



Teen Dating Relationships: How Daily Disagreements are Associated with Relationship Satisfaction

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Abstract

Being in a satisfying romantic relationship in adolescence is associated to many short- and long-term benefits. However, more research is needed to better understand what promotes relationship satisfaction in adolescence. To address this gap, this study used a diary approach to examine the relation between disagreements and daily variations in adolescent romantic relationship satisfaction. A sample of 186 adolescents was recruited (Mage = 17.08 years, SD = 1.48; 56% female). Multilevel modeling was used to evaluate how disagreement occurrences, resolution, and resolution strategies were related to daily perceived relationship satisfaction at both the between- and within-subjects levels. At the within-subjects level, satisfaction was lower on days when a disagreement occurred, especially for girls. Adolescents also reported lower relationship satisfaction on days when they used more destructive strategies than usual, and higher relationship satisfaction on days when they successfully resolved disagreements. This study demonstrates that adolescents' evaluations of their daily relationship satisfaction vary as function of disagreement processes.

Keywords Adolescence · Relationship satisfaction · Romantic relationships · Disagreements · Conflict resolution · Daily

Introduction

Relationship satisfaction can have significant effects on adolescents' well-being, and these effects tend to persist into adulthood. It is therefore essential to identify factors related to relationship satisfaction in adolescence. The developmental significance of youth's romantic relationships has been well documented. In addition to being crucial for the development of one's identity, sexuality and self-esteem (Furman and Shaffer 2003), early romantic experiences forecast subsequent ones (Furman 2018). For instance, having a satisfying relationship in adolescence is one of the most important predictors of future satisfying intimate relationships (Seiffge-Krenke 2003; Madsen and Collins 2011), which in turn confer numerous benefits (e.g., better mental health, more

romantic commitment, and higher quality of life; Neto and da Conceição Pinto 2015). Relationship satisfaction (also referred to as relationship quality; Graham et al. 2011) is one of the main empirical concepts in the field of adult intimate relationships because of its strong prediction of relationship dissolution (Fincham et al. 2018). However, in adolescence, the research on relationship satisfaction remains limited. Considering that it has been linked to greater social competence (Viejo et al. 2018), lower externalizing symptoms and less substance use (Collibee and Furman 2015), it is crucial to further understand which factors promote or hinder relationship satisfaction in youth. This is especially true considering that lower satisfaction in youth's dating relationships has been associated with both dating violence victimization and perpetration (Orpinas et al. 2013). Disagreements are inevitable in any close relationship. In adolescent romantic relationships, disagreements and their conflict-resolution strategies have been associated to relationship longevity (e.g., Shulman et al. 2006). Despite the fact that changes in relationship satisfaction can ultimately lead to changes in relationship stability (Karney and Bradbury 1995), it remains unclear how adolescents' disagreements and conflict resolution strategies correlate with relationship satisfaction, especially in daily life. By using an intensive longitudinal methodology (i.e., daily diaries), the current study aimed to investigate how the

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occurrence of a disagreement and its processes (i.e., its resolution and the conflict resolution strategies used) are associated with relationship satisfaction. By doing so, this study aims to provide a finer, more nuanced representation of how adolescents deal with interpersonal stressors, and how, consequently, their perceptions of relationship satisfaction fluctuate daily.

Relationship Satisfaction and Disagreements in Adolescence

Inherent to any romantic relationship are disagreements, which dating adolescents need to learn to manage with their partners. The experience of conflict and disagreements, even over minor issues, has been associated with poorer relationship satisfaction in adulthood (Cooper et al. 2018). In adolescence, it has also been linked to poorer satisfaction in friendships and parental relationships (Van Doorn et al. 2009). Despite the fact that conflicts in adolescence occur more frequently with romantic partners than with friends (Furman and Shomaker 2008), whether experiencing disagreements with a romantic partner in adolescence is related to changes in satisfaction remains unknown.

The strategies used to resolve conflict are even more powerful indicators of relationship satisfaction than the presence of conflict itself (Flora and Segrin 2015). Three major categories of conflict resolution strategies have been identified in the literature: positive problem solving (i.e., negotiation and finding solutions), conflict engagement (e.g., coercion, negative behaviors such as verbal violence or confrontational interaction), and withdrawal (i.e., disengaging from or downplaying the conflict) (Fortin et al. 2020). However, more broadly, these strategies can be conceptualized along two factors into constructive (i.e., positive problem solving) and destructive strategies (i.e., conflict engagement and withdrawal) (Fortin et al. 2020).

Studies on conflict resolution styles in adolescence have documented some sex differences, namely that girls tend to resort to more destructive problem-solving behaviors than their boyfriends do (Connolly et al. 2015). In addition, compared to their relationships with best friends, adolescents tend to use more destructive strategies when resolving their conflicts with a romantic partner (Connolly et al. 2015). In terms of other indicators of relationship well-being, a study found that girls' perception of their boyfriend as being conflictual towards them was negatively associated with their own relationship satisfaction (Galliher et al. 2004). Furthermore, the results of studies examining the link between conflict resolution and relationship longevity or stability in adolescence are consistent with findings in adults; adolescents who used more constructive strategies to solve conflicts with their romantic partners had significantly longer and more stable relationships (Shulman et al. 2006;

Ha et al. 2013). Despite this, little attention has been devoted to examining how disagreements and the strategies used to resolve them are related to relationship satisfaction, a powerful predictor of relationship stability (Le et al. 2010), in the context of teenage dating relationships. In addition, data is lacking to pinpoint how disagreement affects daily satisfaction changes. To fully understand the implications of disagreements for satisfaction, it is important to consider both whether daily disagreements have been resolved and how they have been resolved. Improving the understanding of these associations is a crucial first step towards promoting adaptive behaviors in adolescent relationships and fostering healthy relationships, which can carry over to subsequent relationships.

Use of Daily Diaries in Relationship Satisfaction Research

Most studies examining relationship satisfaction are cross-sectional, examining relationship satisfaction at one point in time. However, considering the dynamic nature of relationships (e.g., the influence of contextual factors; Kelley 1983, 2002), studying daily fluctuations in relationship satisfaction can provide a more comprehensive portrait of romantic relationships (Arriaga 2001). Cross-sectional studies on satisfaction solely examine differences between individuals (e.g., why do some individuals report on average higher satisfaction than others?); however, satisfaction has been shown to vary within the same individual from one day to another as well (i.e., within-subjects differences; Cooper et al. 2018). Thus, to obtain a comprehensive portrait of the factors that are related to satisfaction, it is crucial to consider both between- and within-subjects processes. Intensive longitudinal methods, such as daily diaries (i.e., filling out diaries at a specific time of day), provide an optimal way to capture these processes by collecting numerous consecutive data points from each individual (Bolger and Laurenceau 2013). These methods also reduce the amount of time between the occurrence of the event and the data collection, which minimizes recall bias and increases ecological validity (Laurenceau and Bolger 2005).

To gain a better understanding of the context that surrounds relationship satisfaction, a study used daily diaries to examine whether daily conflict was related to daily satisfaction of adolescents in their relationship with their parents and their best friends (Van Doorn et al. 2009). It found that on days when adolescents perceived higher levels of conflict than usual with either a parent or a best friend, they also reported lower relationship satisfaction. In addition, results showed that relationship satisfaction was higher on days when conflict was handled constructively compared to destructively. Adopting a daily-diary methodology when studying behaviors and perceptions can allow a finer

depiction of relationships and better highlight their complexities. While there is existing literature on the topic in the context of friendships (e.g., Van Doorn et al. 2009), a gap remains to understand how daily conflict and relationship satisfaction are related in the context of adolescent romantic relationships. Filling this gap has significant implications considering that in adolescence, conflicts occur more frequently (Furman and Shomaker 2008)—and are resolved more destructively—in romantic relationships than in friendships (Connolly et al. 2015).

Current Study

The goal of this study was to examine how disagreements are related to relationship satisfaction in dating adolescents at both the within- and between-subjects levels. This study investigated whether, on a given day: (1) the occurrence of a disagreement, (2) its resolution, and (3) greater use of constructive or destructive resolution strategies was associated with relationship satisfaction. It was expected that on days when adolescents reported disagreements, did not resolve their disagreements, and used less constructive and more destructive strategies than usual, they would report being less satisfied (within-subjects hypothesis). In addition, this study examined between-subjects differences, such that it compared how adolescents differed from each other on disagreement occurrences, resolved disagreements, resolution strategies and satisfaction. It was expected that adolescents who report more frequent disagreements, less frequently resolved disagreements, greater use of destructive strategies, and lesser use of constructive strategies than their peers to also report lower overall satisfaction than them (between-subjects hypothesis). Finally, this study explored whether associations differed between sexes at both the within-subjects and between-subjects levels.

Methods

Participants

A sample of 186 adolescents (104 girls; 82 boys) was recruited through educational institutions in the Montreal Metropolitan Area, as well as through online ads on Facebook. In order to be eligible, participants had to satisfy the following criteria: (a) aged between 14 and 19 years; (b) in a relationship for at least 1 month prior to the study; (c) living separately from their current romantic partner; (d) not have any children; and (e) have internet access. Participants were on average 17.08 years old ($SD = 1.48$). The majority of participants were in a heterosexual relationship (97.8%), currently enrolled in high school (61.4%), lived at home

with both of their parents (63.4%), were of Quebecois/Canadian ethnicity (70.4%), and spoke French at home (85.5%). In terms of their relationship characteristics, 40.3% of the sample reported being in their first dating relationship, and 43.0% reported that the relationship had been ongoing for at least a year.

Procedure

In-person recruitment was done through educational institutions in the Greater Montreal area. Research assistants set up a booth in each school in order to provide information to students about the study. Some schools gave their consent for research assistants to give a short informative speech in classrooms and to invite students to visit the booth after class. Then, research assistants fully explained the research procedure and the nature of the study to interested participants and obtained their written informed consent. In addition, to ensure that adolescents properly understood that the study examined disagreement in teen dating relationships, research assistants reviewed the section of the survey measuring “disagreement occurrence” with each participant. Research assistants informed participants to report on disagreements that occurred on a given day with their boyfriend or girlfriend, even if these disagreements did not escalate into more severe conflicts. Participants that were recruited online received the same explanations from a research assistant by phone. These participants also had to complete and return an electronic consent form before beginning the study. After obtaining consent, all participants received a personalized link through text message or e-mail inviting them to complete a series of online questionnaires on the secure web platform *Qualtrics*. In order to assure confidentiality, each participant was solely identified by a unique identification code. All participants completed an initial online questionnaire, which took about 30 min and assessed individual characteristics (e.g., socio-demographic characteristics) and relationship history. The following day, participants started the online diary study. Each day for 14 days, participants received an invitation at 8:00 p.m. to complete a 5-min daily questionnaire. The survey assessed participants’ daily relationship satisfaction, disagreements, and strategies used to resolve the disagreements. Participants were required to complete the daily diary before 9:00 a.m. the following day. A reminder was sent via text message or e-mail at 7:00 a.m. to participants who had not yet completed their daily questionnaire. In order to promote participants’ retention and to ensure their well-being, research assistants made follow-up calls on days 2, 7, and 12 of the study. During these phone calls, research assistants reiterated the goal of the study and asked participants if they had any difficulty interpreting questions included in the survey. In addition, a list of available online and in-

person support resources was provided at the end of each online questionnaire. Participants received 4\$ for every questionnaire that was completed in the required time frame (8:00 p.m. to 9:00 a.m.), for a maximum total of 60\$ (the initial baseline survey, and 14 daily diaries). In addition, participants who completed at least 12 out of 14 daily diaries were eligible to win a 250\$ gift-certificate for the mall of their choice.

Measures

Relationship satisfaction

Daily relationship satisfaction was measured using a validated four-item French version of the *Dyadic Adjustment Scale* (DAS-4; Sabourin et al. 2005). The instructions and items were slightly modified in order to assess satisfaction perceived on a given day rather than a general perception of satisfaction. Referring to the current day, participants indicated on a Likert-scale, ranging from 0 = never to 5 = always, how frequently: (a) they considered ending their relationship; (b) things went well between them; and (c) they self-disclosed or confided in their partner. A final item measured participants' perception of their relationship's level of happiness from 0 = extremely unhappy to 6 = perfectly happy. A summed total score was used with a possible maximum of 21 and higher scores reflecting higher satisfaction. The Omega (ω ; McDonald 1999) statistic was used to estimate level-specific reliability (Geldhof et al. 2014). The scale exhibited moderate reliability at the within level ($\omega = 0.66$) and good reliability at the between level ($\omega = 0.80$).

Daily disagreements and resolution

First, participants reported whether or not they had been in contact (either in person, phone, text message, or direct message) with their romantic partner that day. If participants answered "yes," they then answered the following dichotomous item (0 = no; 1 = yes): "Were there times today when your opinion differentiated from your boyfriend's or girlfriend's?". Participants who answered "yes" were then invited to think about the most important difference of opinion they had that day and answer a follow-up question assessing whether or not the disagreement was resolved (0 = yes; 1 = no).

Daily strategies used to resolve disagreements

The strategies participants employed to solve disagreements were measured using an adapted French version of the *Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory* (CRSI; Kurdek 1994), validated for a French-Canadian adolescent population (Fortin

et al. 2020). This instrument is composed of 16 items assessing the extent to which participants used problem solving, conflict engagement, and withdrawal during their daily disagreements on a three-point Likert scale from 0 = a little to 3 = a lot. For the purpose of this study, mean scores of the destructive strategies (i.e., conflict engagement and withdrawal) and constructive strategies (i.e., problem solving) subscales were used. Both subscales showed good reliability within-subjects, $\omega_{constructive} = 0.84$, $\omega_{destructive} = 0.83$, and between-subjects, $\omega_{constructive} = 0.97$, $\omega_{destructive} = 0.93$.

Analyses

In order to examine how the daily occurrence of disagreement, its resolution, and the use of constructive and destructive resolution strategies were associated with same-day satisfaction, multilevel structural equation models (MSEM) were estimated using Mplus version 8.4 (Muthén and Muthén 1998–2017). One of the essential guidelines for analyzing intensive longitudinal data is separating the between-subjects (i.e., variability in average scores between participants or inter-person differences) and within-subjects (i.e., variability in each participant's scores from one day to another or intra-person differences) levels of analysis in models (Bolger and Laurenceau 2013).

Two separate MSEM models were estimated to examine how the daily independent variables (level 1 variables) were associated with daily satisfaction, and to determine whether there was an interaction with sex (level 2 variable). The first model examined the association between the occurrence of a disagreement and relationship satisfaction; the second examined disagreement resolution, constructive and destructive strategies, and satisfaction. All four independent variables were person-mean centered. Person-mean centering was done by subtracting each participant's mean score across all measurement points on a given independent variable from the participant's raw daily score on the targeted variable (McNeish and Hamaker 2019). Thus, values of person-mean centered variables can be interpreted as deviations from the individual's mean (i.e., how does a participant deviate on a given day from his or her usual or average score?). For disagreement occurrence and resolution, which are dichotomous variables (i.e., 0 = no disagreement, 1 = disagreed; 0 = not resolved, 1 = resolved), person-mean centering reflects whether or not the event occurred. For resolution strategies, which are continuous variables, person-mean centering reflects whether or not a participant significantly engaged in more or less of these strategies than their average. Then, in order to obtain a more easily interpretable intercept and capture between-subjects differences and based on recommendations for MSEM (McNeish and Hamaker 2019), predictors were grand-mean centered by subtracting the grand mean of the sample

(i.e., all measurement points across all individuals in the sample) from each individual’s mean on each independent variable across all measurement points. This procedure allows to examine whether adolescents who score higher or lower than the sample mean on the predictors also report higher or lower satisfaction, across the 14 days (between-subjects differences). In each model, both the between-subjects means, and the within-subjects deviations of the independent variables were included.

Time was entered as a covariate in both models in order to take into consideration the possibility that the relationship between the predictor variables and satisfaction may be explained by the passing of time (Bolger and Laurenceau 2013). This study also verified whether relationship length, dichotomized to represent a relationship that has been ongoing for at least 1 year (1) or for less than a year (0) was a moderator. Relationship length was subsequently removed from the analyses because it failed to contribute to the models.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics are summarized by sex in Table 1. Across the 14-day period, completion rate for the daily diaries was 92.28%. Adolescents in this study reported on average 2.72 days of disagreements during the course of the 14 daily diaries study. A total of 505 disagreement days were reported in the sample. Among those days, 79.8% of disagreements were reported as resolved. Based on results from *t*-tests on the person-level aggregated variables (i.e., means of the repeated measures), girls reported significantly more disagreement occurrences and greater use of destructive conflict resolution strategies. Boys reported greater use of constructive strategies, and more frequently resolved disagreements.

Disagreement Occurrence and Relationship Satisfaction

Multilevel analyses predicting end-of-day relationship satisfaction as a function of disagreement occurrence showed significant between-subjects and within-subjects associations. Participants who reported on average more frequent disagreements over the 14 days than the sample mean reported lower relationship satisfaction overall ($\beta = -3.48, SE = 0.99, z = -3.52, p < 0.001$). Consistently, on days when they reported a disagreement with their romantic partner, participants were also significantly less satisfied ($\beta = -1.15, SE = 0.15, z = -7.55, p < 0.001$). Upon examining interactions with sex, it was found that on days when a disagreement occurred, girls were significantly less satisfied ($\beta = -1.47, SE = 0.20, z = -7.62, p < 0.001$) than boys ($\beta = -0.69, SE = 0.23, z = -3.01,$

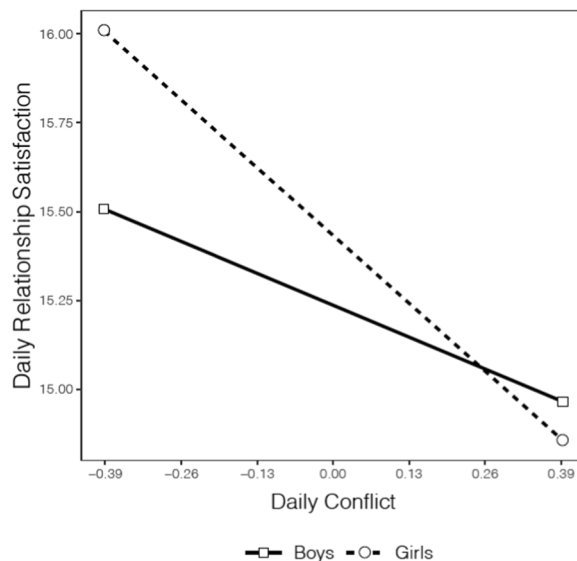


Fig. 1 Cross-level interaction with sex moderating the relationship between daily disagreement and relationship satisfaction

Table 1 Descriptive statistics

	Overall (n = 186)	Girls (n = 104)	Boys (n = 82)	p
	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)			
Mean age (14.13–19.95)	17.08 (1.48)	16.99 (1.49)	17.20 (1.42)	<0.001
Mean number of disagreement (0–1)	0.23 (0.17)	0.24 (0.19)	0.22 (0.15)	<0.001
Mean resolution (0–1)	0.79 (0.29)	0.78 (0.29)	0.82 (0.28)	0.001
Mean constructive strategies (1–3)	2.28 (0.46)	2.21 (0.45)	2.38 (0.47)	<0.001
Mean destructive strategies (1–3)	1.32 (0.30)	1.34 (0.30)	1.29 (0.30)	0.001
Mean satisfaction (1–19)	14.78 (2.46)	14.79 (2.51)	14.76 (2.39)	0.79
	<i>n</i> (%)			
Relationship of 12 months or more	80 (43.6)	46 (43.4)	34 (42.5)	0.90

T-tests and chi-square tests were used to compare girls and boys. Mean scores for the predictor variables are aggregated from participants’ total daily reports over the course of the study

Table 2 Multilevel estimates of disagreement characteristics on daily satisfaction

	Within B (SE)	Between B (SE)
Resolution	1.69 (0.38)***	1.01 (0.75)
Destructive strategies	−2.06 (0.47)***	−2.96 (0.73)**
Constructive strategies	−0.07 (0.35)	1.32 (0.47)*

Resolution is a dichotomous variable coded as: 0 = not resolved and 1 = resolved. Time was a significant covariate. Relationship length was not a significant predictor and was removed from all models

* $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.001$

$p = 0.003$) (Fig. 1). Thus, the within-subjects association between disagreement occurrence and daily satisfaction was modulated by the participant's sex. This was the only significant interaction with sex in the study.

Conflict Resolution and Relationship Satisfaction

Table 2 presents the results of the multilevel analysis predicting how disagreement characteristics (i.e., resolution and the conflict resolution strategies used) are related to end-of-day relationship satisfaction. Between-subjects results showed that participants who reported greater use of destructive strategies over the 14 days compared to the sample mean had lower relationship satisfaction ($\beta = -2.96$, $SE = 0.73$, $z = -4.04$, $p < 0.001$). Conversely, those who reported greater use of constructive strategies than the sample mean reported higher satisfaction ($\beta = 1.32$, $SE = 0.47$, $z = 2.78$, $p = 0.005$). No significant effect was found for resolution of disagreements at the between level. Thus, participants who on average reported more frequently resolved disagreements were not significantly more satisfied than their peers ($p = 0.179$).

At the within-subjects level (i.e., individual level), disagreement resolution was significantly and positively associated with satisfaction ($\beta = 1.69$, $SE = 0.38$, $z = 4.51$, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that on days when a disagreement was resolved, adolescents reported greater relationship satisfaction. On days when adolescents used more destructive strategies than they usually did to resolve their disagreement with their romantic partner, they reported being less satisfied ($\beta = -2.06$, $SE = 0.47$, $z = -4.43$, $p < 0.001$). There was no significant within-subjects result for the daily use of constructive strategies. After exploring whether these associations differed between girls and boys, this study found no significant interactions with sex for resolution or destructive and constructive strategies neither at the between- nor at the within-subjects level.

Discussion

Romantic relationships in adolescence can serve as a training ground for acquiring and improving interpersonal

behaviors that are essential for the maintenance of future intimate relationships (Connolly and McIsaac 2009; Barber and Eccles 2003). Supporting this, research has documented the continuity of romantic experiences through time; having a satisfying relationship in adolescence is one of the most important predictors of future satisfying relationships (Seiffge-Krenke 2003; Madsen and Collins 2011). Despite evidence that adolescent romantic relationships have long-lasting implications, little is known with regards to what promotes or hinders relationship satisfaction, especially in daily life. The daily occurrence of a disagreement and the conflict resolution strategies used to resolve it are two factors that have been linked to relationship satisfaction in both adolescent friendships (Van Doorn et al. 2009) and adult intimate relationships (Cooper et al. 2018). The current study fills an important empirical gap by investigating whether these variables are interrelated in the context of adolescent romantic relationships. More specifically, it examined through daily diaries how the occurrence of a disagreement with a boyfriend or girlfriend, its resolution, and the strategies employed to do so were associated to daily levels of relationship satisfaction. Furthermore, it explored whether these associations differed between sexes.

Disagreement Occurrence and Relationship Satisfaction

This study examined daily disagreements and their impact in the context of adolescent romantic relationships. Adolescents reported on average 0.23 conflicts per day with a romantic partner, which is a similar daily rate to those obtained in the literature on adolescent friendships (e.g., Vannucci et al. 2018). While there is variability regarding prevalence of daily conflict in adult intimate relationships, this finding is also within the documented range in the literature (e.g., Lazarus et al. 2018). Thus, while this study included a more inclusive operationalization for the disagreement variable, it obtained a similar rate to other studies on conflict.

This study's findings demonstrate that in adolescence more frequent disagreements with a romantic partner over the course of 2 weeks is associated with poorer relationship satisfaction. More importantly, in line with the emitted hypotheses, experiencing a disagreement with a boyfriend or girlfriend on a given day is related to lower relationship satisfaction on that same day. This finding is consistent with and builds on research in the context of adolescent friendships, which suggests that adolescents are significantly less satisfied on days when they report a conflict with a best friend (Van Doorn et al. 2009). The current study extends these findings to the context of romantic relationships.

This study also explored sex differences and found that the negative association between daily disagreement

occurrence and relationship satisfaction was especially true for girls. This is consistent with a study, which showed that in adolescent friendships, for both boys and girls—but especially for girls—perception of conflict was related to lower relationship satisfaction (Demir and Urberg 2004). One possible explanation for this sex difference could be that girls tend to interpret the disagreement (i.e., a negative interpersonal event) as being more stressful and threatening than boys. Some authors have suggested that women are more heavily invested in, and attuned to, their interpersonal relationships (e.g., Kendler et al. 2001). Research suggests that not only do adolescent females experience more interpersonal stressors than their male counterparts do, but they also perceive these negative events as being more stressful (Flook 2011). Supporting this, romantic involvement in adolescence has been more strongly linked to depression for girls than for boys (Joyner and Udry 2000), suggesting that girls are more vulnerable to relational outcomes. Consistent with these findings, girls in this sample also perceived significantly more disagreements over the 14 days than boys. This may suggest that they are more sensitive to interpersonal discord, which could explain the stronger association between the occurrence of a disagreement and satisfaction for girls.

Disagreement Resolution and Relationship Satisfaction

Despite the scarce literature on disagreement resolution and relationship satisfaction, it was hypothesized that a positive relational outcome (i.e., resolved rather than unresolved disagreement) would be related to greater satisfaction. In terms of differences between individuals, this study did not, however, find that adolescents who report more frequently resolved disagreements with a boyfriend or girlfriend over a period of 14 days were more satisfied with their relationship. An explanation for this finding may be that resolving a disagreement is a factor that has more implications for adolescents' relationship well-being in the short-term. Building on this, the results of this study revealed a significant within-subjects association for disagreement resolution, such that a resolved conflict on a given-day is related to greater same-day satisfaction. In contrast to family relationships (e.g., with siblings and parents) that are compulsory, close peer relationships including friendships and romantic relationships are voluntary in nature, thereby rendering them more vulnerable to dissolution (Laursen and Adams 2018). Disagreements can therefore pose an important threat for such symmetrical relationships by creating an imbalance in the perception of the rewards and costs associated with them (Laursen and Adams 2018). Therefore, in the current study, a possible explanation for the significant within-subjects relationship between

disagreement resolution and satisfaction may be that successfully “surviving” a disagreement with a boyfriend or girlfriend on one day can be enough for boys and girls to report being more satisfied on that same day.

Some authors have theorized that, over and above the occurrence of a conflict, the way it is resolved is a better indicator of relationship well-being (Flora and Segrin 2015). Numerous studies among adults and adolescents have shown the damaging effect of destructive conflict resolution behaviors, and the positive influence of constructive strategies on relationship well-being, including on satisfaction (e.g., Shulman et al. 2006). Destructive strategies, which foster a positive “outcome for one partner at the expense of the other” (Shulman 2003, p. 121) are well-documented for having deleterious consequences on relationships. Compared to constructive strategies, which comprise mutual communication and negotiation, confrontational and avoidant strategies generally exclude these processes, which hinders conflict resolution and even promotes subsequent conflicts (Feeney and Karantzas 2017).

As hypothesized, at the between-subjects level, results show that adolescents who reported greater levels of destructive resolution strategies during disagreements over a 2-week period also reported poorer relationship satisfaction when compared to the sample average. In addition, those who used more constructive behaviors overall reported better relationship satisfaction than their peers. As previously mentioned, this study found no difference in overall satisfaction levels between adolescents as a function of disagreement resolution throughout the 14 days. Thus, regarding conflict resolution strategies, the between-subjects results of this study indicate that the overall use of constructive and destructive conflict resolution strategies over time may be a better indicator of differences in relationship satisfaction levels between adolescents. At the within-subjects level, this research found that on days when adolescents used more destructive strategies (i.e., withdrawal and conflict engagement) than their usual norm to resolve a disagreement with their romantic partner, they reported being less satisfied. These results confirm this study's hypothesis, and corroborate previous findings (Van Doorn et al. 2009), while also extending the knowledge on the negative impact of destructive strategies on relationship satisfaction to adolescents' daily romantic context. Finally, despite the fact that sex differences emerged in this study with regards to average use of conflict resolution strategies, results suggest that both girls and boys perceived similarly the negative impacts of destructive strategies on their relationship satisfaction.

Interestingly, contrary to the emitted hypothesis, there was no significant within-subjects association between the use of constructive strategies (i.e., collaboration and compromise) and daily satisfaction in this study. This

diverges from available literature in the context of adolescent friendships, according to which constructive conflict is related to higher same-day relationship satisfaction with a best friend (Van Doorn et al. 2009). In the context of romantic relationships, authors have found that adolescents generally use more constructive than destructive strategies to resolve interpersonal conflict (Shulman 2003). This was also the case in the current study. It has been theorized that, given their significance, adolescents tend to strive to maintain their romantic relationships by minimizing negative outcomes, such as coercive behaviors and one-sided benefits, and constructively tackling potential relationship damage (Shulman 2003). Therefore, a possible explanation for the lack of significance for the within-subjects component of constructive strategies may be that adolescents use constructive strategies as their norm to preserve their relationship, thus deviating little from their average behavior in everyday life. This is supported by the comparatively smaller amount of intra-individual variability for constructive strategies than destructive strategies in the current study.

Considering that most of the literature on disagreements and relationship satisfaction in adolescence are cross-sectional studies, this study filled an empirical gap by examining the day-to-day associations between disagreements and satisfaction in adolescents' dating relationships. Its findings provide a critical step towards identifying the daily processes by which experiencing a disagreement with a boyfriend or girlfriend and using different behaviors to resolve a disagreement can alter one's perception of relationship satisfaction. Methodologically, daily diaries have many benefits compared to the available cross-sectional studies, including reducing recall bias (Bolger and Laurenceau 2013). By using an intensive longitudinal method (i.e., daily diaries), this study was able to differentiate within-subjects effects from between-subjects effects and to examine both how participants varied in their behavior during the course of the study, as well as how they compared to other participants. In addition, results provided a more refined description of how adolescents' daily satisfaction varies as function of contextual factors, such as the occurrence of a disagreement and the behaviors they used to solve it. Further, investigating short reference periods, with participants filling out a questionnaire every day for a set amount of time, allowed us to assess a wider range of disagreements that adolescents experience in their everyday lives, rather than only capturing less prevalent more intense conflicts that tend to be more salient (Laursen and Adams 2018).

This study documented adolescents' daily fluctuations in relationship satisfaction in the context of their romantic relationships, a topic on which there is little empirical evidence. Results yielded that perceptions of relationship

satisfaction can change from one day to another as a function of situations and behaviors, such as disagreements with a romantic partner and the strategies employed in attempt to resolve them. This study also offers an empirical contribution by showing that relationship satisfaction, even in adolescence, can be a dynamic process. Therefore, future studies should adopt methodologies that can account for daily changes in teens' dating relationship processes. Researchers can build on these findings by examining the implications of these fluctuations in adolescence. For instance, it would be pertinent to examine whether daily changes in levels of satisfaction in adolescence are as detrimental as in adulthood, as well as their implications for other outcomes such as psychological distress, stress, relationship stability, etc.

The design of this study allowed us to explore more precisely which conflict resolution strategies are related to adolescents' romantic satisfaction in daily life. In fact, while this study found between-subjects differences in relationship satisfaction for both destructive and constructive strategies, only destructive strategies were related to satisfaction on a given day. The results of this research can serve as a steppingstone for existing and future intervention programs, by identifying behaviors that should specifically be targeted in order to avoid hindering adolescents' relationship satisfaction. In fact, conflict resolution is a skill that can effectively be ameliorated through intervention. In order to promote relationship satisfaction, as well as to prevent interpersonal victimization, it is essential to educate and inform adolescents on how to recognize maladaptive destructive behaviors and their consequences.

Limitations

This study also had some limitations. Firstly, despite the methodological advantages of intensive longitudinal methods, the correlational design of the current study did not allow us to determine the temporality of the associations between the variables or to assess causality. Therefore, it is possible that its results reflect either the effects of disagreement resolution on satisfaction, or the effects of satisfaction on disagreement resolution. As theorized by Laursen and Hafen (2010), the consequences of conflict can depend on certain factors such as the conflict's characteristics, as well as on the level of relationship satisfaction. It is therefore possible that the associations between disagreements and relationship satisfaction are mutually reciprocal and influence one another, such that a negatively resolved disagreement hinders relationship satisfaction, which in turn promotes further maladaptive disagreements. However, the design of this study did not permit us to test this possibility.

Next, this study included only one of the romantic partners, rather than recruiting and assessing couples. Researchers have

highlighted the importance of taking into consideration the interdependence and reciprocity of romantic partners when studying relationship processes (Paradis and Fernet 2017). By integrating both partners in a study, it would be possible to explore how each individual's perception of relationship satisfaction is determined by their own conflict resolution behaviors, as well as by their partner's. For instance, dyadic analyses could examine how the well-documented detrimental communication pattern where one partner demands and the other withdraws is related to satisfaction in adolescence. The research design did not permit to run dyadic analyses including both partners of the teens' dating relationships. Over the course of the study, participants reported on average 2.72 days of conflict. In order to analyze dyadic data, both partners would have had to agree on the occurrence of a same disagreement on a given day. It is possible that in the same couple, one partner perceives a disagreement while the other does not. Because the current study's goal was to better understand situational events, including both partners would have most likely resulted in a lack of dyadic units of analysis (couples) and statistical power. Therefore, the research design did not focus on dyadic data. However, future studies can use different types of intensive longitudinal methods to examine the links between disagreement, resolution and relationships satisfaction within a dyadic research protocol, such as an event-sampling procedure (Bolger and Laurenceau 2013). This type of methodology collects numerous reports of interactions or disagreements over the same day. This can increase the likelihood that partners have reported on the same event or disagreement, and thus increase statistical power in order to estimate dyadic models. Additionally, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of conflicts and relationship satisfaction, future studies should look to recruit diverse samples as the great majority of adolescents that participated in this study were heterosexual, Caucasian, and Francophone.

Finally, considering that numerous factors can contribute to or hinder relationship satisfaction, disagreement occurrences and resolutions tell only part of the story. Because of the limited sample size, this research was unable to account for possible moderating or mediating variables. Aside from sex, this study did not take into consideration how other individual characteristics (e.g., attachment styles, emotion regulation difficulties, partner support, hostile attributions, etc.) or contextual factors (e.g., alcohol consumption and daily stress) can be related to satisfaction. Including these variables in future research should provide a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms that underlie teens' satisfying relationships. In line with this, this research focused solely on relationship satisfaction. However, examining how disagreement processes are related to other markers of relationship stability, such as commitment, trust, and passion may provide an even better representation of romantic relationships in adolescence.

Conclusion

Disagreements are naturally occurring features of interpersonal relationships (Laursen and Adams 2018). The way they are resolved is a crucial element in determining how the relationship will evolve, for instance by leading to changes in relationship satisfaction levels. However, more research is needed in order to understand the impact of disagreements on relationship satisfaction in adolescence, especially in daily life. The current study addressed this empirical gap by examining how in a daily context, the occurrence of a disagreement with a romantic partner, its resolution, and the strategies used to solve it are related to adolescents' relationship satisfaction. It found that even everyday disagreements with a boyfriend or girlfriend can have a negative impact on adolescents' relationship satisfaction—especially if these disagreements are not resolved. In addition, it confirmed that using destructive strategies such as withdrawal or conflict engagement when resolving disagreements has deleterious effects on adolescents' evaluation of their relationship. Therefore, teaching adolescents more adaptive and constructive interpersonal behaviors, such as compromise and collaboration, is key for promoting personal and relational well-being. Finally, this study's methodology allowed to obtain a more refined, micro-level understanding of adolescent relationship processes, for instance by showing that similarly to adults, adolescents can vary in their perceptions of relationship satisfaction from one day to another as a result of contextual factors, such as disagreements and their processes.

Authors' Contributions E.H.T. contributed to the conception of the study and the design, participated in the data collection, performed the statistical analysis, and drafted the manuscript; A.P. contributed to the conception and design of the study, supervised data collection, material preparation and data analysis, and helped draft the manuscript; N.G. participated in the data analysis and contributed to writing the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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Data Sharing and Declaration This manuscript's data will not be deposited.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of Interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval This study has been approved by the Université du Québec à Montréal's institutional ethics committee for research with human subjects (*Comité institutionnel d'éthique de la recherche avec des êtres humains*); certificate # 1770_e_2018; file #592.

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