Long Distance Romantic Relationships

Uzak Mesafe Romantik İlişkiler

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ABSTRACT

The advancement of technology, changing living conditions, and increased travel freedom have contributed to the growing prevalence of long-distance romantic relationships, making it important to examine the factors that influence these relationships. As in any romantic relationship, couples in long-distance relationships face various challenges and must continuously exert effort to maintain their connection despite physical separation. This study aims to review research on long-distance romantic relationships and discuss the dynamics and determining factors that shape them. The literature indicates that long-distance relationships have been studied in relation to variables such as relationship quality, trust, commitment, self-disclosure, idealization, social support, emotional closeness, and the meaning attributed to periods of separation. These studies demonstrate that couples can overcome the barriers imposed by physical distance, strengthen emotional bonds, and develop strategies to sustain the relationship through the use of technological communication tools. Furthermore, the literature highlights areas in which long-distance relationships are similar to or differ from geographically close relationships. Communication patterns, social support utilization, tendencies to idealize the partner, and individual awareness emerge as key factors directly affecting relational commitment and satisfaction in long-distance relationships. Maintaining a healthy long-distance relationship is facilitated by developing effective communication skills, strengthening social support networks, and leveraging technological communication tools. Consequently, attachment styles, communication frequency, social support, individual awareness, and the meaning partners attribute to the relationship are critical factors enhancing relational resilience in long-distance relationships. Therefore, understanding the dynamics of long-distance romantic relationships is important for both academic research and practitioners working in the field of mental health.

Keywords: Long distance, romantic relationships, relationship satisfaction

ÖZ

Günümüzde teknolojinin ilerlemesi, değişen yaşam koşulları ve artan seyahat özgürlüğü, uzak mesafeli romantik ilişkilerin yaygınlaşmasına neden olmuş ve bu ilişkileri etkileyen faktörleri incelemeyi önemli hâle getirmiştir. Her romantik ilişkide olduğu gibi, uzak mesafe ilişkilerini sürdüren çiftler birtakım zorluklarla karşılaşmakta ve ilişkiyi uzakta iken canlı tutmak için sürekli çaba göstermeleri gerekmektedir. Mevcut çalışma, uzak mesafe romantik ilişkileri konu alan araştırmaları derleyerek, bu ilişkilerin dinamiklerini ve belirleyici faktörlerini tartışmayı amaçlamaktadır. Alanyazın incelendiğinde, uzak mesafe romantik ilişkilerin romantik ilişki kalitesi, güven, bağlılık, kendini açma, idealize etme, sosyal destek, duygusal yakınlık ve ayrılık sürecine yüklenen anlam gibi değişkenlerle çalışıldığını gösteren araştırmalar olduğu görülmektedir. Bu çalışmalar, çiftlerin teknolojik iletişim araçlarını kullanarak fiziksel mesafenin getirdiği engelleri aşabildiğini, duygusal bağlarını güçlendirebildiğini ve ilişkinin sürdürülmesini sağlayan stratejiler geliştirebildiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Ayrıca, uzak mesafeli ilişkilerin yakın mesafeli ilişkilerle benzerlik gösterdiği ve farklılaştığı alanlar üzerinde de durulmuştur. Özellikle iletişim biçimleri, sosyal destek kullanımı, idealize etme eğilimleri ve bireysel farkındalık, uzak mesafe ilişkilerde ilişkisel bağlılığı ve memnuniyeti doğrudan etkileyen önemli faktörler olarak öne çıkmaktadır. Bu ilişkilerin sağlıklı yürütülmesi, çiftlerin etkili iletişim becerilerini geliştirmeleri, sosyal destek sistemlerini güçlendirmeleri ve iletişimlerini teknolojik araçlarla desteklemeleri ile mümkün olmaktadır. Sonuç olarak, bağlanma stilleri, iletişim sıklığı, sosyal çevre desteği, bireysel farkındalık ve partnerlerin ilişkiye verdikleri anlam gibi unsurlar, uzak mesafeli ilişkilerde ilişkisel dayanıklılığı artıran kritik etmenler olarak önem kazanmaktadır. Bu nedenle, uzak mesafeli romantik ilişkilerin dinamiklerinin anlaşılması hem akademik araştırmalar hem de ruh sağlığı alanında çalışan uygulayıcılar için önemlidir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Uzak mesafe, romantik ilişkiler, ilişki memnuniyeti

Introduction

Long-distance relationships (LDRs) constitute a significant and increasingly common portion of romantic partnerships in society (Strohm et al., 2009). In traditional societies, newly formed families would typically live together with their children under the same roof or in close proximity to their extended families. Over time, however, many couples have been compelled to live apart due to reasons such as work or education, a situation commonly defined as a long-distance relationship (DeVito 2015). Although there is no universally accepted definition of LDRs, they are generally characterized by the lack of physical contact as a result of geographical separation (Jiang et al. 2010). Various factors—such as pursuing career opportunities or educational goals, military service or assignments, incarceration, immigration restrictions, and parental or family obligations—can cause couples to live geographically apart (Puranachaikere et al. 2021).

Previous literature has sought to distinguish between individuals in long-distance relationships and those in geographically close ones. For short-distance relationships, it is suggested that partners are able to see each other within less than one hour of travel, whereas long-distance relationships typically involve at least one hour or more of travel to meet (Krapf 2018). In a scale development study conceptualizing long-distance romantic relationships, factors such as the time required for partners to physically reunite and the lack of physical contact were emphasized, with geographical distance identified as the most distinctive feature separating LDRs from geographically close relationships (Pistole and Roberts 2011).

In long-distance relationships, the methods partners use to foster closeness, the strategies they employ to maintain the relationship, the degree of satisfaction they derive from the relationship, and their level of commitment may hold unique significance compared to geographically close relationships (Lani et al. 2022). Today, technological advancements have reduced the effects of geographical separation by enabling more frequent visual and verbal interactions between partners (Hampton et al. 2017). For example, studies suggest that technology facilitates greater face-to-face interaction in long-distance couples, which in turn enhances intimacy and happiness in the relationship (Merolla 2012). Consistent with this, Wang et al. (2023) noted that virtual reality technologies may also contribute positively to the experiences of couples in long-distance relationships.

The aim of this study is to better understand long-distance romantic relationships and to interpret the diverse findings in the literature by examining the individual and relational outcomes associated with maintaining a romantic relationship across distance. To this end, the existing literature on LDRs was reviewed, and relevant variables were categorized and discussed under thematic headings, both in terms of their unique characteristics and in comparison to geographically close relationships.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Long Distance Relationships

The advantages and disadvantages of long-distance romantic relationships (LDRs) compared to geographically close relationships have been widely discussed in the literature through numerous qualitative studies. Two key beliefs that are inherently challenged by the nature of LDRs are commonly considered. The first is the belief that face-to-face contact is indispensable for close relationships, and that geographical proximity is necessary for personal relationships (Stafford 2005). Maguire and Kinney (2010) highlight that uncertainty, inequality, and jealousy pose greater difficulties for individuals in long-distance romantic relationships. Similarly, Anand et al. (2018) note that couples in LDRs experience stress due to factors such as increased costs associated with visiting their partner, lower social support, and the time lost creating opportunities for communication. Among individuals in LDRs experiencing high stress, being physically apart from their partner is most frequently cited as the primary source of stress (Maguire and Kinney 2010).

In addition to the inherent dynamics of LDRs, the individual-level outcomes are also considered. For example, Erdem and Özdemir (2024) examined problems faced by women who had been living apart from their partners for at least eight months. The study with 17 participants found that women experienced the greatest challenges in areas such as physical distance, duration of separation, partner absence, social and parenting issues, household responsibilities, and financial difficulties.

The literature also explores coping strategies developed in response to the difficulties of LDRs. Kolozsvari (2015) emphasizes that partners in LDRs develop linguistic and symbolic strategies to define and maintain their relationship, even in the absence of physical proximity. Another study highlights that individuals in LDRs often report more advantages than disadvantages of their relationship (Kayabol et al. 2022). In this study, two types of advantages were identified: first, individual advantages—including opportunities for personal time and self-development, learning patience, dedicating time to hobbies, and gaining self-confidence, second, relational advantages—such as the presence of love and longing that enhances relationship quality and duration, recognizing the partner's value, spending higher-quality time together, frequent communication, and fewer conflicts.

Consistent with these findings, Sahlstein (2004) conducted a qualitative study with 20 couples in LDRs and found that being apart played a supportive role in the relationship while also limiting certain individual needs. For instance, couples in LDRs tended to use their time together more meaningfully, deferred activities related to work or career, experienced autonomy when alone, and had areas in which they did not have to account to their partner. The distinction between time spent together and time spent apart in a romantic relationship appears to serve different purposes. Stafford (2005) similarly emphasized that individuals in LDRs can focus on school, career, or other responsibilities during periods of separation, while dedicating attention to the relationship when together, thus benefiting from the advantages of being apart. These studies suggest that couples in LDRs develop various coping strategies, such as linguistic and symbolic methods, to overcome challenges. Additionally, they tend to use their shared time more efficiently, while focusing on individual goals such as career during periods of separation.

In conclusion, long-distance romantic relationships inherently involve both challenges and benefits. Beyond the advantages and disadvantages, examining which relational and individual variables are associated with LDRs, and comparing these to geographically close relationships, appears essential for understanding how couples can maximize the benefits of long-distance relationships.

Comparing Long Distance and Close Distance Romantic Relationships

Geographical proximity or distance in romantic relationships is believed to facilitate the understanding of relationship dynamics. In a study comparing relationship dynamics among university students in long-distance and geographically close romantic relationships, Beckmeyer et al. (2023) found no significant differences in relationship satisfaction, commitment, or conflict dynamics based on the distance of the relationship. Similarly, Mokambu (2023) conducted a qualitative study with seven participants in long-distance relationships and reported that relationship satisfaction, commitment, and conflict did not differ significantly due to distance, however, relationship-related stress negatively affected communication. Consistent with these findings, Guldner and Swensen (1995) indicated that individuals in long-distance relationships can have levels of relationship satisfaction, closeness, trust, and commitment comparable to those in geographically close relationships. Furthermore, individuals experiencing loneliness in long-distance relationships may utilize social support networks to maintain and develop other relationships (Guldner, 1996).

On the other hand, some studies suggest that differences exist between individuals in long-distance and geographically close relationships. For example, a study examining the effect of physical proximity on romantic relationships compared participants in geographically close and long-distance relationships. It found significant differences in trust and commitment, but not in relationship satisfaction. Specifically, long-distance partners exhibited higher commitment but lower trust compared to those in geographically close relationships, while relationship satisfaction levels did not differ between the two groups (Taneja and Goyal 2020). In another study, Eichler (2014) found that, for women in both long-distance and close relationships, relationship satisfaction, the availability of alternative partners, and the effort invested in the relationship were key predictors of commitment. However, for men in long-distance relationships, alternative partner availability did not predict commitment, whereas it was a significant predictor for men in close relationships. These findings highlight the importance of considering gender differences when comparing long-distance and geographically close romantic relationships.

Other studies emphasize dynamics that can mitigate the disadvantages of long-distance relationships and strengthen the relationship. For instance, Arditti and Kauffman (2004) noted that couples in long-distance relationships need to enhance their communication to reinforce their bonds. Similarly, individuals with high phone and internet usage in long-distance relationships reported higher levels of commitment, satisfaction, and trust (Aylor 2003). Holtzman et al. (2020) observed that partners in long-distance relationships used video calls, voice calls, and messaging more frequently than geographically close partners. In particular, the frequency of messaging and partner responsiveness significantly increased relationship satisfaction among long-distance partners, whereas similar effects were not observed for partners in geographically close relationships. These findings underscore the crucial role of communication in maintaining strong long-distance relationships, with messaging and video calls being more frequently utilized than in close relationships.

Billedo et al. (2020) conducted a study with 142 long-distance and 314 geographically close relationship participants and found that participants in close relationships reported more frequent Facebook use and greater perceived relationship support and stability compared to those in long-distance relationships. However, Facebook usage was found to facilitate access to social support in both long-distance and geographically close relationships. Earlier studies also support the association between Facebook use and the intention to maintain the relationship, regardless of distance (Billedo et al. 2015). Another study reported that individuals in long-distance relationships derived more satisfaction from communication via texting compared to those in geographically close relationships (Martens 2012).

Overall, the literature indicates that while geographical distance introduces differences in certain relationship dynamics, similarities also exist. Romantic relationship experiences are shaped by multiple variables, including communication styles and social support systems. Studies have shown that relationship satisfaction, commitment, and conflict may not differ significantly, while trust levels and predictors of commitment can vary. Additionally, communication methods and technology use substantially influence long-distance relationship dynamics, leading to differences from geographically close relationships. Finally, it is important to consider cultural differences in study samples, which allows for a more nuanced understanding of the similarities and differences between long-distance and geographically close romantic relationships.

Relationship Satisfaction in Long Distance Romantic Relationships

Relationship satisfaction in long-distance romantic relationships has been widely studied and is associated with a variety of relational dynamics. Several factors, including the roles and responsibilities of the partner who remains behind, expectations from the partner, preparedness for separation, sexuality, trust, and commitment, have been found to play significant roles. Moreover, trust, honesty, and strong communication are considered essential for the functionality of long-distance relationships (Kariuki 2014). Suminar and Kaddi (2018) emphasized that relationship satisfaction in long-distance relationships is positively influenced when partners share similar emotions and thoughts and come together with a common purpose. In this sense, physical distance ceases to be a detrimental factor to relationship quality, as compatibility and shared goals serve as protective elements. In a more recent study, Tomar et al. (2023) demonstrated that voluntary and mutual sacrifices made by couples in long-distance relationships enhanced both their own and their partner's marital satisfaction. Another line of research indicated that marital satisfaction in long-distance marriages tends to be lower, however, following the implementation of a psychoeducational program on effective communication skills, couples reported significant improvements in communication, which in turn contributed positively to marital satisfaction (Rohmah et al. 2020). Similarly, the absence of physical contact was investigated by Goldsmith and Byers (2018). While the lack of physical intimacy was expected to negatively affect relationship satisfaction, their findings revealed that online sexual interactions could mitigate these effects, suggesting that physical contact is not an absolute necessity for maintaining satisfaction in long-distance romantic relationships. Furthermore, regular and effective communication has been identified as one of the most critical factors influencing relationship satisfaction. Open and transparent communication channels enable partners to express their needs, concerns, and emotions, thereby bridging physical distance and strengthening

emotional bonds. Within families, effective communication has been shown to facilitate conflict resolution, increase openness, and reinforce familial ties (Fox 2022). Taken together, these studies suggest that relationship satisfaction in long-distance romantic relationships is shaped by multiple factors, including trust, commitment, communication, sacrifice, and the presence of shared goals.

The use of technology-based communication tools, such as video calls, instant messaging, or scheduled phone conversations, can help couples overcome the challenges posed by physical separation and foster more effective communication (Acedera and Yeoh 2019). For example, communication processes involving video calls, photo sharing, and messaging have been shown to facilitate the maintenance of long-distance relationships and preserve emotional bonds, thereby contributing positively to relationship satisfaction (Amelia 2020). In a study conducted with 87 individuals in long-distance relationships, it was found that relationship maintenance behaviors predicted relationship satisfaction, and that satisfaction played an indirect role in the link between relationship continuation and individual well-being (Belus et al. 2019).

Similarly, Mas'udah (2022) investigated how interactions are sustained in long-distance relationships and concluded that the use of social media and telecommunication helps overcome the inherent limitation of face-to-face interaction. These tools serve a protective role in maintaining communication, thereby supporting relationship satisfaction. Borelli et al. (2015), in a study of 533 participants, highlighted that relational savoring was associated with positive emotions among those reporting average to high relationship satisfaction, while emotional states mediated the link between relational savoring and post-stress relationship satisfaction. Moreover, Martens (2012) found that emotional support, socialization, supportive evaluations, phone conversations, and webcam use enhanced relationship satisfaction, whereas frequent short messaging had a negative effect. Collectively, these studies provide evidence that the absence of physical contact can be compensated for through online interactions and that effective communication skills further strengthen emotional bonds.

Another factor influencing satisfaction among couples in long-distance relationships is religion. In a study conducted in Malaysia, it was found that couples relied on religious beliefs as a coping strategy, which contributed to higher levels of relationship satisfaction (Sumari et al. 2021). Similarly, a study conducted with 50 couples in long-distance marriages revealed that religiosity was positively associated with marital satisfaction, with spouses reporting higher levels of religious commitment also demonstrating higher levels of satisfaction (Kuswartanti 2023). Thus, religious beliefs appear to serve as a protective factor by enhancing couples' emotional resilience and positively influencing their relationship satisfaction.

In summary, relationship satisfaction in long-distance romantic relationships is influenced by multiple critical factors. Evidence indicates that trust, commitment, communication, sacrifice, and shared goals are essential in shaping the quality of romantic relationships. Communication technologies provide couples with resources to overcome challenges associated with physical separation and strengthen emotional bonds. Furthermore, the development of effective communication skills and the use of religious beliefs as a coping mechanism emerge as important strategies for enhancing satisfaction in long-distance relationships.

Commitment in Long Distance Romantic Relationships

Commitment in romantic relationships is described as the individual's intention to maintain the relationship in the future despite challenges and fluctuations in positive emotions (Dandurand et al. 2013). Many researchers have argued that the most crucial factor for a successful marriage is the mutual dedication of both spouses to the institution of marriage (Alford-Cooper 2016, Ghezelseflo et al. 2016). Larson (2020) noted that personal dedication strengthens the marital bond and that commitment may manifest through orientations and behaviors that enhance relationship satisfaction. Numerous studies have examined the association between relationship satisfaction and levels of commitment (Kelmer et al. 2013, Shahhossiani et al. 2019). Interestingly, existing research suggests that individuals may continue to demonstrate commitment to their partners even in situations where romantic relationship satisfaction is low (Adams and Jones, 1999).

Eren (2019), in a study comparing individuals whose romantic relationships began either online or face-to-face, found differences between the groups in terms of romantic beliefs, however, no significant differences were observed in the variable of commitment. On the other hand, several studies support the idea that commitment tends to be higher in long-distance relationships compared to geographically close ones. For example, Peterson (2014), in a comparative study of long-distance and geographically close couples, found that partners in long-distance romantic relationships reported higher average levels of commitment, although no significant differences emerged in terms of relationship satisfaction. Similarly, Özmeriç (2024) found that factors such as relationship duration, gender, satisfaction, investment size, and perceived importance predicted variability in commitment levels among individuals in long-distance relationships.

Further, in research comparing long-distance and geographically close relationships, individuals' perceptions of the future of their current relationships revealed that those in long-distance relationships held more optimistic views regarding the likelihood of eventual marriage (Kelmer et al. 2013). This finding suggests that the inherently lower levels of entrapment and the relatively higher degree of dedication found in long-distance relationships may contribute positively to both relationship satisfaction and expectations of marriage.

In summary, research indicates that commitment in long-distance relationships plays a critical role in relationship maintenance and that commitment levels may be even higher than in geographically close relationships. This phenomenon appears to be closely related to relationship quality, compatibility, and future expectations.

Trust in Long Distance Romantic Relationships

In the literature, trust emerges as another key concept explored in long-distance romantic relationships. Online platforms provide opportunities for couples to experience relationships "together at a distance" (Lani et al. 2022). As the physical distance between partners increases, communication skills appear to be a decisive factor in establishing trust. In line with this, trust, along with commitment, has been identified as a central element in online relationships, much like in many long-distance relationships (Whitty and Gavin 2001). Studies focusing on online relationships have shown that strong levels of trust are often observable only through online communication behaviors (Henderson and Gilding 2004).

A study examining the interplay of relationship duration, trust, and infidelity in long-distance romantic relationships found that the length of the relationship was not significantly associated with the amount or frequency of infidelity. However, it played an important role in shaping trust within the relationship (Henderson et al. 2023). Similarly, research on families in Singapore where one spouse worked abroad revealed that communication technologies allowed partners to construct "simultaneous lives" by maintaining a sense of imagined closeness. Nevertheless, these technologies were limited in their ability to prevent relational disconnect. When communication was absent, both partners resorted to imagining how the other spent their time apart, leading to doubts, diminished trust, and an increased risk of divorce (Acedera and Yeoh 2019). In line with this, studies investigating interactions in long-distance relationships emphasized the vital role of trust in maintaining such partnerships (Mas'udah 2022).

Research has also highlighted a positive link between trust and marital satisfaction. For instance, a study focusing on women's trust in their partners demonstrated that greater trust was associated with higher marital satisfaction in long-distance relationships (Arsita et al. 2021). Similarly, studies with commuter couples showed that overcoming conflicts together and maintaining effective communication helped strengthen emotional bonds, thereby fostering mutual trust and unity (Star et al. 2022). These findings underscore the central role of trust in sustaining long-distance relationships.

Other studies have investigated the extent to which trust is challenged in long-distance relationships compared to geographically close ones. For example, a study with 262 Facebook users found that participants in long-distance romantic relationships reported higher levels of relationship maintenance behaviors via social networking sites than those in geographically close relationships. However, they also

reported greater use of social media for partner surveillance and higher levels of jealousy, indicating that trust-related issues may be more prevalent in long-distance contexts (Billedo et al. 2015). Suwinyattichaiporn et al. (2017) emphasized that for long-distance romantic relationships to thrive, individuals must openly communicate their trust, concerns, and jealousy to their partners.

The determinants of trust in long-distance relationships have also been examined. Purba and Khoman (2012) found that among couples who saw each other between once and twelve times per year, emotional intelligence was a significant predictor of trust in one's partner. While not explicitly stated, their findings also suggest that social networking platforms can facilitate mutually satisfying interactions. On the other hand, Guldner and Swensen (1995), in a comparative study of long-distance and geographically close relationships, found similar levels of trust across both groups. This may indicate that trust is universally essential for the long-term success of romantic relationships, regardless of geographical distance—only relationships with high levels of trust appear to endure successfully.

Overall, the literature emphasizes that trust is a fundamental element in long-distance romantic relationships. Effective communication, particularly openness and honesty, is considered essential for building trust. Research consistently shows that trust is a determining factor not only for relationship satisfaction but also for commitment, playing a critical role in sustaining relationships. While social media and online platforms may help foster trust, they can also increase jealousy and insecurity in certain contexts. In general, the presence of trust is indispensable for the sustainability of long-distance romantic relationships.

Long-Distance Relationships and Attachment Styles

The subjective characteristics of individuals within a relationship can also influence relational dynamics, and one of the most impactful of these is attachment style. Among university students in long-distance relationships, it has been found that uncertainty regarding reunification with a partner does not negatively affect those with secure attachment orientations. This finding has been interpreted as reflecting couples' perception that granting personal freedom to their partners and being geographically distant does not necessarily create problems for the relationship. Thus, in long-distance relationships, commitment—when considered alongside secure attachment orientations—can be regarded as a protective factor for maintaining relational stability (Maguire 2007).

Froidevaux et al. (2025), in a study of 90 participants in interethnic long-distance romantic relationships and 215 participants in same-ethnicity romantic relationships, found that individuals with higher levels of anxious or avoidant attachment demonstrated lower levels of partner reflective functioning in interethnic couples compared to same-ethnicity couples. Similarly, Ceylaner (2019), in a study with 212 individuals in Turkey involved in either long-distance or geographically close relationships, examined the role of autobiographical memory characteristics and functions in the association between attachment orientations and perceived relationship value. The results indicated that the absence of physical contact may negatively influence the perceptual richness of memories, and that video calls may limit perceptual details of autobiographical recall. In both long- and short-distance relationships, higher levels of avoidant attachment were associated with lower perceived relationship value, with the intimacy function of autobiographical memory demonstrating an indirect effect in this association.

In another study, Pistole et al. (2010) investigated 473 participants in both long-distance and geographically close romantic relationships, showing that attachment styles, relationship maintenance behaviors, and stress levels varied depending on relational distance. Long-distance couples were more likely to engage in future-oriented thinking and introspective communication, while geographically close couples more frequently engaged in joint tasks. In long-distance contexts, higher attachment anxiety, lower positive communication, greater advice-seeking, and introspective behaviors emerged as stress-enhancing factors.

Bouchard et al. (2023) further found that, in women involved in long-distance romantic relationships, anxious attachment was indirectly linked to romantic relationship quality through relationship

maintenance behaviors. Similarly, among both men and women, avoidant attachment was indirectly related to their own relationship quality through relationship maintenance behaviors.

Collectively, these studies indicate that attachment styles play an important role in sustaining long-distance romantic relationships. Evidence suggests that insecure attachment may present greater challenges in interethnic couples, whereas secure attachment functions as a protective factor, buffering couples against the negative effects of uncertainty in long-distance relationships.

Long-Distance Relationships and Other Relationship Variables

Another concept frequently examined in the context of long-distance relationships is emotional intimacy. Kayabol et al. (2022), in a qualitative study with 15 married individuals, found that emotional intimacy in long-distance relationships can be sustained through factors such as the use of technology, conflict resolution strategies, positive personality traits, and relational resources.

Idealization is another variable often studied in long-distance relationships. Because couples spend less time together and have limited communication, they may avoid conflicts when they reunite in order to spend time more meaningfully (Sahlstein 2004). Thus, idealization can serve as a relationship-strengthening mechanism for couples in long-distance arrangements. In line with this view, Stafford (2005) suggested that limited communication may increase idealization. Additionally, Mietzner and Lin (2005) noted that some partners in long-distance relationships enhance their communication in order to compensate for physical distance.

A further area of research concerns the meaning of separation for partners in long-distance relationships. When couples perceive separation as beneficial, they may place less emphasis on the frequency of visits or the level of communication. For example, Arditti and Kauffman (2004) found that individuals separated due to academic or career-related reasons often viewed this process as an investment in their relationship's future. Therefore, the reasons couples choose to maintain their relationships at a distance—in other words, the meaning attributed to separation—appear to be an important factor in sustaining the relationship.

Another influential factor in long-distance relationships is family and social support (Yin 2009). Priastuty et al. (2023) found that partners' family resilience served as a protective factor, positively influencing relationship satisfaction in long-distance couples. In other words, partners with high levels of social and familial support did not experience a decline in relationship satisfaction. Yin (2009) further examined the relationship between social support, relational uncertainty, and communication channels. Involving 311 participants, the study found that emotional support, socialization, guidance, and validation of support were negatively associated with relational uncertainty. Thus, the level of social support available to couples appears to be a crucial factor for relational health in long-distance contexts. Conversely, Waterman et al. (2017) reported that university students in long-distance romantic relationships participated less in campus activities and experienced greater loneliness while on campus.

A final dynamic affected by distance is self-disclosure. Hammonds et al. (2020) examined the role of different communication channels in facilitating self-disclosure within romantic relationships. Among 101 participants, instant messaging was the most commonly used medium but was less often employed for intimate or deeply personal topics. Instead, couples in long-distance relationships preferred face-to-face interactions for self-disclosure, followed by phone calls and webcam conversations. These findings suggest that self-disclosure does occur in long-distance romantic relationships and provide insight into the frequency and contexts in which different communication channels are used.

In summary, research highlights that long-distance relationships possess distinctive dynamics that must be understood separately from geographically close relationships. Concepts such as emotional intimacy, idealization, and the meaning of separation reveal both the unique challenges and the opportunities inherent in long-distance relationships.

Conclusion

In this study, the dynamics of long-distance romantic relationships were examined in light of previous research. With the opportunities provided by advancements in transportation and technology, long-distance relationships have become more common and are likely to continue increasing. Consequently, investigating the dynamics of long-distance romantic relationships has gained importance. Regardless of whether the relationship is geographically close or distant, dynamics such as trust, commitment, relationship satisfaction, and self-disclosure are considered crucial. Variables such as partner commitment, relationship satisfaction, and trust may play different roles for individuals in long-distance versus geographically close relationships. While geographical distance creates challenges for couples, previous studies have shown that both the quantity and quality of time spent together significantly affect relationship quality in long-distance contexts (Priastuty et al. 2023).

Additionally, family support, social networks, sustained communication, and effective communication have been identified as key factors influencing trust, commitment, and satisfaction in such relationships (Priastuty et al. 2023). Research further suggests that couples in long-distance relationships may report levels of satisfaction, commitment, and trust comparable to those in geographically close relationships (Kopecki 2020, Taneja and Goyal 2020, Beckmeyer et al. 2023). This finding has often been explained in the literature by the widespread use of technology enabling more frequent face-to-face interactions, the role of social support, cultural norms and religious influences (Sumari et al. 2021, Fox 2022, Kuswartanti 2023), effective communication skills, and individual characteristics (Billedo et al. 2015, Suwinyattichaiporn et al. 2017, Janning et al. 2018, Amelia 2020, Hammonds et al. 2020, Johnson and Hall 2021, Kang 2021). Collectively, these findings highlight that communication, social support, and individual factors are essential for maintaining long-distance romantic relationships in a healthy way.

Therapists are likely to need a deeper understanding of the psychological dynamics underlying long-distance relationships in order to better support their clients. Previous studies have already included therapeutic work with clients in long-distance relationships (Rhodes 2002). Receiving psychological support—whether individually or as a couple—may be particularly beneficial for couples navigating the challenges of long-distance relationships. Therefore, for therapists working with couples who have not yet established permanent commitments, such as marriage, issues related to communication skills, trust, and commitment warrant careful attention. For example, both individual and online family therapy can be beneficial for couples in long-distance relationships by supporting personality development, subjective well-being, and interpersonal communication and adjustment skills (Kurniadi et al. 2023). Thus, for practitioners in the field of mental health, promoting communication skills, encouraging relationship-maintenance behaviors that support trust and commitment, and fostering beliefs about relationship quality should be considered when working with clients in long-distance relationships.

On the other hand, research examining the influence of culture on long-distance romantic relationships remains scarce. Future studies addressing cultural and religious influences could provide culturally specific recommendations. For example, He et al. (2013) examined an online community for individuals in long-distance relationships and found that participation in online social support groups provided positive contributions to relationship maintenance. Furthermore, given the varying role of technology in facilitating communication, research focusing on long-distance couples with limited opportunities for online or face-to-face contact may yield different findings. It would be beneficial to conduct experimental studies on long-distance relationships addressing factors such as personality traits, cultural norms, social support, communication skills, conflict resolution strategies, and subjective well-being. Moreover, employing samples drawn from diverse educational and occupational backgrounds, as well as individuals experiencing long-distance relationships for different reasons (e.g., migration, military service), and using both qualitative and experimental methodologies, could contribute practical solutions to problems encountered in long-distance romantic relationships. In this way, the concept of long-distance romantic relationships can be examined across a variety of contexts and dynamics.

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