

# HAIGAZIAN UNIVERSITY

The Interrelationship amongst Conflict Resolution Styles, Sexual Satisfaction, Depression, and  
Anxiety among Lebanese Adults

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*DEDICATION*

*I would like to dedicate this work to my family and friends  
who showed great support throughout this process.*

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### Abstract

This study assessed the relationship between conflict resolution styles, sexual satisfaction, depression, and anxiety among Lebanese adults. A total of 150 individuals were administered the Gottman Sound Relationship House Questionnaire, the Index of Sexual Satisfaction, the Zung Self-Rating Anxiety Scale, and the Beck Depression Inventory-II (BDI-II). Destructive conflict resolution styles were significantly negatively correlated with sexual satisfaction, depression, and anxiety, while constructive styles were significantly positively correlated with these variables. Moreover, depression and anxiety were more affected by destructive styles, while sexual satisfaction was more affected by constructive styles.

## The Interrelationship amongst Conflict Resolution Styles, Sexual Satisfaction, Depression, and Anxiety among Lebanese Adults

Human relationships have been studied since 1938 because of their importance and complexity (Gottman & Silver, 1999). Dozens of variables have been presumed to play a role in relationships, especially in romantic relationships. When people start a relationship, they go in with their own set of values, personality styles, beliefs, conflict resolution styles, and opinions, which makes conflict inevitable. Because such factors are interrelated, studies have focused on the positive and negative effects of these and other factors on the course of the relationship, its longevity, and the perceived satisfaction of those involved. Relationships can serve as a support system, where partners understand, respect, and appreciate one another (Greeff & Bruyne, 2000).

Moreover, healthy relationships in which couples communicate positively, appreciate one another, and accept the influence of one another have been shown to serve as protective factors against infectious diseases (Greeff and Bruyne, 2000; Gottman & Silver, 1999). However, not all relationships are perceived as positive ones. Some people find themselves in relationships where they lack the sense of security that they aim for and instead perceive their relationships as negative or troublesome. These couples, with time, tend to develop negative feelings towards one another that will ultimately result in the dissolution of the relationship. Moreover, these relationships have shown to lead the way to a vast number of physiological problems, such as vulnerability to infectious and coronary diseases, and psychological problems, such as depression, anxiety, substance use, and even suicidality (Gottman & Silver, 1999).

There are many factors that influence the course of a relationship and serve as correlates for either relationship satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Marital theorists often implicate communication as a central feature in marital discord (Christensen & Shenk, 1991). For example,

conflict may be functional for a relationship longitudinally because it allows each partner to share strong feelings and opinions related to specific issues. However, conflict that is indicative of defensiveness, stubbornness, and withdrawal may be dysfunctional longitudinally (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989). Christensen and Shenk (1991) have found that if couples cannot maintain a mutual, constructive, problem-solving approach to their inevitable differences, distress will develop. The resulting distress might come in several forms. It can be portrayed through distance between the partners, sexual dysfunctions, depressive symptoms, anxiety, or physiological problems related to diseases and illnesses.

### **Background of the Study**

#### *Conflict Resolution Styles*

Several theories have been presented and studied regarding how couples communicate and resolve their conflicts. Studies aimed to find the destructive and the constructive conflict resolution strategies or styles and their effect on the relationships itself. Because people tend to differ in their ability to use conflict, the manner in which they argue, react to, and act upon conflict, clashes between partners are inevitable at times (Greeff and Bruyne, 2000). Dr. John Gottman, a leading psychologist in the field of relationships, has been studying relationships for the past 40 years. He was interested in helping couples achieve happiness and satisfaction in their relationship, so he began studying the different behaviors that couples exhibit, especially during times of conflict. His research not only focused on behaviors but on non-verbal communication and physiological changes during arguments. His research has helped him develop the ability to predict divorce, with 91% accuracy, from listening to a couple argue for three minutes. He ultimately identified specific factors that are predictive of relationship satisfaction. These factors are related to how the conflict resolution styles that couples exhibit when dealing with their

problems and the strategies they use when talking to one another. These conflict resolution styles are not distinctive categorical styles in which people fit perfectly. Rather, they are behaviors exhibited throughout different intervals of the argument that become detrimental to the couple's relationship with time. When couples engage in these styles, their chances of constructive conflict resolution is decreased. Conversely, when couples shy away from using these behaviors or styles in their arguments, their chances of resolving the conflicts amicably increases. Gottman developed the Sound Relationship House Questionnaire- Constructive versus Destructive Conflict Measures to screen for each of these factors, providing independent subscales for each. He began with how the conversation starts-off, how couples interacted during the argument, and finally the resulting conclusions drawn from the argument (solution).

Other studies have also found evidence for the detrimental effects of destructive interaction styles on relationships. Greeff and Bruyne (2000) stated that there are few aspects in a relationship that influence a couple's sense of well-being more than their ability to manage conflict constructively and mutually. They make a distinction between constructive and destructive conflict resolution styles. With respect to constructive styles, interactions are characterized by flexibility, an enhancement of self-esteem, and cooperation. Conversely, destructive styles are characterized by escalating spirals of manipulation or avoidance, rigidity, dominance (or subordination) and demeaning verbal and non-verbal communication (Greeff & Bruyne, 2000). Their research also indicated that couples tend to adhere to conflict resolution styles which are usually learned in childhood. However, for more positive results, they should be able to make creative use of conflict and learn to adapt to certain changes in the relationship. Consistent with the findings of Gottman, they showed that unresolved conflicts can have a negative impact on the mental health of one or both of the partners.

*Conflict Resolution and Sexual Satisfaction*

Relationship conflict has long been thought to cause, maintain, and influence sexual problems in the absence of a physical cause (Metz & Epstein, 2002). Most theoretical models of human sexuality emphasize the importance of relational communication in maintaining sexual adjustment (Purnine & Carey, 1997). To some, sexual problems cannot be addressed until communication improves (Wincze & Carey, 1991). Supportive communication has been found to be a strong predictor for sexual intimacy (Sprecher, Metts, Burleson, Hatfield, & Thompson, 1995). Marriages in which partners reported high levels of mutually satisfying non-sexual interactions were less likely to be sexually inactive or to be sexually dissatisfied (Donnelly, 1993). Donnelly (1993) also found that lack of sexual activity appears to be associated with the existence of other problems in the relationship. When relationships suffer outside the bedroom, they may suffer inside it as well (Donnelly, 1993). Moreover, Lawrance and Byers (1995) found that characteristics which are indicative of the quality of the relationship are related to the level of sexual satisfaction, strengthening the notion that sexual satisfaction is affected by factors that are not sexual in nature. Cupach and Metts (1994) found that the manner in which relational conflict is managed affects sexual dysfunction, such as inhibitions of sexual desire or physiological changes in the sexual response cycle. One can conclude at this point that with respect to conflict resolution and sexual satisfaction, the relationship seems to be unidirectional; when conflict resolution is dysfunctional and characterized by negativity, withdrawal, defensiveness, and lack of respect, it affects sexual satisfaction negatively, leading to less enjoyable sexual interactions and experiences.

In addition to documented research cited above, I can also add that during my clinical internship at the American University of Beirut Medical Center (Psychiatry Department), I

encountered several cases that strengthened the notion that conflict resolution styles and sexual satisfaction are related. People presented to psychotherapy complaining of sexual dissatisfaction, depression, or anxiety, unable to relate those symptoms to relational conflicts. The women I encountered were experiencing low sexual desire or sexual pain and felt that sex with their partners had become a chore. Men, on the other hand, experienced sexual dysfunctions and perceived sex as less satisfying. A lot of the times, in practice, there were underlying communication problems between these individuals and their significant others, in the absence of any physical or medical cause. Couples would often criticize one another, blame, nag, or even withdraw from conflicts. These patterns ultimately took a toll on their sexual life with their partners and created more problems. Once they were taught how to effectively deal with their loved ones, their symptoms began to decrease and the focus shifted from their symptoms to their relationships. They became aware of how these relationships are affecting them, which made them focus on making them better. Therefore, in light of the above, this study will predict that constructive conflict resolution styles will be positively correlated with sexual satisfaction.

#### *Conflict Resolution, Depression, and Anxiety*

The relationship between conflict resolution skills and depression or anxiety is not as clear. Some studies aimed at seeing whether conflict resolution styles in a relationship have an effect on people's depression. The results have been mixed, with some studies showing a positive correlation between dysfunctional conflict resolution styles and depression (Schudlich, Papp & Cummings, 2011), while other studies have found no such association (Ulrich-Jakubowski, Russell, & O'Hara, 1988). Beach, Katz, Kim, & Brody (2003) found that disturbance in a relationship is a powerful predictor of later depressive symptoms. Moreover, studies have suggested that marital dysfunction, characterized by negative interactions and

conflict resolution styles, is a causal factor in depression (Jackman-Cram, Dobson, & Martin, 2006). Furthermore, one study found that treatment for depression improved marital adjustment and changed the severity of depression. However, the same study noted that if poor communication persisted after treatment of depression, there was an increased risk for an increase in depressive symptoms (Jackman-Cram et al., 2006). This previous finding confirms the notion that communication in a relationship plays a vital role in the maintenance or increase in depressive symptoms. This led researchers to conclude that the relationship between marital communication and depression is bidirectional, with one always exacerbating the other (Jackman-Cram et al., 2006).

### **Problem Statement**

Finally, there have been no studies in the Lebanese society that focused on the importance of conflict resolution styles in the maintenance of satisfying sexual relationships. Moreover, there have been no studies that examined the link between conflict resolution styles and depression or anxiety. Therefore, and taking into consideration the above discussed rationale of this study, the author will aim at finding the relationship between conflict resolution styles (constructive versus destructive) and sexual satisfaction as a primary measure, and depression and anxiety as secondary measures. The destructive conflict resolution styles are the Harsh Startup, The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, and Gridlock on Perpetual Issues. The constructive conflict resolution style is compromise. The hypotheses are stated below:

1. The constructive conflict resolution style will be positively correlated with sexual satisfaction.
2. Destructive conflict resolution styles will be negatively correlated with sexual satisfaction.
3. The constructive conflict resolution style will be negatively correlated with depression.
4. Destructive conflict resolution styles will be positively correlated with depression.

5. The constructive conflict resolution style will be negatively correlated with anxiety.
6. The destructive conflict resolution styles will be positively correlated with anxiety.

### **Significance of the Study**

Similar to other societies, Lebanese individuals are subjected to a lot of everyday pressures and stressors that might play a role in how they deal with their problems at home or with loved ones. People will tend to displace these pressures onto those close to them, leading to unhealthy and unconstructive ways of dealing with their problems. Moreover, some people don't know how to effectively deal with the inevitable conflicts that arise in a relationship and are unaware of the effects of destructive conflict resolution styles on other aspects of their lives, such as depression, anxiety, and even sexual satisfaction. Some men might use aggressiveness, force, or even disrespect when dealing with their partners because of the societal understanding that men are superior to women. Women on the other hand might react by either becoming defensive or by withdrawing from the conflict because of the notion that women in our society are under the mercy of their husbands and should not stand up for themselves and speak their minds. These misconception and societal "rules" lead to tensed relationships, where one or both partners are dissatisfied and where conflicts are not resolved.

Once these conflicts start to build up, they fall into this destructive and dysfunctional pattern which affects other aspects of their lives, such as their sexual satisfaction or even depression levels. This pattern leads partners to build resentments towards one another, which in turn will affect the way they will deal with one another. This is a vicious cycle that leads to the unfortunate dissolution of many relationships that could have been saved if partners learned the right way to interact with one another and to resolve their conflicts more effectively. When the relationship outside the bedroom walls becomes better, it improves the relationship inside.

Hence, if people learn to manage their problems in more effective and constructive ways, they might be able to prevent sexual dissatisfaction, depression, and anxiety. In addition, since romantic relationships play a big role in the enhancement of people's well-being, the more positive these relationships are the more satisfied and adjusted the people involved will be.

It is important clinically to figure out this relationship because it will guide therapists in dealing with people who present with sexual satisfaction. Studies are now showing that people who go to sex therapy for their sexual problems are benefiting more from the learning of communication skills that are indirectly improving the frequency of their sexual activities and the quality of those activities. Therefore, instead of focusing on how individuals or couples can enhance their sexual experiences, psychotherapists can focus on teaching couples to communicate more effectively, leading to improved conflict resolution styles, which in turn may improve sexual satisfaction, anxiety, and depression measures.

### **Overview of Methodology**

This quantitative study was conducted to understand the correlations between conflict resolution styles, sexual satisfactions, depression, and anxiety. One-hundred and fifty participants, above 18 years of age and from a convenient sample were asked to fill a survey consisting of 4 separate questionnaires that target conflict resolution styles, sexual satisfaction, anxiety, and depression. They were also asked to read a consent form and provide oral consent for participation. Moreover, participants were asked to provide some demographic information regarding their age, relationship status, number of relationships they have been in, and the duration of the longest relationship. Participants who were currently single were asked to answer with respect to a past relationship of their choice. This study included married, divorced,

widowed, single, and engaged participants, as well as those currently in a committed relationship.

Four scales were used in this study: The **Gottman Sound Relationship House Questionnaire- Constructive versus Destructive Conflict Measures** (Gottman & Silver, 1999) to measure whether couples use constructive or destructive conflict resolution styles when dealing with certain issues in their relationship; the **Beck Depression Inventory II** (Beck, Brown & Steer, 1996), to measure the presence and the severity of depressive symptoms; the **Zung Self-Rating Anxiety Scale** (Zung, 1971): to measure the presence and severity of anxiety symptoms; and **The Index of Sexual Satisfaction** (Hudson, Harrison, & Crossup 1981), to measure the degree of satisfaction in the sexual component of a dyadic relationship. Finally, after the data were gathered, correlational analyses, analyses of variance (ANOVAs) and independent samples t-test were applied for further analyses of the data.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

*Conflict Resolution Styles:* behaviors and attitudes that one utilizes when attempting to resolve a conflict with another person. They include, but are not limited to, avoidance, defensiveness, criticism, and compromise (Gottman & Silver, 1999).

*Sexual Satisfaction:* the degree to which an individual is satisfied with the sexual aspect of his/her relationship. Sexual aspects of the relationship can range from kissing, stroking, and undressing to sexual intercourse (Harvey, Wenzel, & Sprecher, 2004).

*Depression:* an emotional state that is characterized by a sad mood, lack of interest and pleasure in daily activities, significant weight loss/gain, insomnia or excessive sleeping, lack of

energy, inability to concentrate, feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt, and recurrent thoughts of death or suicide (Kazdin, 2000).

*Anxiety*: an emotional state characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts, and physical changes such as increased blood pressure, numbing, sweating, trembling, dizziness, and increased heartbeat (Kazdin, 2000).

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **Review of Literature**

Conflict resolution styles have been addressed amply and associated with several dysfunctions in romantic relationships. Whether discussing everyday issues or making important life-changing decisions, couples need to be able to tackle their conflict effectively to ensure the well-being of their relationships. Conflict resolution styles have been shown to play a central and vital role in the couple's perceived satisfaction with several aspects of the relationship. Moreover, when couples struggle to resolve their conflicts amicably, their sexual interactions suffer and they are placed at a greater risk of developing psychological disorders, such as depression and anxiety. The current study examined the relationship between conflict resolution styles and sexual satisfaction among Lebanese adults to see whether this relationship is similar to that found in research abroad. Moreover, the study aimed at examining the relationship between conflict resolution styles and psychological distress, specifically depression and anxiety, to help deal with psychotherapy clients presenting with such disorders.

#### **Conflict Resolution Styles and Relationships**

Several studies have indicated that individuals who are in a relationship, compared to their single counterparts, enjoy better health and live longer (Choi & Marks, 2008). This might be due to the fact that relationships offer a greater availability of emotions, social support, meaning, and a purpose in life (Choi & Marks, 2008). However, some relationships are not perceived positively by those involved in them. Some people view their relationships as battle fields in which they fight for empathy, understanding, control, and satisfaction. These relationships are a source of heartache and struggle. The problems encountered in relationships can have many sources. A relationship is viewed by some as a clash between several factors,

including differences in personality styles, opinions, values and beliefs (Greeff & Bruyne, 2000). Moreover, individuals differ in their ability to deal with conflict and in the conflict resolution styles they practice (Gottman, 1999). There is considerable agreement that the existence of effective conflict resolution style is crucial for the maintenance of relationship satisfaction (Billings, 1979). One study showed that the escalation and continuation of marital conflicts due to chronic failure to resolve problems may lead to reductions in relationship satisfaction over time (Billings, 1979). Researchers have suggested that unhappy couples appear to suffer from a skills deficit that inhibits their ability to communicate effectively, as they incorporate destructive conflict resolution styles into their arguments (Litzinger & Gordon, 2005). The same study found that compared to non-distressed couples, distressed couples exhibit less mutually constructive communication styles during conflict, more withdrawal from conflict, and more avoidance of conflict (Litzinger & Gordon, 2005).

Conflict resolution styles reflect interpersonal behaviors that are used to address disagreements that occur within relationships (Marchand & Hock, 2000). It is the negative attributes of conflict that are common in distressed relationships (Gordon, Baucom, Epstein, Burnett, & Rankin, 1999). Negative attributes include avoidance or attacking strategies during disagreements. Avoidant strategies might come in the form of withdrawal from conflict or holding feelings inside, while attacking strategies include physical or verbal attacks on a partner (Marchand & Hock, 2000; Greeff & Bruyne, 2000; Christensen & Shenk, 1999). Avoiding conflict will eventually result in the reappearance of conflict issues, as well as emotional distance between the partners (Greeff & Bruyne, 2000). It is important to make a distinction when speaking of conflict. Conflict is an essential part of any relationship and serves to help partners express needs, opinions, and beliefs. Conflict itself isn't to be avoided, but rather is to be dealt

with in constructive ways (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989). Gottman (2000) showed in one study that couples who never engage in conflict have a high probability of their relationship ending. High functioning relationships are not those in which conflict is lacking, but rather consist of skilled communication and conflict resolution (Papp, Goeke-Morey, & Cummings, 2007)

### **Conflict Resolution Styles**

There have been many theories about the conflict resolution styles exhibited by individuals. In an attempt to understand the constructive and destructive ways of handling conflict, researchers focused on how individuals resolve their issues along with their relationship satisfaction and happiness. Research focused on narrowing down conflict resolution styles into specific behaviors that can be observed and measured. Dr. John Gottman, a psychologist and relationship expert, attempted to study relationships in a manner that is all-encompassing. He not only measured specific forms of verbal and non-verbal communication during arguments, but also focused on measuring the physiological changes associated with specific conflict resolution behaviors. Gottman began his research in the “love labs” that he created at the University of Washington. Love labs were similar to apartments in which couples would be observed over periods of time (Gottman, 1999). Gottman and his colleagues also used videotapes, live observations, and questionnaires to assess and measure every aspect involved in conflict resolution. He also measured the physiological changes that would result when couples got engaged in conflict. These include measuring heartbeats, stress hormone levels, and the functioning of the couples’ immune systems. After years of research, Gottman identified several conflict resolution styles that could be detrimental to a relationship with time. These styles consist of specific negative behaviors that, if present in an argument, could set the stage for a host of adverse effects, including the dissolution of the relationship, health-related issues, and

psychological distress (Gottman, 1999). In addition to identifying these negative behavioral styles, Gottman described ways in which to deal with them when and if they arise. To screen for these conflict resolution styles, Gottman developed the Sound Relationship House Questionnaire- Constructive versus Destructive Conflict Measures. This survey consists of four distinct and independent subscales that measure conflict styles at different times during the argument. Gottman begins with how the argument starts (Start-up), describes the behaviors that might take place during an argument (Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse), explains why couples get stuck on the same issues (Gridlock on Perpetual Issues) and finally talks about the ideal way for how the argument should end (Compromise).

Gottman begins by explaining the concept of a Harsh Startup, which he defines as a conversation that is led by criticism, sarcasm, negativity, or accusations (Gottman, 1999). This is translated by the use of “*you statements*” (You always forget to wash the dishes) instead of “*I statements*” (I feel disappointed when you promise to help me with the chores but don’t). “*I*” statements focus on feelings or situations and are descriptive in nature, while “*you*” statements blame and accuse the other person and are accusatory in nature (Gottman, 1999). Therefore, when the conversation starts harshly, it is destined to end harshly (Gottman, 1999).

Gottman then moves on to describe what he calls “The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse”. The four horsemen are four types of negative interactions that have shown, through research, to be lethal to a relationship (Gottman, 1999). Gottman began using the repetitive presence of these interactions to predict separation or and divorce, with a 91% accuracy. They typically come in a specific order but are also seen to pave the way for one another. The first of these horsemen is criticism. Here, a distinction is drawn between a complaint and a criticism. The former targets a specific behavior that can be dealt with while the

latter is more global and attacks the personality directly. When couples learn to state their concerns in a complaint, the chances that their partners will respond positively increase. Stating problems in the form of a complaint removes any negative emotions and creates focus on the complainer's feelings and thoughts. The listening partner doesn't feel attacked but rather takes a moment to really listen and absorb what is being said.

On the other hand, when conversations are led by criticism, the partner's response isn't as positive. Since criticism throws blame and is a general character assassination (Gottman, 1999), its continuous use usually leads to the second horseman: contempt. Sarcasm and cynicism are identified as the two types of contempt. Contempt is generally characterized by disgust with the other person and leads to more conflict rather than reconciliation. Moreover, it is fueled by long festering negative thoughts about the partner and is more common in relationships where conflicts aren't resolved (Gottman, 1999). Interestingly, research has found that people who are in relationships in which contempt is frequent are more likely to suffer from infectious diseases than other people (Gottman, 1999; Greeff and Bruyne, 2000). Although the reason for this association is unknown, scientists and researchers agree that a link between the two variables exists (Gottman, 1999).

When a relationship is negative, critical, and attacking, partners will want to defend themselves, which allows the third horseman, defensiveness, to make its way through. Although the need to defend oneself is understandable in such situations, research shows that defensiveness rarely has the desired effect because it is perceived as a way to blame the other person. Defensiveness places the individual in a close-minded and self-protective mode. When one becomes defensive, he fails to see what the other person is really saying and rather focuses on protecting his image (Gottman, 1999). The deeper content of the argument is lost and the

conversation turns into a power struggle, where each individual is fighting to shield himself from further attacks. When the focus of the argument shifts from its resolution to self-protection, the chance of finding a suitable solution decreases.

When criticism, contempt, and defensiveness become continuous and persistent ingredient in arguments between couples, one partner eventually tunes out. This happens in later stages in the relationships and is the most lethal of the four horsemen (Gottman, 1999). The process of “tuning out” is referred to as stonewalling, which is the last of the four horsemen. This takes place in later stages of the relationship, after partners have struggled with negative feelings for some time and feel flooded with negativity. Although this horseman is more common amongst men, it is the peak of devastation for a relationship. In stonewalling, one partner totally disengages rather than confronts. There is an underlying belief that disengaging is a means to avoid conflict when in fact it is a means to avoid the entire relationship (Gottman, 1999). Gottman explain that in healthy relationships, casual feedback is given in the form of “yeah” or nodding. This casual feedback is an indication that the other person is listening to the concerns of the other. It portrays empathy to the speaker, which decreases negative emotions. However, when someone is stonewalling, the casual feedback is replaced with complete silence, which gives the other person the impression of indifference and fuels the negative emotions, allowing them to become present during the argument. In the latest stages of stonewalling, one partner might eventually leave the scene of an argument, leaving the other partner with increasing feelings of contempt (Gottman, 1999).

The argument is bound to end at some point. However, the way in which it ends is very important. Gottman believes that the only solution to relationship problems is to find a compromise (Gottman, 1999). If couples fail to compromise, the relationship suffers and

problems are unresolved. However, when couples are able to reach common grounds, the solution is more satisfying and amicable. The key to compromise is to be able to be open to the partner's opinions and beliefs. Whether one agrees with those beliefs or opinions is not important; what is important is to honestly consider the partner's point of view (Gottman, 1999). If both partners refuse to budge, the argument is going nowhere. With time, the lack of compromise leads to another problem in the relationship, perpetual issues. Sixty-nine percent of relationship problems fall into the category of perpetual problems (Gottman, 1999). These problems are characterized by arguing over the same issues in the same way. When couples fail to compromise, they will want to prove their point in the argument, every single time. However, they begin to focus very narrowly on their opinions, inhibiting them from seeing things from a different perspective. Hence, they end up bringing up the same issues in the same exact manner, which inhibits them from resolving their conflicts. The state of getting stuck on the same issues is described as a gridlock on perpetual issues (Gottman, 1999). Gridlock is the pathway to feelings of frustration, rejection, and hurt, and in turn paves the way for the four horsemen, creating further psychological stress and physiological problems (Gottman, 1999).

In summary, when the relationship starts with a negative atmosphere of criticism and anger, it encourages the use of criticism, fuels contempt, and produces defensive attitudes until one partner eventually stonewalls. When this takes place, it makes compromise very difficult, leading couples to get gridlocked on perpetual issues. This cycle is described as a negative and destructive conflict resolution style. However, when couples are able to start the conversation in a soft manner, complain rather than criticize, be open to their partner's ideas and opinions, compromise takes place and gridlock is avoided. The latter is characterized as a positive or constructive conflict resolution styles. Teaching couples how to effectively resolve conflict can

prevent a host of problems, including sexual dysfunctions, psychological stress, and physiological problems (Gottman, 1999).

### **Conflict Resolution and Sexual Satisfaction**

Sexuality is entwined into the fabric of many close relationships; it is approved in marriage, often explored in dating, and is an complex part of other committed relationships (Christopher & Sprecher, 1999). Sexual satisfaction, being such an individual and intimate feeling, is difficult to define and study (Ziherl & Masten, 2010). Some define sexual satisfaction as the degree to which an individual is happy with the sexual aspects of his or her relationship (Sprecher & Cate, 2004). Others define it as an emotional state that occurs with the fulfillment of individual wishes in the area of sexual life (Ziherl & Meston, 2010). Regardless of the definition, researchers agree that sexual satisfaction should not be confused with the pleasure of orgasm. One can have sexually satisfying sexual experiences without reaching orgasm, while others might reach orgasm and feel sexually dissatisfied (Ziherl & Meston, 2010). To screen for sexual satisfaction, Hudson created the Index of Sexual Satisfaction. This scale encompasses a wide range of aspects related to sexual experiences, including behavioral elements, feelings, and perceptions of partner satisfaction during sexual intercourse (Hudson et al., 1981).

There are many factors that influence sexual satisfaction in a relationship, such as age, characteristics and behaviors of the partner, emotions, sexual behaviors, as well as factors related to social background (Haavio-Mannila & Kontula, 1997; Ziherl & Masten, 2010). Moreover, affectional and sexual variables are believed to have a reciprocal relationship, with one always influencing the other (Henderson-King & Veroff, 1994). For some, sexual satisfaction is considered to be an indicator for the quality of the relationship (Sprecher, 2002). That is, if the non-sexual aspects of the relationship are rated highly, the probability for sexual satisfaction

increases. Moreover, research shows that how couples feel about the sex in the relationship is highly related to how they feel about the entire relationship (Sprecher, 2002; Zihel & Masten, 2010; Byers, 2005). The number of individuals presenting to sex therapy is increasing with time. Over the last two decades, desire disorders have increased at sex clinics, with men becoming the presenting partner (Byers & MacNeil, 1997). In one study, the two most common concerns for men were “I am not interested in sex” and “My partner doesn’t want sex when I do” while “I am not interested in sex” and “I am unable to relax” were the most common concerns for women. After ruling out any medical cause for the lack of interest or sexual dissatisfaction, psychologist found themselves dealing with other aspects of the relationship that ultimately eliminated these concerns (Byers & MacNeil, 1997). Therefore, researchers aimed at determining what factors in the relationship play a role in increasing or decreasing sexual satisfaction in the absence of a medical cause.

Research has consistently shown a strong positive relationship between poor communication and destructive conflict resolution styles on sexual satisfaction (Byers, 2005; Tullman, Gilner, Kolodny, Dornbush, & Tullman, 1981; Metz & Dwyer, 1993; Henderson-King & Veroff, 1994; Donnelly, 1993; Sprecher, 2002; Christopher & Sprecher 2000; Zihel & Masten, 2010; Haavio-Mannila & Kontula, 1997). Byers & MacNeil (1997) found that positive communication skills and successful conflict resolution are associated with greater sexual self-disclosure and greater sexual satisfaction. Causality with respect to this notion is yet to be established. Although there seems to be a strong correlation between conflict resolution styles and sexual satisfaction, the direction of this relationship is unknown (Byers, 2005). One study found that couples who maintain a high quality of communication and positive conflict resolution strategies are more likely to have sexually satisfying relationships and less likely to

suffer from sexual dysfunctions (Haavio-Mannila & Kontula, 1997). Studies of sexually dysfunctional couples suggest that they are less likely to be satisfied in their relationships, to have more unresolved conflict, and to utilize more negative interactions during arguments (Metz & Dwyer, 1993). A study by Metz & Dwyer (1993) found that couples suffering from sexual dysfunctions or sexual dissatisfaction tend to resolve their conflicts in a manner that precipitates, exacerbates, or perpetuates these sexual problems. The same study found that individuals who are sexually dissatisfied described their partners as being unable to resolve conflicts, using high behavioral and physical aggression, or as denying and withdrawing from conflict. Another study found that when arguments are frequent, characterized by negativity, criticism, or withdrawal, couples reported less enjoyable sexual experiences (Henderson-King & Veroff, 1994). However, one study found gender differences with respect to this notion; for men, decreased sexual satisfaction seemed to create conflict, while for women negative conflict seemed to decrease sexual satisfaction (Byers, 2005).

Since research is showing a link between negative conflict resolution styles and sexual satisfaction, several studies have attempted to test this notion clinically as well. Therapists worked with individuals or couples presenting with sexual concerns by focusing on the non-sexual aspects of the relationship. Therapy focused on improving communication skills, targeting unresolved conflict, teaching couples effective strategies to use during conflict, and warning couples of the negative impact of certain interactions (such as the four horsemen). The couples would rate their sexual satisfaction before the start of therapy and after termination. Results show that sexual dysfunctions improved and sexual satisfaction increased as a result of improved communication (Litzinger & Gordon, 2005; Byers, 2005). Although the focus of such

intervention included only a minimal discussion of sexual aspects of the relationship, couples were able to improve without any medical interventions.

### **Conflict Resolution, Depression, and Anxiety**

Depression is an emotional state characterized by sadness and crying, anhedonia, guilt and regret, negative views of the self and pessimism, agitation and irritability, indecisiveness, and feelings of worthlessness. It also includes loss of energy and fatigue, changes in sleeping and eating patterns, loss of interest in sex, and suicidal ideations (Halgin & Whitbourne, 2010). On the other hand, anxiety can be defined as feelings of fear, nervousness, and worry (Halgin & Whitbourne, 2010). Physical symptoms of anxiety include increased heart rate, hot flashes, sweating, trembling or shivering, difficulty breathing, dizziness, hyper vigilance, and other somatic complaints such as bodily pains, stomachaches or indigestion, dizziness or fainting spells, and fatigue (Halgin & Whitbourne, 2010). Some people suffering from anxiety might find it hard to fall asleep and might experience nightmares frequently. Symptoms for depression and anxiety can be triggered by external events that are perceived as stressful or threatening to the individual. Stressful events are relative to individuals; what one person might regard as stressful might not be perceived similarly by another individual. Stressful events include loss of a loved one, work problems, divorce, and distressing relationships.

Studies show that there is a strong and consistent association between marital distress, specifically conflict-related issues, and depression (Whisman, Weinstock, & Uebelacker, 2002; Jackman-Cram et al., 2006; Marchand & Hock, 2000; Choi & Marks, 2008; Morokoff & Gulliland, 1993; Schudlich et al., 2011; Ulrich-Jakubowski et al., 1988; Bodenmann & Ledermann, 2007; Frohlich & Meston, 2002; Papp et al., 2007). These studies explain certain negative interactions that occur during conflict and their influence on depressive symptoms.

However, the causality of this relationship has not been established yet, which led researchers to characterize it as a positive feedback loop where negative conflict led to depressive symptoms which in turn created more conflict (Choi & Marks, 2008; Whisman et al., 2002; Jackman-Cram et al., 2006). However, one study found that negative marital interactions typically preceded depression (Schudlich et al., 2011). To strengthen this notion, studies show that the psychotherapeutic treatments for depression are successful only when relational issues are targeted in therapy. One study by Jackman-Cram et al., (2006) showed that conflict and negative interactions after treatment for depression were risk factors for subsequent increases in depression severity. Another study showed that after teaching couples how to effectively handle conflicts in their relationships, there was a substantial decrease in their depressive symptoms one year later (Schudlich et al., 2011). Verbal and non-verbal hostility, criticism, less facilitative behaviors, and withdrawal from conflict were identified as behaviors frequently associated with depression (Schudlich et al., 2011; Marchand & Hock, 2000; Jackman-Cram et al., 2006; Whisman et al., 2002).

There are no studies to date that focus on the association between conflict resolution styles and anxiety. However, several studies show a link between conflict resolution styles and physiological changes that might play a role in the development of anxiety symptoms. One theory explaining the evolution of anxiety symptoms with repeated exposure to negative relational interactions was coined “flooding” by Dr. John Gottman. The theory explains that negative interactions trigger physical sensations in the body over time. These sensations include increased heart rate, sweating, and even hormonal changes in the brain. When these physical sensations are repeated often in the context of an argument, the individual becomes conditioned to perceive the situation as dangerous or threatening. Ultimately, the person will begin to

associate anxiety symptoms with the relationship itself. Reflexively, fight or flight responses are activated; fight responses are characterized by criticism and defensiveness while flight responses are characterized by stonewalling and avoidance. Therefore, repeated exposure to negativity triggers anxiety-like symptoms where partners begin to develop feelings of fear, apprehension, and worry regarding their relationship, which might translate into other aspects of their life as well, leading to full-blown anxiety (Gottman, 1999). Moreover, one study showed that negative verbal and non-verbal exchanges in a problem-solving task directly led to changes in the endocrine system, which plays a role in the regulation of emotions, at least for a short period after the task (Choi & Marks, 2008). Another study found that stress resulting from relationship conflict is related to sleep disturbances, nightmares, and hyper-alertness, which can be viewed as symptoms of anxiety (Morokoff & Gilliland, 1993).

In light of the previous literature, it is clear that conflict resolution styles have a strong impact on the development of sexual problems and the decrease of sexual satisfaction. Therefore, this study aimed at examining this relationship among Lebanese adults (hypotheses 1 & 2). Moreover, it appears that conflict resolution styles can help develop, maintain, and exacerbate depression and anxiety symptoms. Since there are no studies in Lebanon that address this association, the current study focused on the relationship between destructive versus constructive conflict resolution styles on depressive symptoms (hypotheses 3 & 4) and anxiety symptoms (hypotheses 5 & 6). This study is focused on identifying the conflict resolution styles that play a vital role in disrupting other aspects of a couple's life. It also examined whether the conflict resolution styles associated with positive outcomes in the literature are also associated with similar outcomes in the Lebanese society.

## CHAPTER 3

### Method

#### Participants

The sample for this study consisted of 150 participants. Seventy participants were males and 80 were females. The ages of the participants ranged from 20 to 60 years, with an average age of 31 years. Thirty-two participants were single, 31 were engaged, 47 were married, and 40 were in a relationship. Participants were selected on the basis on convenience sampling of those who were sexually active within a relationship.

#### Materials

**Gottman Sound Relationship House Questionnaire- Constructive versus Destructive Measures.** The Gottman Sound Relationship House Questionnaire- Constructive versus Destructive Measures is a self-report questionnaire that measures the use of constructive versus destructive conflict resolution styles (Gottman and Silver 1999). It consists of four subscales that are all positively keyed. The first subscale is titled Harsh Startup and consists of 20 true or false questions related to the manner in which an argument begins. Sample statements include: *My partner is often very critical of me* and *I hate how my partner raises an issue*. This subscale has a high reliability of  $\alpha = .93$ . The second subscale is The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. It is composed of 33 true or false items that assess the presence of destructive conflict resolution styles such as criticism, defensiveness, stonewalling, and contempt. Sample statements include: *My partner uses phrases like “you always” or “you never” when complaining* and *I feel disgusted by some of my partner’s attitudes*. The reliability of this scale is high of  $\alpha = .94$ . The third subscale is called Gridlock on Perceptual Issues and is composed of 20 true or false items. This scale assesses the degree to which couples get stuck on the same issues throughout their relationship.

Sample statements include: *My partner rarely makes an effort to change* and *The same problems keep coming up again and again in our relationship*. This scale also has a high reliability of  $\alpha = .91$ . Finally, the fourth subscale is called Compromise and consists of 20 true or false items. This subscale measures the degree to which couples use the constructive conflict resolution style of compromising. Sample statements include: *Our decisions often get made by both of us compromising* and *We are usually good at resolving our conflicts*. The reliability for this subscale is  $\alpha = .53$ .

**The Index of Sexual Satisfaction.** The Index of Sexual Satisfaction is a self-report scale aimed to measure the degree of satisfaction in the sexual component of a dyadic relationship (Hudson et al., 1981). It consists of 25 items with a Likert-type scoring from 1 to 7 indicating the degree to which respondents agree with certain statements regarding their sexual activities with 1 indicating “None of the time” and 7 indicating “All of the time”. Sample statements include: *I feel that my partner enjoys our sex life* and *Our sex life is monotonous*. Some of these statements are negatively keyed to offset the potential for response set bias. The reliability for this scale is high ( $\alpha = .92$ ).

**Zung Self-Rating Anxiety Scale.** The Zung Self-Rating Anxiety Scale is a self-report measure used to assess the presence and the severity of anxiety symptoms (Zung, 1971). It consists of 20 items scored on a Likert-type scale with a value of 1 indicating A Little of the time, 2 Some of the time, 3 Good part of the time, and 4 Most of the time. A score between 20-44 is within the normal range, 45-59 indicating mild to moderate anxiety, 60-74 indicating marked to severe anxiety, and 75-80 indicating extreme anxiety. This test has a high reliability ( $\alpha = .80$ ).

**Beck Depression Inventory II.** The Beck Depression Inventory II is a self-report measure used to assess the presence and the severity of depression symptoms (Beck, Brown & Steer, 1996). It consists of 21 items scored on a Likert-type scale ranging from 0 to 3. Total score of 0-13 is considered minimal range, 14-19 is mild, 20-28 is moderate, and 29-63 is severe. This scale measures aspects of depression pertaining to sleep patterns, guilt, view of self, view of the future, suicidality, sadness, and other diagnostic criteria for depression according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual IV-TR. This scale has a high reliability ( $\alpha = .92$ ).

### Procedure

Dr. Gharzeddine looked over the surveys that had been chosen and agreed on the topic. He requested a pilot study to determine whether the scales will be reliable to use within the Lebanese society. A pilot study was performed and the data of 46 participants were analyzed for the scale reliabilities. The scales were all found to have high reliabilities. The alpha coefficients for the Gottman Sound Relationship House Questionnaire- Constructive versus Destructive Conflict Measures subscales are as follows: Harsh Startup  $\alpha = .927$ , The Four Horsemen  $\alpha = .905$ , Gridlock on Perceptual Issues  $\alpha = .923$ , and Compromise  $\alpha = .881$ . The reliabilities for the remaining scales are: Index of Sexual Satisfaction  $\alpha = .958$ , Beck Depression Inventory II  $\alpha = .916$  and the Zung Self-Rating Anxiety Scale  $\alpha = .823$ .

The four scales were combined into one questionnaire packet. Demographic variables pertaining to gender, age, relationship status, length of the relationship, and the number of relationships were added (Appendix B). The four scales used were the Gottman Sound Relationship House Questionnaire- Constructive versus Destructive Measures (Appendix C), The Index of Sexual Satisfaction (Appendix D), Zung Self-Rating Anxiety Scale (Appendix E), and The Beck Depression Inventory II (Appendix F) and were arranged in the above mentioned order.

following the demographic information. Convenience sampling was used to collect data. Questionnaires were handed out by the researcher in different areas of Beirut in an attempt to get a diverse sample of participants with different ages and backgrounds. The researcher approached individuals and explained the purpose of the study, asking individuals if they would be willing to fill out a questionnaire. If participants were not sexually active within a relationship, they would not fill the questionnaire. Moreover, before filling the questionnaire, participants were asked to read a consent form (Appendix A) and provide oral consent. Finally, for ethical considerations, because these questionnaires include depression and anxiety measures, participants were provided the email of the project director and the research investigator in the consent form in case they felt that they were in considerable distress and needed to be provided with psychotherapeutic interventions. If such participants end up contacting, the issue will be discussed so that participants can be provided with the necessary services they need.

Data collection began in November 2012 and was completed in February 2013. Following this, data was entered into SPSS and statistical analyses were run, including correlational analyses, analyses of variance (ANOVA), and Independent samples T- test.

## CHAPTER 4

### Results

#### Reliability Testing

Cronbach's alpha was computed to determine the reliabilities of each scale and subscale used in the study. The current reliability scores were within acceptable range. The only subscale that showed a significant increase was the Compromise subscale from 0.53 to 0.93. This could be explained by the use of the subscale with other subscales rather than independently. Gottman & Silver (1999) explained that the use of this scale alone might yield low reliability coefficients, while adding it to the other constructs will increase its reliability. The previous and current reliability coefficients are reported in table below (See Table 1).

**Table 1**

*Cronbach's Alpha for the Gottman subscales, ISS, Zung Self-Rating Anxiety Scale, and BDI II*

	Previous Cronbach's alpha	Current Cronbach's alpha
Harsh Startup subscale	.93	.94
Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse subscale	.94	.95
Gridlock on Perpetual Issues subscale	.91	.88
Compromise subscale	.53	.93
Index of Sexual Satisfaction	.92	.97
Zung Anxiety Scale	.80	.91
Beck Depression Inventory II	.92	.96

#### Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1: The constructive conflict resolution style of compromise will be positively correlated with sexual satisfaction

A Pearson correlation coefficient was used to assess this relationship. A strong significant positive correlation was found between compromise and sexual satisfaction ( $r = .65, p < .01$ ).

The hypothesis was confirmed. Hence, the use of compromise when resolving conflicts was associated with higher sexual satisfaction (Table 2).

**Table 2**

*Correlation Matrix for the Conflict Resolution Styles with the Sexual Satisfaction, Depression, and Anxiety*

		Harsh Startup	Four Horseman	Gridlock Issues	Compromise	Sexual Satisfaction	Anxiety
Four Horseman	Pearson Correlation	.933**					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000					
	N	150					
Gridlock	Pearson Correlation	.875**	.895**				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000				
	N	150	150				
Compromise	Pearson Correlation	-.785**	-.797**	-.771**			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000			
	N	150	150	150			
Sexual Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	-.636**	-.601**	-.688**	.658**		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		
	N	150	150	150	150		
Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	.428**	.471**	.445**	-.433**	-.391**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	150	150	150	150	150	
Depression	Pearson Correlation	.662**	.681**	.683**	-.715**	-.663**	.702**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	150	150	150	150	150	150

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

Hypothesis 2: Destructive conflict resolution styles will be negatively correlated with sexual satisfaction.

A Pearson correlation coefficient was used to assess the relationship between Harsh Startup, The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, and Gridlock on Perpetual Issues and sexual

satisfaction. Each relationship was assessed separately. First, there was a strong significant negative correlation between Harsh Startup and sexual satisfaction ( $r = -.63, p < .01$ ). Second, there was a strong significant negative correlation between The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse and sexual satisfaction ( $r = -.60, p < .01$ ). Finally, there was a strong significant negative correlation between Gridlock on Perpetual Issues and sexual satisfaction ( $r = -.68, p < .01$ ). The hypothesis was confirmed. Therefore, the use of destructive conflict resolution styles when resolving a conflict in the relationship was associated with low levels of sexual satisfaction (Table 2).

Hypothesis 3: The constructive conflict resolution style of compromise will be negatively correlated with depression.

A Pearson correlation coefficient was used to assess this relationship. A strong significant negative correlation was found between compromise and depression ( $r = -.71, p < .01$ ). The hypothesis was confirmed. Therefore, the use of compromise while resolving conflicts was associated with a decrease in depressive symptoms (Table 2).

Hypothesis 4: Destructive conflict resolution styles will be positively correlated with depression.

A Pearson correlation coefficient was used to assess the relationship between the three destructive conflict resolution styles and depression. First, Harsh Startup was strongly significantly positively correlated with depression ( $r = .66, p < .01$ ). Second, there was a strong significant positive correlation between the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse and depression ( $r = .68, p < .01$ ). Finally, Gridlock on Perpetual Issues was strongly significantly positively correlated with depression ( $r = .68, p < .01$ ). The hypothesis was confirmed. Hence, the use of destructive conflict resolution styles while attempting to resolve a conflict is associated with high levels of depressive symptoms (Table 2).

Hypothesis 5: The constructive conflict resolution style of compromise will be negatively correlated with anxiety.

A Pearson correlation coefficient was used to assess this relationship. A moderate significant negative correlation was found between compromise and anxiety ( $r = -.43, p < .01$ ). The hypothesis was confirmed. High levels of anxiety were associated with less use of compromise when resolving conflicts in a relationship (Table 2).

Hypothesis 6: Destructive conflict resolution styles will be positively correlated with anxiety.

A Pearson correlation coefficient was used to assess the relationship between the destructive conflict resolution styles and anxiety. First, there was a moderate significant positive correlation between Harsh Startup and anxiety ( $r = .42, p < .01$ ). Second, there was a moderate significant positive correlation between the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse and anxiety ( $r = .47, p < .01$ ). Finally, Gridlock on Perpetual Issues was moderately significantly positively correlated with anxiety ( $r = .44, p < .01$ ). The hypothesis was confirmed. Therefore, higher levels of anxiety were correlated with the use of destructive conflict resolution styles (Table 2).

Because the independent variables (the four conflict resolution styles) were highly correlated with one another, the regression assumption of multicollinearity was violated. Therefore, a regression analysis could not be performed to check the strongest predictor of sexual satisfaction. To check whether conflict resolution styles predicted sexual satisfaction, the scores on the four styles were combined to form a composite score. The composite score was equal to the scores on the destructive conflict resolutions styles (Harsh Startup, The Four Horsemen, and Gridlock on Perceptual Issues) *minus* the score on the constructive conflict resolution style (Compromise). The cutoff point for this score is 79.5, meaning that those who

score higher than the cutoff exhibit destructive conflict resolution styles while those scoring lower than the cutoff exhibit constructive resolution styles.

### **Additional Analysis**

Several ANOVAs were conducted to look at differences between conflict resolution styles across length of the relationship, relationship types, and age groups.

First, conflict resolution styles were assessed across the reported length of the relationship. The length was divided into the following groups: Less than a year, 1-5 years, 6-10 years, and more than 10 years. The main effect of the length of the relationship was found for the use of compromise  $F(1,149) = 2.47, p < .01$ . Participants who have been in a relationship for more than 10 years ( $M = 34.8, SD = 6.58$ ) reported significantly higher use of compromise than participants who have been in a relationship for less than a year ( $M = 33.4, SD = 4.66$ ), 1-5 years ( $M = 30.6, SD = 5.8$ ), and 6-10 years ( $M = 29.5, SD = 8.61$ ).

**Table 3**

*ANOVA for Conflict Resolution Styles by Relationship Length*

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Harsh	Between Groups	157.271	4	39.318	.842	.500
	Within Groups	6767.503	145	46.672		
	Total	6924.773	149			
Horsemen	Between Groups	828.801	4	207.200	1.880	.117
	Within Groups	15977.972	145	110.193		
	Total	16806.773	149			
Gridlock	Between Groups	445.555	4	111.389	2.173	.075
	Within Groups	7434.319	145	51.271		
	Total	7879.873	149			
Compromise	Between Groups	377.772	4	94.443	2.470	.047
	Within Groups	5544.521	145	38.238		
	Total	5922.293	149			

Second, conflict resolution styles were assessed across relationship type. The main effect of relationship type (single, engaged, married, and in a relationship) were not significant for any of the conflict resolution styles. Moreover, participants were grouped into age groups (20-30, 31-40, 41-50 and 51-60) to assess differences with respect to conflict resolution styles. The main effect of age range was non-significant.

A T-test was performed to check whether the use of conflict resolutions styles differed across gender. Men ( $M = 71.7$ ,  $SD = 29.1$ ) and women ( $M = 73.5$ ,  $SD = 29.7$ ) did not differ significantly with respect to conflict resolution styles,  $t(148) = -.386$ ,  $p = n.s.$

Finally, an independent samples T-test was performed using the cutoff score to check the effect of constructive versus destructive conflict resolution styles on sexual satisfaction, anxiety, and depression. First, results showed a significant effect of conflict resolution styles on sexual satisfaction. Those who exhibited more constructive styles ( $M = 143.5$ ,  $SD = 22.6$ ) and those who exhibited more destructive styles ( $M = 97.6$ ,  $SD = 33.9$ ) differed significantly with respect to sexual satisfaction,  $t(148) = -9.93$ ,  $p < .01$ . Consequently, for sexual satisfaction the use of constructive styles had a significantly greater effect on sexual satisfaction than the use of destructive styles. The more constructive conflict resolution styles the participants used, the more they were sexually satisfied (Table 4)

**Table 4**

*Independent Samples T-test for Constructive versus Destructive styles and Sexual Satisfaction,*

Group Statistics				
Conflict Resolution	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Sexual Satisfaction $\geq 79.50$	62	97.6774	33.99121	4.31689
< 79.50	88	143.5909	22.64551	2.41402

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Sexual Satisfaction	Equal variances assumed	16.457	.000	-9.930	148	.000	-45.91349	4.62387
	Equal variances not assumed			-9.283	98.371	.000	-45.91349	4.94601

Second, results showed a significant effect of conflict resolution styles on depression. Participants who exhibited more destructive styles ( $M = 21$ ,  $SD = 11.4$ ) and those who exhibited more constructive styles ( $M = 4.5$ ,  $SD = 5.8$ ) differed significantly with respect to depression,  $t(148) = 11.58$ ,  $p < .01$ . Therefore, the use of destructive styles had a greater effect on depressive symptoms than the use of constructive styles. Individuals who used more destructive styles were more depressed than those who used more constructive styles (Table 5)

**Table 5**

*Independent Samples T-test for Constructive versus Destructive Styles and Depression*

**Group Statistics**

Conflict Resolution		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Depression	$\geq 79.50$	62	21.0806	11.42086	1.45045
	$< 79.50$	88	4.5455	5.88766	.62763

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference

Depression	Equal variances assumed	32.712	.000	11.582	148	.000	16.53519	1.42767
	Equal variances not assumed			10.463	83.919	.000	16.53519	1.58042

Finally, results also showed a significant effect of conflict resolution styles on anxiety symptoms. Those who exhibited more destructive styles ( $M = 38.7$ ,  $SD = 11.6$ ) differed significantly from those who used constructive styles ( $M = 28.2$ ,  $SD = 8.3$ ) with respect to anxiety,  $t(148) = 6.12$ ,  $p < .01$ . The use of destructive styles had a greater effect on anxiety than the use of constructive styles. Individuals who used destructive styles were more anxious than those who used constructive styles (Table 6).

**Table 6**

*Independent Samples T test for Constructive versus Destructive Styles and Anxiety*

Group Statistics								
Conflict Resolution		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			
Anxiety $\geq 79.50$		62	38.2742	11.65089	1.47966			
Anxiety $< 79.50$		88	28.2614	8.37689	.89298			

  

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Anxiety	Equal variances assumed	5.017	.027	6.125	148	.000	10.01283	1.63470
	Equal variances not assumed			5.794	103.865	.000	10.01283	1.72824

## CHAPTER 5

### Discussion

The present study was aimed at examining the relationships between conflict resolution styles, sexual satisfaction, depression, and anxiety. The results of the study demonstrated that the four conflict resolution styles are of relevance in Lebanon. The descriptive statistics show that each of the conflict resolution styles exist in varying degrees within the sample, with some people exhibiting low levels and other exhibiting higher level.

Although previous research did not examine the use of the conflict resolution styles across different age groups, this study showed that there were no significant differences. Hence, people of all ages did not differ in their use of conflict resolution styles. Only one study by Gottman looked at gender differences with respect to conflict resolution styles (Gottman & Silver, 1999) and the results showed that men were more likely to exhibit the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse than women. However, the current study did not find any gender differences across the four conflict resolution styles. This finding shows that men and women are both equally likely to be critical of one another, to become defensive during conflict, and to avoid compromise. This lack of gender difference in the current study might be attributed to several things. First, Gottman's study looked exclusively at married individuals who were being observed in a laboratory setting. This might have influenced the behaviors of both genders; it could be that men wanted to show the "aggressive" or "strong" stereotypical behaviors while women wanted to show the "calm" and "composed" behaviors. In the current study, participants were not observed and they were free to report their behaviors. This might have enabled people to be more honest with respect to the behaviors they exhibit in their relationships. Another explanation might be attributed to cultural differences. It could be that the women from other

western cultures feel more freedom to express themselves than in our culture. Their values and opinions within the relationship can be expressed without the use of hostility or aggressiveness. In our culture, the role of the women in a relationship is different. Women are sometimes viewed as the “underdog”, and are not given the freedom to express disagreement with great ease. This might lead to emotional flooding (Gottman & Silver, 1999), which will eventually lead the way to defensiveness and criticism. This might explain why the use of conflict resolution styles was similar across both genders, especially when it comes to the four horsemen.

Moreover, because most studies examined conflict resolution styles within the context of marriage (Papp et al., 2007; Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; Litzinger & Gordon, 2005; Gordon et al., 1999), the type of relationship was not examined. In the current study, results showed no significant differences in the use of conflict resolution styles across single, engaged or married individuals, as well as those in a relationship. Participants who were single, engaged, married, or in a relationship dealt with their conflict in similar ways. People learn how to resolve conflicts by either seeing how those around them tackle their problems, how they are taught by their parents to resolve issues, or through experiencing what works and what doesn't. It is a reflection of an individual's personality and life experiences. Therefore, it might not be bound by the type of relationship the person is in. Consequently, it may be that the personality and life experiences play a greater role in determining what styles people exhibit rather than the type of relationship they are in.

Finally, previous studies did not examine the use of conflict resolutions styles across difference relationship lengths. However, the current study found significant differences in the use of compromise, which was significantly more prominent with couples who have been in a relationship for more than 10 years. Therefore, although the type of relationship was not an

indicator of the use of conflict resolution styles, the length of the relationship serves as an important variable. Interestingly, this study shows that it takes individuals a decade (or more) to come to the realization that in order to solve conflicts in the relationship, it is important to compromise. However, that doesn't eliminate the possibility that for individuals to get to this point, they had to go through the three destructive styles. This might be the reason for the long duration. Participants begin by clashing with one another and with time find that certain changes must be made in order to escape gridlock. Therefore, people start incorporating compromise into their solutions and become aware of its advantages. So participants who learn to look for common grounds, give and take, and apply a certain degree of reciprocity while resolving their conflicts are those who have been together for 10 years.

Other interesting findings showed that sexual satisfaction is affected more by constructive conflict resolutions styles than destructive ones. Participants who exhibited more constructive styles than destructive ones also reported higher sexual satisfaction than their counterparts. Therefore, although participants might be utilizing some destructive behaviors in their arguments, the presence of compromise plays a stronger role in ensuring higher degrees of sexual satisfaction. This might be because although participants are being exposed to some degree of negativity in their arguments, the use of compromise brings them solace in knowing that their conflicts are ultimately being effectively resolved. This decreases the potential for participants to become negatively emotionally flooded and to perceive their relationships as dangerous (Gottman & Silver, 1999), which leads them to allow themselves to be sexually engaged with their partners.

On the other hand, depression and anxiety were both more affected by destructive conflict resolution styles than constructive ones. Therefore, the use of destructive styles plays a

role in increasing depression and anxiety more than the role played by compromise in decreasing these symptoms. Destructive styles include several charged and intense behaviors that elicit a lot of negativity in a person, whether on the behaving or receiving end. Whether one is constantly receiving criticism from the other person or feeling the need to constantly defend him/herself, individuals will begin to feel anxious and depressed with time. Continuous criticism and stonewalling target the individual's core and might lead to a drop in self-esteem and create sadness. Therefore, when people are continuously criticized or ignored, they begin to feel rejected and start to have questions about themselves. These feelings might intensify with time, increasing depressive symptoms. Moreover, when arguments start off with a lot of negativity, leaving people to fend for themselves, it puts them in a state of hyper-arousal. Moreover, their continuous need to defend themselves also creates a lot of anxiety. Therefore, with time, people will begin to anticipate that the argument will end catastrophically and they develop anxiety towards it. It becomes a danger zone in which they need to fight or escape. Therefore, even if such behaviors are followed by compromise, the damage done at the early stages of the argument are not forgotten by the individual, leading to anxiety symptoms over time.

Overall, the results supported the hypotheses of this study. It was expected that there would be a negative correlation between the destructive conflict resolutions styles (Harsh Startup, The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, and Gridlock on Perceptual Issues) and sexual satisfaction. Moreover it was hypothesized that these variables would be positively correlated with depression and anxiety. These two hypotheses were supported by the results. It was also hypothesized that the constructive conflict resolution style (Compromise) would be positively correlated with sexual satisfaction and negatively correlated with depression and anxiety. The results also supported these two hypotheses.

The results discussed above provide support to the theories surrounding conflict resolution styles and sexual satisfaction found in previous studies. Although relationship satisfaction was not measured in the current study, results showed that conflict resolution styles impact several aspects in a couple's life. Sexual satisfaction decreases with the presence of hostility, withdrawal, criticism, and defensiveness, which is consistent with the findings of Gottman & Silver (1999), Litzinger & Gordon (2005), and Billings (1979). When an argument begins with criticism, it paves the way for defensiveness to take place. Repetitions of this pattern with time increases the likelihood that one or both partners will experience negative feelings, coined emotional flooding (Gottman & Silver, 1999). Ultimately, partners become too emotionally flooded with negative emotions that they become hostile, attacking, or eventually disengage. This pattern is consistent with results from this current study.

There are many different variables that might be related to a decrease in sexual satisfaction in any relationship, regardless of conflict resolution styles. For instance, correlation analyses in the current study showed a strong association between depression and sexual satisfaction. Because no causality was established, one can assume that depression mitigates the changes in sexual satisfaction. Hence, the relationship between these two variables can be bidirectional. Previous studies noted mixed results with respect to this issue. Some studies showed that depression leads to decreased sexual satisfaction (Bodenmann & Ledermann, 2007; Frohlich & Meston, 2002), while other studies suggested that decreased sexual satisfaction precedes depression (Papp et al., 2007; Choi & Marks, 2008). Depressed individuals experience sadness and loss of interest in sex (Halgin & Whitbourne, 2010), which might explain the former relationship.

Conflict resolution styles have been linked to depressive symptoms in previous research. Results show that people who resolve their conflicts in unhealthy and destructive ways are more likely to exhibit depressive symptoms (Ulrich-Jakubowski et al., 1988; Morokoff & Gulliland, 1993; Schudlich et al., 2011). Some of these studies showed a causal relationship between the two variables. However, causality was found to be bidirectional. For instance, since depressed individuals are more likely to perceive things more negatively than non-depressed individuals (Halgin & Whitbourne, 2010), they are more likely to interpret neutral or positive aspects of the argument as negative. This increases the likelihood that they will use more destructive measures such as defensiveness or stonewalling. With time, the manner in which conflict is resolved becomes destructive. On the other hand, destructive conflict resolution styles constitute of criticism, negative emotions, and other behaviors that, with time, might create depression to one or both partners. Therefore, although a link between the two variables exists, the direction of the relationship is still not well established.

Anxiety has not been independently linked to the use of destructive conflict resolution styles in previous research. Findings from this study showed that conflict resolutions styles serve as a predictor for anxiety. Therefore, anxiety increases with the use of destructive conflict resolution styles. This is not very surprising considering the physiological reactions that results from the use of criticism, defensiveness, stonewalling, aggressiveness, or even nagging. Gottman& Silver (1999) explained that excessive and consistent use of such behaviors and attitudes place the body in fight or flight mode. Therefore, people begin to feel that they are in a dangerous situation. Heartbeats increase, along with sweating, muscular tension, and breathing difficulties. These symptoms resemble those of an anxiety or panic attack. Consequently, people become conditioned to exhibit these symptoms even before the argument actually begins. They

anticipate how things are going to unfold (based on previous experiences) and anxiety takes place. With that rationale, one can also assume that anxiety and conflict are linked bi-directionally. Individuals who are generally anxious might be more anxious when dealing with conflict, which might increase their tendency to perceive conflict as a dangerous domain from which they need to escape. In such cases, their initial anxiety might be leading them to use more destructive styles. On the other hand, individuals who have repeatedly become anxious due to conflict itself might withdraw or become defensiveness to protect themselves. With time, they begin to associate conflict with feeling anxious. A causal relationship has not yet been established with respect to these two variables.

### **Clinical Implications**

The findings of the current study have a several implication within the clinical context. To begin with, knowledge of the existence of the four conflict resolution styles within the Lebanese culture can narrow the scope when it comes to identifying what constructive and destructive behaviors couples are exhibiting when attempting to resolve conflicts. These styles serve as guidelines that therapists can screen for when dealing with people who are having trouble resolving any sort of conflict. Moreover, because these styles are not specific to romantic relationships, they can also be used in a more general sense when people present with difficulties in resolving their conflicts with anyone around them. They shed light on specific behaviors that can be avoided and other specific behaviors that are to be sought after. For example, there are specific behaviors that indicate the use of criticism, such as judging the other person and throwing blame onto someone else. The first step would be to educate people about these wrongdoings so that they will be able to recognize these behaviors in themselves and others. The

next step would be to teach people how to replace destructive styles and behaviors with more constructive ones.

The association between how couples resolve their conflicts and how they rate their sexual satisfaction might seem like common sense. However, in the clinical setting, sometimes people are unable to make this link. They dwell on their sex life, trying to figure out what might be physically wrong with them. Establishing the link between conflict resolution and sexual satisfaction is important. Instead of placing the focus on sexual satisfaction (which might only be a symptom), people need to focus on other important aspects of their relationships. This might even prevent additional problems from taking place later on in the relationship. It is important, however, to have people screen for sexual dysfunctions to rule out any medical causes for their problems. Moreover, from the results of this study, it seems more important to focus on enhancing the use of constructive styles when people present with sexual dissatisfaction. Therefore, encouraging people to use compromise in their arguments might increase their sexual satisfaction. This should also be followed by teaching them to decrease the use of destructive styles.

Depression might be caused by several variables in one's life. People feel depressed because of pressures at work, social difficulties, or financial burdens. Depression might also be brought on by grief or loss. However, when depression becomes apparent in the context of a relationship, it is important to screen for difficulties and problems within the relationship that might be leading to increases in depressive symptoms. It is also important to educate people that depression might be a cause or an effect to conflict within the relationship. Teaching patients how to prevent themselves from getting too anxious when resolving a conflict is also very important. Anxiety can be conditioned to take place when people feel criticized or feel the need

to consistently defend themselves. With depression and anxiety, it is important to target the use of destructive styles, before encouraging people to use constructive ones. Because the results showed that depression and anxiety are more affected by destructive styles, focusing on them might decrease the symptoms, paving the way for more constructive styles to be incorporated into their arguments.

Teaching patients these associations and making them aware of behaviors and attitudes they or their partners are exhibiting is the first step to dealing with such problems. It is also important to teach people alternative behaviors that can replace the dysfunctional ones. Moreover, monitoring their depressive symptoms or their sexual satisfaction as behaviors change might also help patients see the link more clearly. With time, people will learn that conflict is healthy when it is dealt with constructively. This will help shield them from more symptoms or difficulties in their relationships, as well as protect the relationship from dissolution.

### **Limitations and Future Studies**

As with all research, there are several limitations to the current study that must be noted. The first limitation is the relatively small sample size (150 participants), which affects the reliability and generalizability of the study. A second limitation is that the questionnaires were not translated to Arabic, thereby including only English-speaking members of the Lebanese population. This again means that the results cannot be generalized to the whole of Lebanon, decreasing the validity of the study. Moreover, since the data was based on self-reports, it might be subject to response bias. Finally, with respect to the measure of sexual satisfaction, medical and physical causes were not ruled out. Hence, decreased sexual satisfaction might not only be affected by conflict resolution styles, but rather might have a biological cause.

Although this study has shed light on some important findings, there is much more room to explore within the Lebanese society. Future research could focus on establishing causal relationships between these factors in order to clarify these relationships further. It is important to know whether conflict resolutions styles are a cause to sexual dissatisfaction, depression, and anxiety, or whether the latter variables precede destructive conflict styles. Since the study sampled participants from the Beirut area, it is important that future studies focus on different areas of Lebanon.

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## Appendix A Consent Form

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**Haigazian University**  
P.O. Box 11-1748  
Riad El Solh, 1107 2090  
Beirut, Lebanon

### CONSENT TO SERVE AS A PARTICIPANT IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

**Project Title:** *The Relationship between Conflict Resolution Styles, Sexual Satisfaction, Depression and Anxiety among Lebanese Adults*

**Project Director:** *Dr. Marwan Gharzeddine, PhD. email: garzedin@gmail.com*

**Research Investigator:** *Sara El-Charif, email: sara.sharif01@gmail.com*

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#### **Nature and Purpose of the Project:**

*The purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between conflict resolution styles, sexual satisfaction, anxiety, and depression measures.*

#### **Explanation of Procedures:**

*As a research participant you will be administered a questionnaire that you will be asked to fill out. Your names will not appear on the questionnaires and they will remain anonymous. It is expected that your participation in this research will last for 20 minutes at maximum.*

#### **Potential Discomfort and Risks:**

*There are no risks associated with participation in this research.*

#### **Potential Benefits:**

*The potential benefit is that you would have helped the investigator complete this research which is a thesis dissertation, and contributed to answering the research problem.*

#### **Costs/Reimbursements:**

*There are no costs associated with the participation in this research.*

#### **Alternative Procedures:**

*There are no alternative procedures in this study in case you refuse to participate.*

#### **Alternatives to Participation:**

*There are no alternatives to participation in this study in case you refuse to participate.*

#### **Termination of Participation:**

*If you decide to give consent to participate in this research, your participation might be terminated by the principal investigator or research director if the results show that they were contradictory or malingered.*

**Confidentiality:**

*The results of your participation will be kept confidential to the fullest extent possible. This means that only the principal investigator and research director will know about your specific results. Only information that cannot be traced to you will be used in reports or manuscripts published or presented by the investigator or director. Raw data on data-recording systems will be kept with the investigator following the termination of the study.*

**Withdrawal from the Project:**

*Your participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You can refrain from participating and completing the questionnaires. If you decide to consent to participate, you can withdraw your consent to participate at any point without any explanation and without any penalty. You are free to leave this research at any time.*

**Participant's Oral Consent:**

*Only your **oral** consent is needed. By consenting you agree to participate in this research project. The purpose, procedures to be used, as well as, the potential risks and benefits of your participation have been explained to you in detail. You can refuse to participate or withdraw your participation in this study at any time without penalty. You will be given a copy of this consent form.*

## **Appendix B**

### **Demographics Form**

This survey is confidential. Please do not include your name anywhere on it. Answer the following questions, without forgetting to answer anything, and then go on to answer the survey.

1. Gender: Male \_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_

2. Please specify your age: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Indicate your relationship status:

- a. Single
- b. Engaged
- c. Married
- d. Divorced
- e. Widowed
- f. In a relationship

5. If you are engaged, married, or in a relationship at the moment, please indicate the length of the relationship

\_\_\_\_\_

6. If you are divorced or widowed, please indicate how long it has been

\_\_\_\_\_

7. How many relationships have you been in?

\_\_\_\_\_

8. How long was your longest relationship?

\_\_\_\_\_

If you are not currently in a relationship, please answer the following questions based on a past relationship.

### Appendix C

#### Gottman Sound Relationship House Questionnaire- Constructive versus Destructive Styles

This section is designed to look at the conflict resolution styles that you and your partner exhibit when attempting to resolve a certain issue. Read each statement and place a check mark in the appropriate TRUE or FALSE box.

<b>Harsh Startup</b>	True	False
<b>When we discuss our issues:</b>		

1. My partner is often very critical of me.		
2. I hate the way my partner raises an issue.		
3. Arguments often seem to come out of nowhere.		
4. Before I know it we are in a fight.		
5. When my partner complains I feel picked on.		
6. I seem to always get blamed for issues.		
7. My partner is negative all out of proportion.		
8. I feel I have to ward off personal attacks.		
9. I often have to deny charges leveled against me.		
10. My partner's feelings are too easily hurt.		
11. What goes wrong is often not my responsibility.		
12. My partner criticizes my personality.		
13. Issues get raised in an insulting manner.		
14. My partner will at times complain in a smug or superior way.		
15. I have just about had it with all this negativity between us.		
16. I feel basically disrespected when my partner complains.		
17. I just want to suddenly leave the scene when complaints arise.		
18. Our calm is suddenly shattered.		
19. I think my partner's negativity is unnerving and unsettling.		
20. I think my partner can be totally irrational.		

<b>Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse</b> <b>When we discuss our issue:</b>	True	False
1. I feel attacked or criticized when we talk about our disagreements.		
2. I usually feel like my personality is being assaulted.		
3. In our disputes, at times, I don't even feel like my partner likes me very much.		
4. I have to defend myself because the charges against me are so unfair.		
5. I often feel unappreciated by my partner.		
6. My feelings and intentions are often misunderstood.		
7. I don't feel appreciated for all the good I do in this relationship.		
8. I often just want to leave the scene of the arguments.		
9. I get disgusted by all the negativity between us.		
10. I feel insulted by my partner at times.		
11. I sometimes just clam up and become quiet.		
12. I can get mean and insulting in our disputes.		
13. I feel basically disrespected.		
14. Many of our issues are just not my problem.		
15. The way we talk makes me want to just withdraw from the whole relationship.		
16. I think to myself "Who needs all this conflict?"		
17. My partner never really changes.		
18. Our problems have made me feel desperate at times.		
19. My partner doesn't face issues responsibly and maturely.		
20. I try to point out flaws in my partner's personality that need improvement.		
21. I feel explosive and out of control about our issues at times.		
22. My partner uses phrases like "You always" or "You never" when complaining.		
23. I often get the blame for what are really <i>our</i> problems.		
24. I don't have a lot of respect for my partner's position on our basic issues.		

25. My partner can be quite selfish and self-centered.		
26. I feel disgusted by some of my partner's attitudes.		
27. My partner gets far too emotional.		
28. I am just not guilty of the many things I am accused of.		
29. Small issues often escalate out of proportion.		
30. Arguments seem to come out of nowhere		
31. My partner's feelings get hurt too easily.		
32. I often will become silent to cool things down a bit.		
33. My partner has a lot of trouble being rational and logical.		

<b>Gridlock on Perpetual Issues</b> <b>When we discuss our problems:</b>	True	False
1. The same problems keep coming up again and again in our relationship.		
2. We rarely make much progress on our central issues.		
3. We keep hurting each other whenever we discuss our core issues.		
4. I feel criticized and misunderstood when we discuss our hot topics.		
5. My partner has a long list of basically unreasonable demands.		
6. When we discuss our basic issues, I often feel that my partner doesn't like me.		
7. My partner wants me to change my basic personality.		
8. I often keep quiet and withdraw to avoid stirring up too much conflict.		
9. I don't feel respected when we disagree.		
10. My partner often acts in a selfish manner.		
11. What I say in our discussions rarely has much effect.		
12. I feel put down in our discussions of key issues.		
13. I can't really be myself in this relationship.		
14. I often think that my partner is manipulating me.		
15. Sometimes I think that my partner doesn't care about my feelings.		
16. My partner rarely makes a real effort to change.		
17. There are some basic faults in my partner's personality that he/she won't change.		
18. My partner disregards my fundamental needs.		
19. Sometimes I feel that my values don't matter to my partner.		
20. When we discuss our issues, my partner acts as if I am totally wrong and he or she is totally right.		

<b>Compromise</b> <b>During our attempts to resolve conflicts between us:</b>	True	False
1. Our decisions often get made by both of us compromising.		
2. We are usually good at resolving our differences.		
3. I can give in when I need to, and often do.		
4. I can be stubborn in an argument but I'm not opposed to compromising.		
5. I think that sharing power in a relationship is very important.		
6. My partner is not a very stubborn person.		
7. I don't believe one person is usually right and the other wrong on most issues.		
8. We both believe in meeting each other half way when we disagree.		
9. I am able to yield somewhat even when I feel strongly on an issue.		
10. The two of us usually arrive at a better decision through give and take.		

11. It's a good idea to give in somewhat, in my view.		
12. In discussing issues we can usually find our common ground of agreement.		
13. Everyone gets some of what they want when there is a compromise.		
14. My partner can give in, and often does.		
15. I don't wait until my partner gives in before I do.		
16. When I give in first my partner then gives in too.		
17. Yielding power is not very difficult for my partner.		
18. Yielding power is not very difficult for me.		
19. Give and take in making decisions is not a problem in this relationship.		
20. I will compromise even when I believe I am right.		

### Appendix D

#### Index of Sexual Satisfaction

This section is designed to measure the degree of satisfaction you have in the sexual aspect of the relationship with your partner. Answer each item as carefully and as accurately as you can by placing a check beside each item according to the following

1 = None of the time

2 = Very rarely

- 3 = A little of the time  
 4 = Some of the time  
 5 = A good part of the time  
 6 = Most of the time  
 7 = All of the time

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. I feel that my partner enjoys our sex life.							
2. Our sex life is very exciting.							
3. Sex is fun for my partner and me.							
4. Sex with my partner has become a chore for me.							
5. I feel that our sex is dirty and disgusting.							
6. Our sex life is monotonous.							
7. When we have sex it is too rushed and hurriedly completed.							
8. I feel that my sex life is lacking in quality.							
9. My partner is sexually very exciting.							
10. I enjoy the sex techniques that my partner likes to use.							
11. I feel that my partner wants too much sex from me.							
12. I think that our sex is wonderful.							
13. My partner dwells on sex too much.							
14. I try to avoid sexual contact with my partner.							
15. My partner is too rough or brutal when we have sex.							
16. My partner is a wonderful sex mate.							
17. I feel that sex is a normal function of our relationship.							
18. My partner does not want sex when I do.							
19. I feel that our sex life really adds a lot to our relationship.							
20. My partner seems to avoid sexual contact with me.							
21. It is easy for me to get sexually excited by my partner.							
22. I feel that my partner is sexually pleased with me.							
23. My partner is very sensitive to my sexual needs and desires.							
24. My partner does not satisfy me sexually.							
25. I feel that my sex life is boring.							

**Appendix E**  
**Zung Self-Rating Anxiety Scale**

This section is designed to test the level of anxiety that you feel. Please read each one carefully and decide how much the statement describes how you have been feeling **during the two weeks**. Circle the appropriate number for each statement

	None or little of the time	Some of the time	Good part of the time	Most or all of the time
1. I feel more nervous and anxious than usual.	1	2	3	4
2. I feel afraid for no reason at all.	1	2	3	4
3. I get upset easily or feel panicky.	1	2	3	4
4. I feel like I'm falling apart and going to pieces.	1	2	3	4
5. I feel that everything is all right and nothing bad will happen.	4	3	2	1
6. My arms and legs shake and tremble.	1	2	3	4
7. I am bothered by headaches, neck and back pains.	1	2	3	4
8. I feel weak and get tired easily.	1	2	3	4
9. I feel calm and can sit still easily.	4	3	2	1
10. I can feel my heart beating fast.	1	2	3	4
11. I am bothered by dizzy spells.	1	2	3	4
12. I have fainting spells or feel faint.	1	2	3	4
13. I can breathe in and out easily.	4	3	2	1
14. I get feelings of numbness and tingling in my fingers and toes.	1	2	3	4
15. I am bothered by stomachaches or indigestion.	1	2	3	4
16. I have to empty my bladder often.	1	2	3	4
17. My hands are usually dry and warm.	4	3	2	1
18. My face gets hot and blushes.	1	2	3	4
19. I fall asleep easily and get a good night's rest.	4	3	2	1
20. I have nightmares.	1	2	3	4

### Appendix F Beck Depression Inventory II

This final section is designed to measure depressive symptoms and severity of depression. Please answer the following questions as accurately as possible. Answers should be based on the past two weeks, including today. If two answers seem equal, circle the higher in that group.

<b>Sadness</b>	0 I do not feel bad. 1 I feel sad. 2 I am sad all the time. 3 I am so sad or unhappy that I cannot stand it.
<b>Pessimism</b>	0 I am not discouraged about my future. 1 I feel more discouraged about my future than I used to be. 2 I don't expect things to work out for me. 3 I feel that the future is hopeless and will only get worse.
<b>Past Failure</b>	0 I do not feel like a failure. 1 I feel I have failed more than I should have. 2 As I look back on my life, I see a lot of failures. 3 I feel I am a total failure as a person.
<b>Loss of Pleasure</b>	0 I get as much pleasure as I ever did from the things I enjoy. 1 I don't enjoy things as I used to. 2 I get very little pleasure from the things I used to enjoy 3 I can't get any pleasure from the things I used to enjoy.
<b>Guilty Feelings</b>	0 I don't feel particularly guilty. 1 I feel guilty over many things I have done or should have done. 2 I feel quite guilty most of the time. 3 I feel guilty all of the time.
<b>Punishment Feelings</b>	0 I don't feel I am being punished. 1 I feel I may be punished. 2 I expect to be punished. 3 I feel I am being punished.
<b>Self-Dislike</b>	0 I feel the same about myself as ever. 1 I have lost confidence in myself. 2 I am disappointed in myself. 3 I dislike myself.
<b>Self-Criticism</b>	0 I don't criticize or blame myself more than usual. 1 I am more critical of myself than I used to be. 2 I criticize myself for all of my faults. 3 I blame myself for everything bad that happens.
<b>Suicidal Thoughts or Wishes</b>	0 I don't have any thoughts of killing myself. 1 I have thoughts of killing myself, but I would not carry them out. 2 I would like to kill myself. 3 I would kill myself if I had the chance.
<b>Crying</b>	0 I don't cry any more than I used to. 1 I cry more than I used to. 2 I cry over every little thing. 3 I feel like crying, but I can't.
<b>Agitation</b>	0 I am no more restless or wound up than usual. 1 I feel more restless or wound up than usual. 2 I am so restless or agitated that it's hard to stay still 3 I am so restless or agitated that I have to keep moving or doing something

<b>Loss of Interest</b>	0 I have not lost interest in other people or activities. 1 I am less interested in other people or things than before. 2 I have lost most of my interest in other people or things. 3 It's hard to get interested in anything
<b>Indecisive-ness</b>	0 I make decisions about as well as ever. 1 I find it more difficult to make decisions than usual. 2 I have much greater difficulty in making decisions than I used to. 3 I have trouble making any decisions.
<b>Worthless-ness</b>	0 I do not feel I am worthless. 1 I don't consider myself as worthwhile and useful as I used to. 2 I feel more worthless as compared to other people. 3 I feel utterly worthless.
<b>Loss of Energy</b>	0 I have as much energy as ever. 1 I have less energy than I used to have. 2 I don't have enough energy to do very much. 3 I don't have enough energy to do anything.
<b>Sleeping Patterns</b>	0 I have not experienced any change in my sleeping pattern. 1 I sleep somewhat more/less than usual. 2 I sleep a lot more/ a lot less than usual. 3 I sleep most of the day/ I wake up 1-2 hours early and can't get back to sleep.
<b>Irritability</b>	0 I am no more irritable than usual. 1 I am more irritable than usual. 2 I am much more irritable than usual. 3 I am irritable all the time.
<b>Changes in Appetite</b>	0 I have not experienced any changes in my appetite. 1 My appetite is somewhat less/greater than usual. 2 My appetite is much less/greater than usual. 3 I have no appetite at all/ I crave food all the time.
<b>Concentration Difficulty</b>	0 I can concentrate as well as ever. 1 I can't concentrate as well as usual. 2 It's hard to keep my mind on anything for very long. 3 I find I can't concentrate on anything.
<b>Tiredness of Fatigue</b>	0 I am no more tired or fatigued than usual. 1 I get tired or fatigued more easily than usual. 2 I am too tired or fatigued to do a lot of things I used to do. 3 I am too tired or fatigued to do most of the things I used to do.
<b>Loss of Interest in Sex</b>	0 I have not noticed any recent change in my interest in sex. 1 I am less interested in sex than I used to be. 2 I am much less interested in sex now. 3 I have lost interest in sex completely.