbal communication. A tender hug or a warm smile, for example, may express affection and strengthen the emotional bond between partners. Moreover, nonverbal cues are instrumental in navigating periods of relational turbulence. During times of uncertainty or transition, partners rely on nonverbal communication to negotiate intimacy levels and re-establish equilibrium within the relationship. Understanding and effectively utilizing nonverbal communication can thus strengthen the emotional bond between partners, fostering a more resilient and fulfilling romantic connection.

Conflict Resolution

Second, nonverbal cues have been closely linked to relationship conflict resolution. Tseng et al. (2023) stated that during a disagreement, defensive body language, avoiding eye contact, or crossed arms can signal discomfort or defensive behaviour, preventing effective communication and possibly leading to conflicts. Nonverbal signals that are open and compassionate, such as active listening and maintaining eye contact, on the other hand, may improve understanding and result in more successful conflict resolution.

Nonverbal communication has an equal impact on solving conflicts in romantic relationships. Partners who are aware of each other's nonverbal cues can more easily overcome arguments. A comforting touch or empathetic body language, for example, can help calm down heated disagreements. Misinterpretation of nonverbal cues, on the other hand, can lead to misunderstandings and communication barriers, thereby worsening confrontations. Furthermore, in romantic relationships, nonverbal communication is essential to the sensation of closeness. Deep, nonverbal exchanges that produce a strong sense of connection are common in intimate situations. Eye contact, physical tenderness, and gesture communication between partners strengthen their emotional relationships. This increased closeness promotes trust, vulnerability, and the sensation of being fully heard and understood.

Enhance emotional connection

However, nonverbal communication is not without its challenges. Nonverbal communication patterns and preferences differing between partners can create barriers, possibly leading to misunderstandings and disagreements. For the sake of compatibility and successful nonverbal communication, these inequalities must be resolved via open and sympathetic talks and compromises (Abakumova, Mironenkova & Pronenko, 2022). Finally, nonverbal communication is a strong and complex force that changes the depth and quality of romantic relationships by influencing emotions, conflict resolution, closeness, and overall compatibility.

Build trust and intimacy

Last but not least, nonverbal cues help to create an atmosphere of intimacy and trust in relationships. Maintaining trust-inducing eye contact while engaging in affectionate touch, for instance, can foster feelings of safety and strengthen the bond between partners (Ruben et al., 2021). Nonverbal signals that are inconsistent or deceptive, on the other hand, may weaken trust and lead to distance in a relationship. These examples show how nonverbal cues have a significant impact on the dynamics and quality of romantic relationships.

Related Theory

Thibaut and Kelley (1959) developed the Social Exchange Theory, which has been widely used to analyze various types of social interactions and relationships. It provides a framework for understanding how people evaluate and make relationship decisions based on the perceived balance of rewards and costs. People seek to maximize rewards while minimizing costs, and this analysis may influence their decision to stay or leave a relationship. For instance, partners in a romantic relationship engage in social interactions. One partner, for example, might consider the emotional support, companionship, and affection they receive as rewards, whereas potential costs may include time and effort spent. If the reward-to-cost ratio remains positive, the relationship is likely to last. If one partner believes that the costs outweigh the benefits, they may decide to end the relationship. Moreover, Immediacy theory, developed by Albert Mehrabian, is a communication theory that focuses on the use of verbal

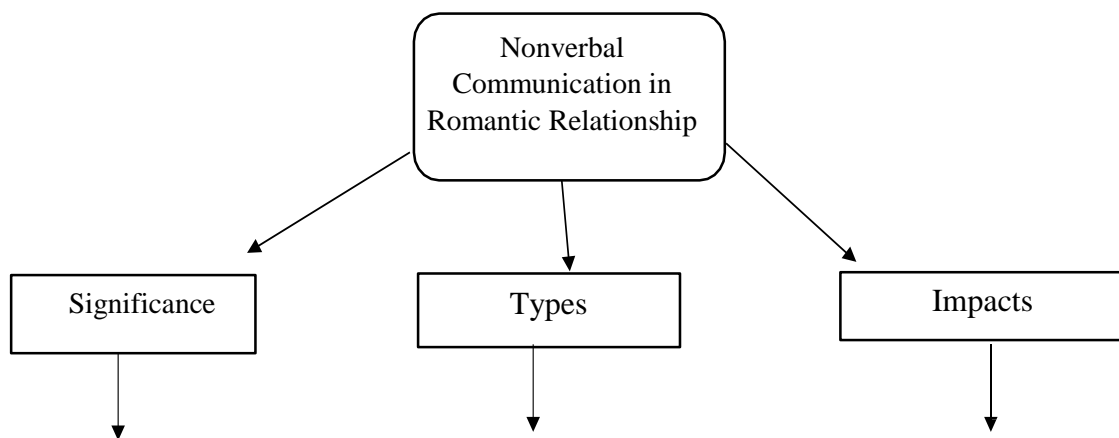
and nonverbal behaviors to enhance closeness, approachability, and engagement in interpersonal interactions. These behaviors, such as maintaining eye contact, using open body language, and offering compliments, are used to reduce perceived interpersonal distance and create a more positive and intimate communication environment (Mehrabian, 1971)

Research Framework

In qualitative research, propositions are statements or ideas drawn from collected data. They often resemble hypotheses or theoretical claims, emerging from data analysis and guiding further investigation or theory development (Figure 2). These propositions, as described by Creswell and Creswell (2017), represent assertions about specific phenomena and are rooted in the patterns and themes discovered during data analysis.

Proposition 1: The types nonverbal communication in romantic relationship are kinesics, eye contact, facial expression, haptic, proxemics and tone of voice.

Proposition 2: The impacts of nonverbal communication in relationship are expression of emotions, intimacy building, trus and conflict resolution.



Help couple improve their communication	Kinesics	Expression of Emotions
Resolve any conflicts that may arise	Eye Contact	Building Intimacy
Strengthen the bonds between couples	Facial Expressions	Trust and Reliability
	Touch Haptic	Conflict Resolution
	Proxemics	
	Tone of Voice	

Figure 2: Research Framework

METHODOLOGY

In order to satisfy the objectives of this study, in-depth interviews, and qualitative research can provide rich insights into individuals' experiences and perceptions of nonverbal communication in their romantic relationships. This method allows for a deeper understanding of the nuances and complexities of nonverbal interactions.

Qualitative research includes a variety of methods, including interviews, focus groups, and observation. Unstructured interviews may be conducted, with open-ended questions on a certain topic, and the interviewer reacts to the responses. Structured interviews feature a set amount of questions that are asked of each participant. It is usually one-on-one and works well for sensitive topics or those that require in-depth investigation. (Tenny, Brannan & Brannan, 2022).

For this study, the participant population that the researcher chose is Malaysia. In March 2024, Malaysia maintains a relatively balanced gender distribution, with females constituting approximately 49.5% of the total population, while males account for the remaining 50.5%. This parity underscores Malaysia's commitment to gender equality and highlights the active participation of women in various spheres of society, including education, workforce, and governance. (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2024). The target group that has been selected for this study consists of 10 couples, who reside within the bustling metropolis of Kuala Lumpur, which is the capital city of Malaysia. Only participants who were currently in a heterosexual romantic relationship (not married) will be chosen to be interviewed.

For this qualitative research study, a suitable sampling technique is purposive sampling. Additionally, the researcher decided to restrict the research sample to a smaller area which is Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Purposive sampling also known as purposeful sampling or judgmental sampling. Purposive sampling involves selecting participants based on specific criteria that are relevant to the research question and objectives. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where researchers intentionally select specific individuals or groups as participants based on defined criteria or characteristics relevant to the research objectives. This method is advantageous for ensuring that the sample includes individuals with expertise or experiences directly related to the study, which enhances the depth and relevance of the data collected (Palinkas et al., 2015).

The researcher seeks informants who meet specific criteria, namely couples with a relationship duration ranging from 1 to 4 years, residing in urban areas, and currently navigating the challenges of a long-distance relationship. Based on the criteria, 14 couples were interviewed. The rationale behind this selection criterion is rooted in studies suggested that couples within the initial 1 to 4 years of their relationship may provide unique insights into the dynamics of developing romantic connections, especially when compounded by the complexities associated with maintaining intimacy across geographical distances.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the research findings, the researcher discovered that romantic partners employ eight types of nonverbal communication in their relationships. These encompass acts of service, eye contact, kinesics, physical touch, personal space, gift-giving, active listening, and tone of voice. The researcher explored that eye contact and kinesics both had a tie in affecting romantic relationship communication.

Eye contact indeed is the most nonverbal behaviour that human beings use since it's our eyes but maintaining and focusing on one thing is a different thing and it's not easy especially since humans are easily distracted by the tiniest thing. Eye contact is the first step in building a relationship between love partners. When two people lock eyes, a sense of mutual recognition and understanding is conveyed, creating the groundwork for future contact and rapport. This first glance frequently serves as an introduction to deeper emotional involvement and connection. Not only that, eye contact enhances verbal communication by reinforcing the sincerity and authenticity of spoken words. When partners maintain eye contact during conversation, it signals active listening and attentiveness, validating the speaker's thoughts and feelings. Next, kinesics, or the study of body language, holds immense significance as a nonverbal communication tool that can positively influence the dynamics between partners. Couples often find that their unspoken gestures, movements, and expressions convey a wealth

of information that words alone cannot capture. When partners are attuned to each other's kinesics, they can better understand and respond to each other's emotions, needs, and desires. For instance, a gentle touch or a lingering gaze can convey love, reassurance, and affection in ways that verbal expressions may struggle to match. Moreover, kinesics can serve as a subtle yet powerful means of connection, fostering intimacy and strengthening the bond between partners. By paying attention to each other's body language and responding with empathy and attentiveness, romantic partners can deepen their emotional connection and cultivate a relationship grounded in mutual understanding and support. Ultimately, embracing kinesics in romantic relationships can enrich communication, enhance empathy, and contribute to the overall health and happiness of the partnership.

In the chapter “*What Words Don’t Tell Us: Non-verbal Communication and Turmoil in Romantic Relationships*,” Ivy and Gleason (2022) examine how nonverbal communication, particularly kinesics, body movements such as gestures, facial expressions, and posture influences romantic relationships during times of conflict and emotional strain. The authors contend that when verbal communication breaks down, kinesic behaviours frequently convey more information than words. They show how body language, facial expressions, and gestures may either increase conflict or promote harmony through theoretical analysis and real-world examples. Their research highlights the potent, frequently unconscious function of body language in negotiating conflicts, conveying emotional states, and preserving emotional closeness in romantic relationships.

Based on the research objective 2, the researcher explored that there are positive and negative impacts of nonverbal communication on romantic partners which are for positive; build emotional connection, build intimacy, conflict resolution and more understanding. Meanwhile for negative impacts include confusion, feeling disconnected and misunderstanding. Misunderstanding is the most mentioned impact among these romantic partners following build intimacy. Misunderstandings of nonverbal cues in romantic relationships often stem from a variety of factors, including differences in communication styles, personal interpretations, and emotional states. Each individual brings their own unique set of experiences, cultural backgrounds, and communication preferences into the relationship, which can lead to misinterpretations of nonverbal signals. Additionally, stress, insecurity, or past traumas may color one's perception, causing them to misread their partner's intentions or emotions.

These misunderstandings can escalate into conflicts if left unaddressed, eroding trust and intimacy over time. When nonverbal cues are misinterpreted as signs of disinterest, dishonesty, or lack of affection, it can breed resentment and dissatisfaction, ultimately leading to a breakdown in communication and connection. In severe cases, persistent misunderstandings of nonverbal cues may contribute to the deterioration of the relationship, as partners feel increasingly disconnected and unable to bridge the gap in understanding, potentially resulting in a breakup. Intimacy in romantic relationships is often deepened through nonverbal cues, which play a crucial role in conveying emotions, understanding, and connection. These cues foster intimacy by tapping into the primal instincts and emotional resonance inherent in human interaction. Eye contact, for instance, establishes a powerful connection by communicating attentiveness and sincerity. Touch, such as holding hands or gentle caresses, releases oxytocin, the "bonding hormone," promoting feelings of trust and closeness. Shared laughter and playful gestures create a sense of shared joy and emotional connection. Additionally, mirroring each other's body language demonstrates empathy and understanding, fostering a sense of being truly seen and understood by one's partner. Overall, these nonverbal cues build intimacy by bridging the gap between verbal communication and deeper emotional connection, affirming the bond between romantic partners in a visceral and profound way.

The study on conflicts in nonverbal communication between romantic partners underscores the nuanced interplay of nonverbal cues in intimate relationships. It reveals a complex landscape where nonverbal signals can both enhance and detract from relational dynamics. Importantly, the findings suggest that while nonverbal communication can undoubtedly carry both positive and negative implications, its positive aspects hold significant potential for enriching the connection between partners. When nonverbal cues convey warmth, understanding,

and affection, they serve as potent tools for deepening emotional intimacy and fostering greater relational satisfaction.

A similar study that delves into the role of nonverbal communication in building intimacy within romantic relationships is conducted by Burgoon and Hale (1984). In their research, they explore how nonverbal cues such as eye contact, touch, and body language contribute to the development of intimacy between partners. Burgoon and Hale found that nonverbal behaviors that convey warmth, empathy, and understanding significantly enhance relational closeness and satisfaction. They emphasize the importance of nonverbal cues in creating emotional resonance and deepening the bond between romantic partners, echoing the sentiments of the previous study (Burgoon & Hale, 1984).

Conversely, negative nonverbal behaviors such as eye-rolling, crossed arms, or dismissive gestures can erode trust and intimacy if left unaddressed. However, the study emphasizes the importance of actively seeking solutions to mitigate such negative cues. By recognizing and addressing these behaviors, partners can cultivate a healthier communication environment, one where misunderstandings are minimized, and emotional bonds are strengthened. Thus, while conflicts in nonverbal communication may arise, proactive efforts to navigate and resolve them can ultimately fortify the foundation of romantic relationships, promoting greater understanding, empathy, and connection.

CONCLUSION

While the study on nonverbal communication impacts on romantic relationships offers valuable insights, it's important to acknowledge its limitations. One limitation could be the reliance on self-report measures, which may introduce biases or inaccuracies in participants' responses. Additionally, the study may have a limited sample size or lack diversity in terms of demographics or relationship types, which could limit the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, the study may have focused predominantly on certain types of nonverbal cues while neglecting others, potentially overlooking important aspects of communication dynamics within relationships. There could also be confounding variables not accounted for in the analysis, such as individual differences in attachment styles or relationship histories, which may influence the observed outcomes. Lastly, the study's cross-sectional design might not capture the dynamics of nonverbal communication over time, failing to account for changes or fluctuations in relationship satisfaction and intimacy. Addressing these limitations in future research could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the complex role of nonverbal communication in romantic relationships.

Future research on the impacts of nonverbal communication on romantic relationships could explore several avenues to deepen our understanding and inform practical interventions. One promising direction is investigating the role of nonverbal synchrony in relationship satisfaction and longevity. This could involve longitudinal studies tracking couples' nonverbal behaviors over time and correlating them with relationship outcomes, shedding light on how synchronicity in gestures, facial expressions, and vocal tone influences relational dynamics.

Additionally, researchers could examine cultural variations in nonverbal communication norms within romantic relationships, exploring how cultural background shapes individuals' interpretations and expressions of nonverbal cues and its implications for relationship satisfaction. Furthermore, studies could delve into the effectiveness of interventions aimed at improving nonverbal communication skills among couples, such as mindfulness-based practices or communication workshops, and their impact on relationship quality.

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