

A MODERATING ROLE OF SELF-DISCLOSURE ON PERSONAL SELF-EXPANSION AND RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION AFFECTING COMMITMENT IN UNMARRIED ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

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ABSTRACT

Self-expansion has long been studied in the personal relationship context when individuals seek to expand their sense of self through novel experiences with their partners, especially, the initial stage of relationships. However, the association between personal self-expansion for one's own self-growth and relationship satisfaction remains unclear. Moreover, it has been found that self-disclosure (i.e., revealing about oneself to others) is an important factor in relationship satisfaction. This study aims to examine the association between personal self-expansion, self-disclosure, relationship satisfaction and its link with commitment among 136 Thai heterosexual participants, due to much research being limited on western cultures, aged between 18-64 years old ($M = 33.9$, $SD = 12$) who are in unmarried relationships for over 6 months. A linear regression was performed to analyze the association between (a) personal self-expansion and relationship satisfaction and (b) relationship satisfaction and commitment. Indirect effects analyses include mediation analysis (i.e., relationship satisfaction as a mediator) and moderation analysis (i.e., self-disclosure as a moderator). The significant findings showed that personal self-expansion positively predicted relationship satisfaction and relationship satisfaction also positively predicted commitment. Moreover, relationship satisfaction significantly mediated the relationship between personal self-expansion and commitment. However, the significant indirect effect of self-disclosure as a moderator was not found in this study.

Keywords: Personal Self-Expansion, Self-Disclosure, Relationship Satisfaction, Commitment

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INTRODUCTION

Individuals form relationships with others throughout their lifespan for survival, cooperation and reproduction. Koerner (2018) classified relationship typologies into 3 major categories, structural attributes-often refer to the innate relationships based on whether some characteristics of the members are present or not (e.g., heterosexual vs. homosexual, biological vs. adopted family), goal-based attributes focus on the cooperative relationship to accomplish goals (e.g., friendship, co-workers) and process-based attributes focus on the interactions between members as a relationship continues (e.g., hostile, volatile couples). Once individuals enter adolescence or early adulthood, some relationships can develop to be more personal relationships in which behaviors are distinctive, from friends to partners and they may experience sexual awakening in their romantic relationships which sometimes intertwine with friendships (Madsen & Collins, 2018).

Unlike companionate love, passionate love or romantic love is linked with other characteristics such as sexual desire, excitement and jealousy. Romantic love is a state in which individuals intensely seek for harmony with the other half (Hatfield et al., 2008). According to the existing evidence, researchers still have not yet concluded whether there are gender differences in falling in love (i.e., which gender has a tendency to love their partner more). However, it has been known that love can fade and end at any time as the relationship grows. Relationship satisfaction/dissatisfaction appears to be prevalent in society nowadays. There is evidence suggesting that self-expansion is a one of the relevant factors related to relationship satisfaction, relationship quality and commitment. Self-expansion is a motivation process when individuals seek to expand themselves (e.g., potential efficacy) by increasing their resources and identities to accomplish one's goals, frequently, through a romantic relationship context (Aron et al., 2013). Whereas, the cognition process, inclusion-of-other-in-the-self, leads to treating another person's perspective as if it's their own by including them to oneself. Some researchers have further conducted research of self-expansion at an individual level (i.e., *personal self-expansion/individual self-expansion*) (e.g., Carswell et al., 2021; Mattingly & Lewandowski, 2014), however, the results of personal self-expansion and relationship satisfactions remains unclear.

Besides self-expansion, self-disclosure is found to be another important characteristic in romantic relationship research (Catona & Greene, 2015; Finkenauer et al., 2018; Rains et al., 2014). As a relationship grows, individuals tend to be more open about themselves to their partners. Finkenauer and colleagues pointed out that self-disclosure enhances individuals to report on their true selves which can either enhance or decrease response from others and relationship outcomes. A comparison study about types of romantic relationships between individualistic cultures in the United States of America and collectivistic cultures in South Korea (Kim & Hatfield, 2004) showed that passionate love was closely linked to an individual's emotions but there were no significant results of gender and cultural differences found. However, the finding suggested that there might be variation of culture and gender roles affecting how individuals express themselves and how they experience love. In addition, a research of cultural differences in intimacy between individualism and collectivism suggested that relationship outcome such intimacy resulting from self-disclosure, usually leads to relational consequences (e.g., satisfaction), seems to be more vigorous in individualistic cultures than in collectivistic cultures, especially in East Asian countries, where the role is less significant (Marshall, 2008).

According to Kehat (2021), self-expansion motivation is considered to be one of the approach relationship motivations benefitting the activity excitement. Specifically, the higher degree of approach motivations, which functions as a psychological factor, positively impacts the activity excitement level. Although the study did not find significant results of different approach relationship motivations (i.e., relationship-oriented, partner-oriented, self-oriented) in

predicting the degree of activity excitement among Thai residents, self-expansion motivation was found to be a significant predictor of activity excitement leading to greater relationship satisfaction. Despite much research of self-expansion and its benefits inside a relational context enhances overall relationship satisfaction, there is still insufficient research about personal self-expansion and its role in non-relational context whether it would foster relationship outcomes or encourage couples to grow apart as they might value their own happiness rather than maintaining the relationships.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Romantic Relationships

Romantic relationships refers to mutual interactions continuingly between 2 people which can be heterosexual or homosexual (Collins et al., 2018). However, researchers may prefer other terms of this type of relationships, such as close relationships which refer to “encompass patterns of cognitive, affective, and behavioral activities occurring within and between the relational partners over time” (Blieszner & Ogletree, 2018) or intimate relationships which involve 3 major domains, the self, the partner, and the relationship (Fletcher et al., 1999). From a social-cognition standpoint, the area where all 3 domains overlap is the cognitive representation of ideal relationships one would consider to be in (e.g., “I want an honest relationship with a partner I can trust”).

Personal Self-Expansion

Forming close relationships is associated with an individual's sense of self shaping one's self and behaviors. As individuals establish a reciprocal romantic relationship, falling in love could lead to self-expansion that could build a greater self-efficacy, self-esteem and enhance the self-concepts (Tomlinson et al., 2018). Aron and Colleagues (2013) explained that in the initial stage of a relationship, shared activities and spending time together seem to be indicators for relationship maintenance. The self-expansion model can be described by two principles, self-expansion motivation, and inclusion-of-other-in-the-self principle. Nonetheless, similarity may inhibit the self-expansion motivation. Individuals have motivation to broaden their self-efficacy to expand their identity and ability to obtain one's goals. Past research showed that self-expansion either associates with experiences or anticipation of new resources and sharing new experiences with others. Meanwhile, inclusion-of-other-in-the-self is when people strive to self-expand through close relationships as they could perceive other's identities as one's own.

Self-expansion has long been studied from a relationship standpoint, however, self-expansion could be viewed from different perspectives, such as relational and non-relational self-expansion (e.g., personal self-expansion). Mattingly and Lewandowski (2012a) conducted serial studies of self-expansion to investigate the association of self-concept and self-efficacy on both individual level and relational level through novel activities. The results showed that there was an association between self-concepts and self-efficacy in both conditions. Specifically, even though participants experienced activities on oneself outside of the relational context, self-concept was found to be expanded, leading to greater self-efficacy. Later, the experimenters conducted another serial experimental study to explore whether the benefits of individual self-expansion remained unclear Mattingly and Lewandowski (2012b). As they predicted, the results showed that individuals also exhibited self-expansion through novel physical and cognitive activities on an individual level. Additionally, Chen and colleagues' (2025) past research has also shown that self-expansion from both relational and personal context increased individuals' personal well-being which affects later relationship well-being (e.g., marital satisfaction). Therefore, personal self-expansion could also be another predictor of relationship outcomes.

H1: Personal self-expansion positively predicts relationship satisfaction

Commitment

According to the triangular theory of love (Sternberg, 1986), there are three fundamental components including intimacy, passion and decision/commitment. Intimacy is when one can feel the closeness, connectedness and boundedness in their romantic relationship. Passion is the desire that can lead to romance, both physical and sexual attraction in a close relationship. Lastly, decision/commitment can be viewed from both short-term and long-term aspects, referring to the decision to love someone else and to commit and try to maintain that relationship. All 3 components are as important as each other, although it differs in terms of its function and the types of relationship one is committed to. However, the combination of these 3 components leads to consummate love which is an ideal type of romantic love that many individuals may seek for. A study of Acker and Davis (1992) found that relationship duration is a significant predictor of commitment in a romantic relationship while the same effects were not found in intimacy and passion. It can be explained that commitment can change as time passes, for instance, engaged or married couples may exhibit a stronger level of commitment in their relationships when compared to couples who have just established their relationships.

H2: Relationship satisfaction positively predicts commitment

Relationship Satisfaction

During a relationship process, both partners could experience both positive and negative feelings. The degree to which one could fulfill the partner's important needs can determine the relationship satisfaction (Rusbult et al., 1998) which is an important variable among others when conducting research about romantic relationships. Relationship satisfaction is a predictor of commitment, marriage and dissolution depending on the type of relationships (e.g., short-term, long-term, committed and uncommitted relationships) and other predictors such as age, relationship duration, ethnicity and cultures (Cassepp-Borges et al., 2023; Bühler et al., 2021). One challenge when conducting a study about relationship satisfaction is the scale selection. Jardine and colleagues (2022) suggested that there are five scales that are widely used to measure relationship satisfaction such as "Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976), the Relationship Assessment Scale (Hendrick, 1988), the Quality of Marriage Index (Norton, 1983), the Couples Satisfaction Index (Funk & Rogge, 2007), and the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (Schumm et al., 1983)". However, among these scales, Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) is widely used as it is simpler and more generalizable than dyadic adjustment scale (Vaughn & Baier, 1999).

H3: Personal self-expansion positively predicts commitment through the mediating role of relationship satisfaction

Self-Disclosure

Self-disclosure refers to verbal communication about oneself or an interaction between an individual to one or more individuals (Cozby, 1973; Catona & Greene, 2015). Catona and Greene further stated that disclosure can also be nonverbal expressions through body language, facial expressions or symbolic messages (e.g., clothes, accessories) to communicate one's information with others. However, much research has mainly examined self-disclosure regarding verbal communication focusing on sensitive information rather than general information (Green et al., 2006). Self-disclosure plays a major role in relationship development and relationship maintenance as it enhances trust, intimacy, positive affect and other relationship outcomes (e.g., satisfaction) when individuals frequently and deeply disclose to their partners. Self-disclosure provides a sense of connectedness and pleasure when one discloses oneself to others while they are in an interpersonal process (Finkenauer et al., 2018). Seemingly, when personal self-expansion occurs outside a relational context or at an individual level (e.g., learning new things, traveling, self-improvement), it can benefit relationship outcomes, especially when one communicates or shares those experiences with their partners

(Lasanen, 2022). Therefore, self-disclosure might be another factor that brings personal self-expansion into a relationship mechanism.

H4: Relationship between personal self-expansion and relationship satisfaction is moderated by self-disclosure.

Previous studies have consistently shown that relational self-expansion enhances relationship quality by incorporating others in the self through novel activities (Aron et al., 2003). However, findings on personal self-expansion are more complex. While personal growth may increase self-efficacy and positive affect, it may not always translate into relational benefits unless such growth is integrated into the relationship (e.g., Lasanen, 2022, Carswell et al., 2021).

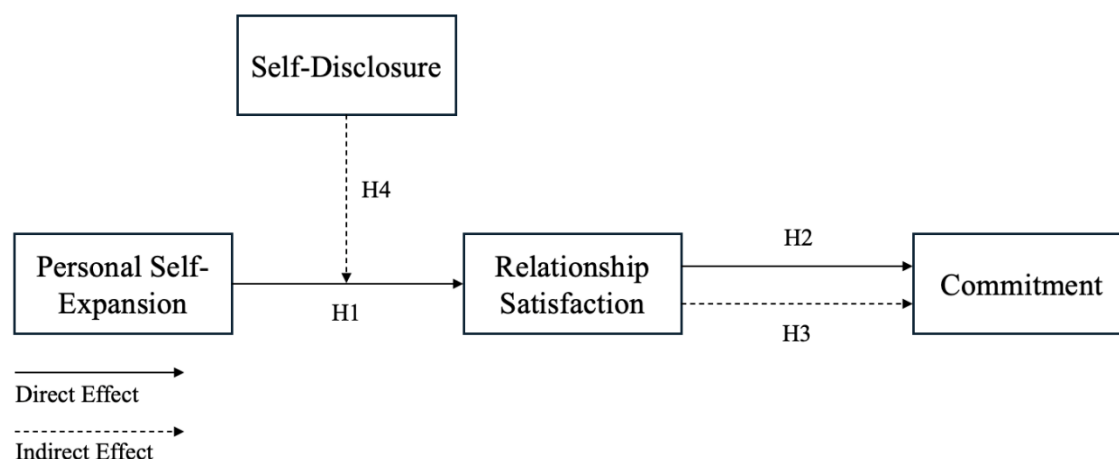


Figure 1 A Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Participants and Procedures

136 heterosexual Thai participants (F = 91, M = 45) aged between 18-64 years old ($M = 33.9$, $SD = 12$) who are in their unmarried romantic relationships for over 6 months were recruited through convenience sampling. The study was conducted online through Qualtrics. Participants were presented with a research instruction and a consent form before beginning the survey including demographics (i.e., gender, relationship duration and occupation). Later, participants had to complete an open-ended question asking them to list 3-5 new activities that they would like to experience in the past 3 months, followed by randomized self-report questionnaires.

Measures

The personal self-expansion, self-disclosure and commitment scales were back translated into Thai as the current study aims to examine Thai participants. Prior to the main study, a pilot study was conducted to measure the reliability of the back-translated scales and approved by the experts from social psychology to ensure that the scales convey the cultural context and conceptual equivalence.

Personal expansion questionnaire. The original scale of personal expansion questionnaire (PEQ) was developed by Gordon & Luo (2011) to examine an individual's personal self-expansion from both inside and outside romantic relationship context. The Thai version ($\alpha = .77$) consists of 5 items for each subscale, novelty (e.g., "I am always interested in finding new things to try") and augmentation (e.g., "I enjoy gaining a more thorough understanding of something I already know"), ranging from 1-5 (i.e., 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

Self-disclosure index. The Thai version ($\alpha = .79$) was developed from self-disclosure index (SDI; Miller et al., 1983, which is a 10-item with 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1-5 (i.e., 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). For example, "I discuss my personal habits with my [insert specific target person]".

Relationship assessment scale. The original relationship assessment scale (RAS; Hendrick, 1988) consists of 7 items. This study uses a translated scale by Chawaleemaporn & Isaranon (2023) ($\alpha = .88$) with 5-point Likert scale (i.e., 1 = the lowest to 5 = the highest) which is more generalizable with romantic couples, not as specific to married couples (e.g., “How well does your partner meet your needs?”).

Commitment. The commitment scale is adapted from the commitment inventory (CI; Stanley & Markman, 1992). The current study partially adopted one subscale to measure commitment in romantic relationship context. The Thai version of relationship agenda subscale ($\alpha = .87$) consists of 6 questions, such as, “I may decide that I want to end this relationship at some point in the future”, ranging from 1-5 (i.e., 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

Data Analysis

The data from an open-ended question was categorized into categories such as baking and cooking, fitness and sports, hobbies, learning, novel experiences, relational expansion, self-improvement, skill development and traveling. The frequency of each category was calculated into percentages to display overall different types of the expansion. The main study data was analyzed by Jamovi version 2.6.45, the reliability analysis was then performed for main variables (i.e., personal self-expansion, self-disclosure, relationship satisfaction and commitment), as well as descriptive statistics. Moreover, Pearson’s correlations were conducted to examine relationships between the main variables through correlation matrix.

A linear regression was conducted to examine the relationship between personal self-expansion and relationship satisfaction and the relationship between relationship satisfaction and commitment when controlling for age, gender and relationship duration. The indirect effects were analyzed by medmod module within the program to examine (a) a mediation analysis for relationship satisfaction on personal self-expansion and commitment and (b) a moderation analysis for self-disclosure on a relationship between personal self-expansion and relationship satisfaction. Lastly, an independent sample t-test was performed to analyze whether there are gender differences between 2 groups of participants (males vs. females).

RESEARCH RESULTS

Descriptive Analysis

Most of the participants are students ($n = 35$), employees in private companies ($n = 33$), government employees ($n = 25$), business owners ($n = 18$), freelance ($n = 12$) and others such as unemployment, housewives, etc. ($n = 13$). Participants reported the duration of their romantic relationship for over 5 years ($n = 41$) followed by 2 years to 2 years and 11 months ($n = 24$), 6 to 11 months ($n = 23$), 4 years to 4 years and 11 months ($n = 17$) and 3 years to 3 years and 11 months ($n = 16$) and 1 year to 1 year and 11 months ($n = 15$), respectively.

Results from an open-ended question asking respondents to list activities that they would like to experience 3 months prior the survey can be divided into 9 categories as baking and booking, fitness and sports, hobbies, learning (e.g., learning languages), novel experiences (e.g., trying new food, having a pet), relational expansion (e.g., shared activities and couple experiences), self-improvement-including well-being (e.g., waking up early, meditation), skills development (e.g., upskill and reskill) and traveling. Out of the 535 total responses, traveling was the most frequent reported by participants (21.5%), followed by fitness and sports (19.3%), hobbies (18.9%), baking and cooking (13.3%), self-improvement (8.8%), skills development (6.4%), novel experiences (5.8%), learning (4.3%) and lastly, 1.9% of participants reported shared activities with their partners.

Descriptive statistics were calculated for all main variables (see Table 1). Overall, participants reported relatively high scores of self-disclosure, followed by commitment, relationship satisfaction and personal self-expansion, respectively.

Table 1 Means and standard deviations for all variables

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Personal Self-Expansion	3.25	0.48
Self-Disclosure	3.65	0.88
Relationship Satisfaction	3.52	0.83
Commitment	3.61	0.94

Reliability Analysis

The Self-Disclosure Index; SDI demonstrated good reliability ($\alpha = .86$), while other scales demonstrated acceptable reliability-Relationship Assessment Scale; RAS ($\alpha = .76$), Commitment ($\alpha = .76$) and The Personal Expansion Questionnaire (PEQ) ($\alpha = .72$), respectively.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson's correlation analyses were conducted to examine the association between the main variables (see table 2). The results showed that all the variables were significantly correlated, specifically, relationship satisfaction was highly correlated with commitment $r(134) = .72$ ($p < .001$) as well as relationship satisfaction and self-disclosure $r(133) = .66$ ($p < .001$).

Table 2 Correlation analysis between the main variables

Variables2	PSE	SD	RS	COM
1) Personal Self-Expansion (PSE)	-			
2) Self-Disclosure (SD)	0.285***	-		
3) Relationship Satisfaction (RS)	0.238**	0.662***	-	
4) Commitment (COM)	0.218*	0.615***	0.718***	-

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$.

Main Study Analyses

Direct effects were analyzed to see whether there are associations between (a) personal self-expansion and relationship satisfaction and (b) relationship satisfaction and commitment (see Table 3) with age, gender and relationship duration as control variables. The overall regression for (a) was statistically significant, $R = 0.46$, $F(8, 127) = 4.28$, $p < .001$ accounting for 21.3% of the variance. Hence, H1: personal self-expansion positively predicts relationship satisfaction was supported. In addition, H2: relationship satisfaction predicts commitment was also supported, as the overall regression model (b) demonstrated statistical significance $R = 0.74$, $F(9, 127) = 19.00$, $p < .001$, accounting for 54.4% of the variance and relationship satisfaction also significantly correlated with commitment. Age was negatively associated with relationship satisfaction and commitment in both analyses ($p < .001$) whereas gender and relationship duration were not significant predictors.

Table 3 Linear regression results

Model	R ²	Adjusted R ²	β	95% CI		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
				Lower	Upper		
PSE → RS	0.213	0.163	0.173	0.001	0.597	1.99	0.049
RS → COM	0.544	0.516	0.672	0.610	0.907	10.11	<.001

An indirect effect of relationship satisfaction on the relationship between personal self-expansion and commitment was analyzed through mediation analysis with 5000 bootstrap samples. The result shows that there was statistically significant mediation effect found between the variables, specifically, the total effect was not significant $B = 0.42$, $SE = 0.21$, $Z = 2.07$, $p = .04$, 95% CI [0.03-0.84]. Table 4 represents the indirect effect and direct effect of the model.

A moderation analysis with 5000 bootstrap samples was conducted to examine whether self-disclosure moderates the relationship between personal self-expansion and relationship satisfaction. Table 5 represents the result of the main and an interaction effect, there was a significant main effect of self-disclosure but no significant main effect for personal self-expansion found. Resulting that the H4: relationship between personal self-expansion and relationship satisfaction is moderated by self-disclosure, was not supported.

Table 4 Indirect effect results

Model	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	95% CI		<i>Z</i>	<i>p</i>
			Lower	Upper		
PSE → RS	0.411	0.169	0.077	0.746	2.426	0.015
RS → COM	0.798	0.731	0.655	0.937	10.913	<.001
Indirect effect	0.328	0.132	0.061	0.588	2.488	0.013
Direct effect	0.096	0.139	-0.157	0.387	0.694	0.488
Total effect	0.424	0.205	0.032	0.836	2.067	0.039

Table 5 Moderation estimates

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	95% CI		<i>Z</i>	<i>p</i>
			Lower	Upper		
PSE	0.073	0.140	-0.219	0.340	0.519	0.604
SD	0.609	0.062	0.489	0.731	9.880	<.001
PSE*SD	0.201	0.119	-0.024	0.442	1.693	0.090

Independent Samples t-test

An independent t-tests was conducted to examine whether there are gender differences, the result showed that females reported slightly higher level of self-disclosure than males $t(134) =$

-3.61 ($p < .001$), similarly to personal self-expansion $t(134) = -2.70$ ($p < .05$) and relationship satisfaction $t(134) = -2.12$ ($p < .05$). However, there was no significant gender difference found in commitment $t(134) = -1.11$ ($p = .27$).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

General Discussion

The present study aimed to study the impact of personal self-expansion in unmarried romantic relationships among Thai individuals by investigating its associations with relationship satisfaction and commitment when having self-disclosure as a mediator. Since much research has found that self-expansion could have positive effects to overall relationship outcomes including relationship satisfaction through novel activities, however, previous studies have not yet concluded whether personal self-expansion would either enhance or diminish relationship satisfaction. In addition, self-disclosure was positively associated with relationship satisfaction, intimacy and relationship outcomes; this suggests that self-disclosure might have direct influence on relationship satisfaction as individuals who share their thoughts and feelings about oneself may be more likely to report higher satisfaction in the relationship. Overall, the findings of the current study supported 3 out of 4 hypotheses, specifically, personal self-expansion was found to significantly predict relationship satisfaction and relationship satisfaction significantly predicted commitment. Additionally, there was a significant mediation effect found, but not a moderation effect.

The result shows that participants who reported greater personal self-expansion were more likely to report greater relationship satisfaction, suggesting that personal self-expansion may also be a predictor to a happy relationship. Consistent with an open-ended question result, over 98% of participants reported activities that they would solo experience but only 2% reported that they would like to engage with their partners. One possible explanation is that participants might aim to fulfil their goals (e.g., traveling, hobbies, learning languages) or improve themselves (e.g., upskill/reskill, fitness and sports) to increase their confidence or competence which might somehow contribute to overall satisfaction in their romantic relationships. However, some activities might have more than one interpretation, such as learning new languages which could be a personal goal or a relational goal if the participant's partner speaks foreign languages. Such motivation might enhance interactions between partners and in line with Thai culture where people value harmony (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The finding that personal self-expansion predicts relationship satisfaction supports the idea that individuals can grow and expand their own interests while maintaining their relationships. On the other hand, these positive effects when one achieves or improves themselves may increase emotional resources and positive self-concept which could strengthen positive relationship perception. However, the effect size was relatively modest, indicating that there might be other factors influencing the satisfaction such as one's feeling toward their partners, validation and responsiveness from partners (Skutovich, 2018).

Relationship satisfaction was found to be a significant predictor of commitment in the present study, aligning with the Investment Model (Rusbult et al., 1998) which states that relationship satisfaction, as one of the 3 determinants, is strongly correlated with commitment. Individuals who are satisfied with their relationship seem to be more committed to their partners and willing to grow old with them too. Interestingly, after controlling for age, gender and relationship duration, age was found to be negatively associated with relationship satisfaction and commitment in this study. The finding suggests that older participants seemed to report less satisfaction in their current relationship than younger participants. However, there is still mixed evidence on these associations from previous research (Bühler et al., 2021).

According to the 2 hypotheses above, it can be implied that relationship satisfaction acts as a mediator between personal self-expansion and commitment. The finding shows that

relationship satisfaction significantly acted as a mediator in the current study. Meaning that, higher self-expansion at an individual level is linked with higher commitment when relationship satisfaction is greater. Although the self-expansion model (Aron et al., 2003) focuses on general expansion from a couple's lens and its outcomes, it appears that personal self-expansion can strengthen romantic relationships by fostering relationship satisfaction and commitment. Essentially, individuals who engage in activities that could promote self-efficacy or personal growth and well-being are more likely to feel satisfied in their relationship, resulting in higher commitment with their partners.

The fourth hypothesis proposed that the relationship between personal self-expansion and relationship satisfaction is moderated by self-disclosure. The current study did not reveal a significant interaction result, meaning that self-disclosure did not either weaken or strengthen the association between personal self-expansion and relationship satisfaction. The greater personal self-expansion appears to enhance relationship satisfaction whether individuals confide in their partners or not. To be specific, self-disclosure was found to be positively associated with relationship satisfaction, intimacy and relationship outcomes, thus, it might have a direct influence on relationship satisfaction as individuals who share their thoughts and feelings about oneself may be more likely to report higher satisfaction (Gupta, 2026). In other words, self-disclosure may function as a direct predictor of relationship satisfaction, which is in line with a significant main effect found in table 4, which is in line with a significant main effect found in table 4. However, self-disclosure in the present study was relatively high, resulting in insufficient variability and the sample size might not be enough to provide sufficient statistical power to detect interaction effects. Moreover, people from different cultures, such as Thai, may value relational harmony or social obligations which could affect their emotional expression and communication patterns (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Personal self-expansion may increase relationship satisfaction whether lovers discuss their experiences to each other or not.

Limitations & Future Directions

First, although the translated scales were reliable, some questions should be reviewed for wording ambiguity to prevent language and meaning confusion. Second, there might be biases occurred for self-report measures (e.g., social desirability). Future research should consider the research design to be dyadic or diary approaches to capture the changes over time and it might be worth examining the role of relational expansion to further examine the association of the relationship outcomes. Third, future study should further examine how different types of novel activities (solo vs. relational) would affect or contribute relationship outcomes in a collectivistic culture to understand psychological mechanisms underlying the personal self-expansion. Lastly, future research should further explore the role of cultural influences within the collectivistic culture among different relationship types (e.g., unmarried, premarital or married couples) and generations along with marriage and divorce history to compare if these factors would influence the relationship satisfaction and commitment among participants or not. Moreover, there is still insufficient research on the roles of self-expansion-particularly personal self-expansion and self-disclosure within a relational context in Thailand, since much research has been limited to broader topics such as gender roles and identities, marketing or workplace settings.

Implications

Theoretical Implication. The study aims to further examine the gaps in existing literature by extending the understanding of how personal self-expansion could amplify relationship outcomes such as satisfaction and commitment over time. Introducing self-disclosure into the study provides insight information of an interpersonal process in a collectivistic culture which is still insufficient and remains unclear. Lastly, the findings extend the comprehension of

personal self-expansion mechanisms in a collectivistic context such as Thailand where our thoughts and behaviors are shaped by others.

Practical Implication. The findings may benefit couples interventions to improve their relationship quality and satisfaction by fostering couples to expand their personal growth along with open and meaningful communication with their partners through communication skill training. Moreover, relevant organizations may support relationship education programs or public campaigns to promote relationship awareness and aim to minimize the negative relationship outcomes.

Conclusion

The present study examined the associations between personal self-expansion, relationship satisfaction, commitment and self-disclosure-as a moderator. In sum, personal self-expansion positively predicted relationship satisfaction and relationship satisfaction predicted commitment. Furthermore, association between personal self-expansion and commitment was mediated by relationship satisfaction, while the indirect effect of self-disclosure did not significantly moderate the relationship between personal self-expansion and relationship satisfaction. Indicating that individuals who expand themselves outside of the relationship tend to be happy in their relationships, hence, commit and plan to stay in a relationship for a long term. Since personal self-expansion is an indicator to satisfaction in relationships, talking or revealing oneself to partners does not seem to facilitate or diminish relationship satisfaction. Overall, these findings emphasize that individuals can expand their personal growth while maintaining happiness in their romantic relationships.

This study extends self-expansion theory by showing that personal self-expansion outside the romantic relationship can still contribute to relationship satisfaction and commitment among Thai unmarried couples. The findings suggest that individual growth and relational well-being are not necessarily competing processes; rather, personal development may enrich romantic relationships when it enhances satisfaction within the relationship.

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