

The Factor Structure And Psychometric Properties Of The Perceived Relationship Quality Component (PRQC) Inventory In The Malaysian Context

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Abstract

The Perceived Relationship Quality Component (PRQC) Inventory developed by Fletcher et al. (2000) was used to assess relationship quality. PRQC consists of 18 items to measure the degree of relationship quality among partners. The aims of this study were to determine the factor structure and psychometric properties (i.e., reliability and validity) of PQRC in the Malaysian context. A sample of 560 (246 males, 314 females) Malaysian adults with partners participated in the current study. The respondents were asked to complete the PQRC through an online survey. The exploratory factor analysis extracted two factors labeled “general relationship quality” (15 items) and “passion” (3 items) which accounted for 63.78% of the total variance in the items of a quality relationship. The general relationship quality factor was re-categorized into five sub-components. The label for the five sub-factors was derived from the original scale (i.e., intimacy, commitment, love, satisfaction, and trust). However, the items measuring each factor were based on the load values in the factor and this result was not consistent with the original scale by Fletcher et al. The results revealed a high level of reliability for the total scale of PQRC and its components. The result of concurrent validity also supported that the PQRC was a valid measure of relationship quality, and its utilities in the Malaysian context is proven.

Keywords: Perceived Relationship Quality Component (PRQC), exploratory factor analysis, reliability, validity, Malaysian context

Introduction

Marriage serves as a covenant between two adults and plays an important role in the family unit (Fowers et al., 2016). Compared to those who

divorce, couples who report being in stable marriages had better marital quality (Karimi et al., 2015). Marital quality is important as staying married and being in a stable marriage are linked

to positive health and social outcomes, such as lower mortality risk (Margelisch et al., 2017; Robles et al., 2014).

Nevertheless, there is a worldwide trend of rising divorce rates. The crude divorce rate in China increased by as much as 178% (Mo, 2017). In Malaysia, 50,356 divorces were recorded in 2018 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2019). Divorce rates were higher among the Malay race (Zakaria et al., 2020). Having a good relationship quality is protective of a marriage. Considering the importance of a good marriage in maintaining health and happiness, there is a need to further study factors that could facilitate or jeopardize relationship quality.

A few measurements have been developed over time to ascertain marriage and relationship quality, such as the Marital Adjustment Test (Locke & Wallace, 1959), the Quality of Marriage Index (Norton, 1983), and Couples Satisfaction Index (Funk & Rogge, 2007). One of the instruments, the Perceived Relationship Quality Component (PRQC; Fletcher et al., 2000), was developed in order to measure the relationship components of satisfaction, commitment, intimacy, trust, passion, and love. This scale has been cross-culturally employed in a number of non-English speaking countries, such as in Indonesia (Elizabeth & Ariela, 2020), Portugal (Arantes et al., 2020), and China (Zhou et al., 2017). It was also utilized to measure relationship quality among diverse populations such as people with multiple sclerosis (Navidian et al., 2017), breast cancer (Pirmardvand et al., 2021), and women with low sexual desire (Gunst et al., 2018). The wide contexts in which this questionnaire was employed attests to its versatility and importance in measuring relationship components across cultures and concerns. To the authors' best knowledge, the PRQC has not been employed nor validated in the Malay language. Due to its potential utility and feasibility to be employed in

large-scale surveys, this study aimed to translate and validate the PRQC in the Malay language.

Method

Participants

The participants were selected using a homogenous purposive sampling to recruit participants. The inclusion criteria were Malaysians aged 18 years and above with partner residing in Malaysia. A total of 543 (295 females, 239 males) respondents were collected in this study. A self-administered online questionnaire was distributed to the participants through social media sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Email, WhatsApp, etc.). The participants were in the age range between 21 to 67 years old with mean age of 40.38 (SD = 11.43). Most of the participants have married (91.6%) and the mean year of married was 14.64 years (SD = 10.98). Of all 5.2% in a committed relationship and living together, and 3.0% of them had engaged and living together with a partner. Participants who provided informed consent answered the questionnaire.

Measures

All the measures were originally in the English language. The questionnaires were translated into the Malay language by using a back-to-back translation procedure.

The Perceived Relationship Quality Component (PRQC) Inventory (Fletcher et al., 2000) was used to assess relationship quality. PRQC contained 18 items and divided into six components—relationship satisfaction (item 1 - 3), commitment (item 4 - 6), intimacy (item 7 - 9), trust (item 10 - 12), passion (item 13 - 15), and love (item 16 - 18). Each component was assessed by three items and scored on a 7-point scale, where 1 (not at all) and 7 (extremely). PRQC also consisted of one additional component – sex relationship quality measure by six items (item 1, 4, 7, 10, 13, and 16).

The Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale WEMWBS by Tennant et al. (2007) was used to measure positive aspects of mental health in the prior 2 weeks. The ordinal scale comprising 14 positively phrased items covering both hedonic and eudemonic aspects. The item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranged from 1 = ‘None of the time’ to 5 = ‘All of the time’. A global score was obtained by adding all the items. Higher scores indicating higher levels of mental well-being.

Data Analysis

The Data of the current study was analyzed using the IBM SPSS AMOS 23 Program. To establish the initial factor structure of the PQRC, the Exploratory Factor Analyze was conducted by using Promax Oblique with Kappa 4 Rotation. The reliability of The PQRC was verified using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. During a stressful situation, the adults normally turn to or rely on the people who are closest to them, often the romantic partner (Simpson & Rholes, 2012). Therefore, we examined the concurrent validity of the PQRC by correlating the PRCQ with WEMWBS score as perceived quality relationship has been found to have a significant relationship with general well-being amidst COVID-19 pandemic (Chua et al., 2021; Overall et al., 2020; Sels et al., 2022).

Results

Exploratory Factor Analysis

Prior to the exploratory factor analysis to determine the structural factor of the PQRC, the

items were tested for their appropriateness for factor analysis. Two initial analysis of Bartlett's test of Sphericity and the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measures for sampling adequacy was conducted prior to the exploratory factor analysis on PQRC. The results KMO coefficient of the scale was 0.947 and the Bartlett result was significant ($\chi^2 = 8560.09$, $p < .001$) which supported the factorability of the PQRC dataset.

To establish the initial factor structure of the EPIQ, the criteria used to decide on the number of factors to extract were based on the result of a parallel analysis where only those factors associated with a greater eigenvalue than the corresponding factor from the random-number dataset were eligible for retention. Besides, we also based on the scree plot result where the “leveling-off-point” on the scree line represents the last factor that should be extracted (Thompson, 2004). Referring to Table 1, The parallel analysis indicated that compared to the 95th percentile random data there were only two eigenvalues that fell below the corresponding eigenvalue from the observed data. The result showed that two factors should be retained. The result was further supported by the scree plot which also indicated a 2-factor solution, graphically, the scree plot showed two factors where the eigenvalues were greater than one (refer to Figure 1). Then, the subsequent factor analyses with Promax Oblique Rotation with Kappa 4 Rotation were conducted to determine whether a 2-factor model should be extracted. In the analysis, all the 18 items of PQRC were forced into two factors.

Table 1 Comparison of Eigenvalues from The Original Factor Analysis and Randomly Generated Datasets of the Perceived Relationship Quality Component (PRQC)

Factor	Corresponding Eigenvalues	Mean	Random Data Eigenvalues
1	10.677	1.331393	1.394562
2	1.428	1.265814	1.311768
3	1.033	1.216249	1.248341

4	.806	1.175322	1.205640
5	.679	1.136241	1.170190
6	.504	1.101000	1.127458
7	.409	1.070047	1.094207
8	.342	1.038305	1.061372
9	.295	1.008053	1.027644
10	.273	0.976501	0.999231
11	.256	0.946501	0.971901
12	.236	0.917600	0.938133
13	.214	0.888543	0.915586
14	.204	0.855058	0.881557
15	.195	0.821619	0.851512
16	.164	0.790198	0.818357
17	.145	0.754253	0.787898
18	.139	0.707302	0.754614

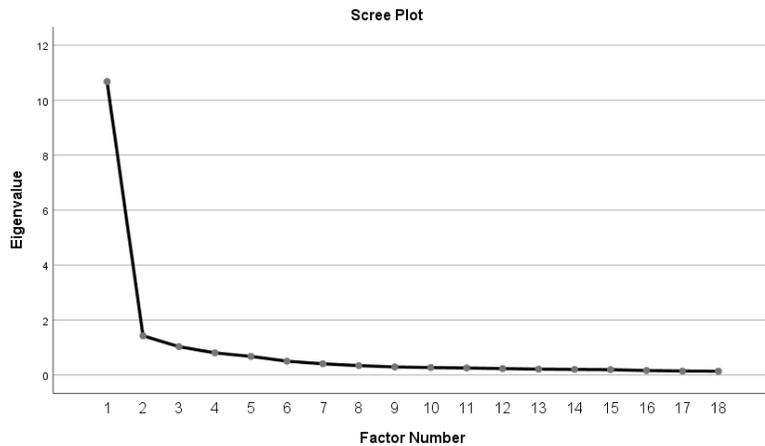


Figure 1. The Scree Plot for the Perceived Relationship Quality Component (PRQC)

The results of the factor analyses indicated the 2-factor model solution accounted for 63.78% of the total variance in the items of a quality relationship. Items were selected for each factor based on the criteria of a factor loading above .50 or above (Hair et al., 1998) in the factor pattern matrix. According to this criterion, all 18 items were retained. The two factors and their

respective items, factor loadings, eigenvalues, and percentage of variance were presented in Table 2. The finding was not consistent with the six PQRC components suggested by Fletcher et al. (2000). However, the items loaded in the second factor were matched with the passion component in the original PQRC.

Table 2 Factor, Items, Factor Loadings, Eigenvalues and Percentage of Variance for The Perceived Relationship Quality Component (PRQC)

Factor /Items	Factor Loading
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		Factor	1	2
		Label	(eigenvalue = 10.33 % variance = 57.37)	(eigenvalue= 1.15 % variance = 6.41)
Factor 1				
RQ6	How devoted are you to your relationship?		.920	
RQ9	How connected are you to your partner?	Intimacy	.902	
RQ8	How close is your relationship?		.895	
RQ10	How much do you trust your partner?		.867	
RQ5	How dedicated are you to your relationship?	Committed	.845	
RQ4	How committed are you to your relationship?		.815	
RQ16	How much do you love your partner?		.808	
RQ18	How much do you cherish your partner?	Love	.786	
RQ3	How happy are you with your relationship?		.740	
RQ11	How much can you count on your partner?		.737	
RQ2	How content is you with your relationship?	Satisfaction	.693	
RQ1	How satisfied are you with your relationship?		.596	
RQ7	How intimate is your relationship?		.539	
RQ12	How dependable is your partner?	Trust	.519	
RQ17	How much do you adore your partner?		.446	
Factor 2				
RQ15	How sexually intense is your relationship?			.925
RQ14	How lustful is your relationship?	Passion		.909
RQ13	How passionate is your relationship?			.617

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

The first factor was labeled as ‘General relationship quality’, it was constituted of 15 items with load values between .446 to .920. This factor accounted for 57.37% of the total variance of the items. The second factor has remained as a component of passion, and it accounted for 6.41%

of the total variance of this component (item loaded values between .612 - .920).

In the first factor, there were a lot of items. In fact, the factor contains many constructs. Thus, it was re-categorized into five sub-factors with three items in each factor. We used the same label for the five sub-factors suggested by

Fletcher et al. (2000) (refer to Table 3). However, the items that measure each factor were based on the load values in the factor and this result was not consistent with the original scale by Fletcher et al.

Reliability of the Perceived Relationship Quality Component (PRQC)

The reliability of the PRQC was assessed using the method of internal consistency Cronbach's

alpha with a criterion of 0.70, indicating good reliability (Chassany et al., 2012). The Cronbach's alpha value for the total of 18 items of the PRQC was $\alpha = .95$, indicating good internal consistency. The results also indicated a high level of reliability for the sub-components with the reliability coefficients ranging from .68 (trust component) to .92 (intimacy component) (refer to Table 3).

Table 3 Internal Consistency Cronbach's Alpha for the Relationship Scale

Dimension	Number of items	Items	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients
Total Scale	18 items		.95
Factor 1	15 items	RQ1, RQ2, RQ3, RQ4, RQ5, RQ6, RQ7, RQ8, RQ9, RQ10, RQ11, RQ12, RQ16, RQ17, RQ18	.96
Intimacy	3 items	RQ6, RQ9, RQ8	.92
Committed	3 items	RQ10, RQ5, RQ4	.86
Love	3 items	RQ16, RQ18, RQ3	.84
Satisfaction	3 items	RQ11, RQ2, RQ1	.82
Trust	3 items	RQ7, RQ12, RQ17	.68
Factor 2 /Passion	3 items	RQ15, RQ14, RQ13	.87

Concurrent Validity of the Perceived Relationship Quality Component (PRQC)

In providing the concurrent validity evidence of PRQC, we expected a significant relationship between the six components of PRQC and the Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) scores. Referring to Table 4, the

results of the analysis were as we expected the six components of the PRQC correlated significantly with the WEMWBS score. However, the five sub-components in Factor 1 were negatively correlated with the WEMWBS score. On the other hand, the passion component was positively correlated with the WEMWBS score.

Table 4 Correlation Between the Components of the Perceived Relationship Quality Component (PRQC) score and the Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) score.

	Intimacy	Committed	Love	Satisfaction	Trust	Passion
Intimacy	1					
Committed	.631**	1				
Love	.629**	.723**	1			
Satisfaction	.628**	.597**	.640**	1		
Trust	.659**	.667**	.728**	.626**	1	

Passion	-.040	-.053	-.054	-.036	-.015	1
WEMWBS	-.299**	-.281**	-.366**	-.332**	-.302**	.253**

Discussion

The main purpose of this study is to explore the reliability and validity evidence drawn from the PQRC of Malaysian cohabiting couples. The results of our study provide evidence for the initial validation of the PRQC Malaysian version. The PRQC was tested among cohabiting individuals in Malaysia which comprised of married, engaged living together, and committed living together individuals, and showed evidence of internal consistency and concurrent validity in the Malaysian context. The results showed that the scores on the two established scales of the PRQC (general relationship quality and passion) showed excellent internal consistency and were consistent with previous studies utilizing the PRQC in other countries (Elizabeth & Ariela, 2020; Nilforooshan et al., 2013; Zhou et al., 2017).

The EFA findings in the current study suggest yielded a two-component solution forming the construct of relationship quality as opposed to the six PQRC components original version of the PRQC by Fletcher, Simpson, and Thomas (2000). However, the second component matched with the Passion component in the original version of the PRQC. Therefore, we named the first component as general relationship quality which comprises 15 items. Since the analysis indicated a clear 2-factor model of the perceived relation quality, we assumed that Malaysian relationship quality among cohabiting couples is determined by sexual and non-sexual factors. When we look closely at the second factor (passion), the terms 'sexually intense', 'lustful' and 'passionate' were translated as more into physical acts of relationship quality in Bahasa Malaysia. This finding is also consistent with Sternberg's explanation in which commitment and intimacy and other related

components have a different concept of relationship than passion (Fletcher et al., 2000).

Since the first component is too general and consist of large number of items, we reanalyzed the first component and formed five sub-scales based on the factor loadings. The sub-scales have similar labels with the original version of the PQRC but some of the items are not loaded or correspond to the same category as the original version. Table 5 demonstrate the components in the original and Malaysian version of the PRQC based on the factor loadings. This could be because of the translation and limited suitable words or terms that can describe the exact meaning in Bahasa Malaysia. For example, item RQ3 "How happy are you with your relationship?" in the first factor of the fell into the love sub-scale of the Malaysia version. The term happy sometimes can be interpreted as joyful if it is direct translated. So, we use another term of happy in Bahasa Malaysia which reflected a more meaningful term that associated with a relationship as a couple which literally means 'happy couple/happy relationship' instead of using the direct translation of happy which has similar meaning with 'joyful couple/joyful relationship' and does not really capture the essence of 'happy' in item RQ3. Apart from that, Fletcher (2000) and Hassebrauck (1997) suggested that overlapping concepts in relationships quality do exist. For example Fehr (1988) argued that love and commitment are somehow overlapping but at the same time are partially independent which may explain our findings. However, it would be useful if further research is done to find out whether this has to do with cultural definition of the components. Furthermore, relationship quality is a broad term and the scope may be different in different culture.

Table 5. Factor and Items of the Original and the Malaysian Version of the Perceived Relationship Quality Component (PRQC)

Factor /Items		Original version of PRQC	Malaysian version of PRQC
Factor 1			
RQ1	How satisfied are you with your relationship?	Satisfaction	Satisfaction
RQ2	How content is you with your relationship?	Satisfaction	Satisfaction
RQ3	How happy are you with your relationship?	Satisfaction	Love
RQ4	How committed are you to your relationship?	Committed	Committed
RQ5	How dedicated are you to your relationship?	Committed	Committed
RQ6	How devoted are you to your relationship?	Committed	Intimacy
RQ7	How intimate is your relationship?	Intimacy	Trust
RQ8	How close is your relationship?	Intimacy	Intimacy
RQ9	How connected are you to your partner?	Intimacy	Intimacy
RQ10	How much do you trust your partner?	Trust	Committed
RQ11	How much can you count on your partner?	Trust	Satisfaction
RQ12	How dependable is your partner?	Trust	Trust
RQ16	How much do you love your partner?	Love	Love
RQ17	How much do you adore your partner?	Love	Trust
RQ18	How much do you cherish your partner?	Love	Love
Factor 2			
RQ15	How sexually intense is your relationship?	Passion	Passion
RQ14	How lustful is your relationship?	Passion	Passion
RQ13	How passionate is your relationship?	Passion	Passion

Note: Original version of PRQC consists of six factors: Satisfaction, Committed, Intimacy, Trust, Love and Passion.

Malaysian version of PRQC consists of two factors. Factor 1: General relationship Quality (Satisfaction, Committed, Intimacy, Trust, Love); Factor 2: Passion.

We also conducted concurrent validity of the PRQC with the WEMWBS. The WEMWBS focused on a range of thoughts and feelings related to positive affect, level of functioning, and relationships (“I am feeling optimistic about the future”, “I have been feeling loved”, “I have been interested in new things”). As expected, the concurrent validity of the six components of the PRQC correlated significantly with the WEMWBS score. However, the five sub-components in Factor 1 were negatively correlated with WEMWBS score. The Pearson coefficient indicated that only the second factor

(passion) was positively correlated with the WEMWBS score. The negative correlation of the first factor (satisfaction, committed, intimacy, trust, love) was not expected but since the data were collected during the first Movement Control Order (MCO). Starting 18th of March 2020, the federal government of Malaysia placed the whole country under quarantine in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The early stage of lockdown has caused a tremendous negative effect on psychological health of people across the globe (Rajkumar, 2020). Furthermore, intimate relationship during the early phases of

pandemic has been reported to be inconsistent (Sels, et al. 2022). Some studies reported no changes in term of intimate relationship (Randall et al., 2021); others, reported increased relationship conflicts (Goodboy et al., 2021). However, our finding confirms the previous finding of Goodwin et al. (2020) which reported that the lockdown period has caused couples spent more time together, thus improved their relationship quality but at the same time they have to deal with the uncertainties of the unprecedented pandemic thus affected their wellbeing. Hence, the negative correlation may be attributed to the situation where continuous effort to adapt to the lockdown and a new way of life that is totally unknown and always changing. A study of the psychological well-being of Italian couples during the pandemic indicated that threats connected to COVID-19 have a substantial impact on their psychological well-being (Donato et al., 2021). A significant but weak correlation was found between the second factor (passion) and WEMWBS. The increased time spent together during the lockdown may increase couples' sexual intimacy since couples become each other's only form of social contact therefore indirectly improved their wellbeing. However, we did not observe the samples' pre-lockdown data thus no direct comparison can be done on the relationship quality before and during the lock down can be made in the current study.

Strengths and Limitations

The strengths of our study are (1) it involved quite a large number of participants (N=543) which covers both East and West Malaysia, (2) involving samples from East and West Malaysia which covers different ethnics and cultures in both regions (3) to account for any temporal effects, data was collected in both regions at the same time; and (4) in our study, the PRQC promotes current research interests in a variety of couples, such as 'cohabiting couples,' by referring

to them as 'partners' rather than spouses, husbands, or wives.

Despite the fact that the outcomes of this study support PRQC as a psychometrically sound and valid tool for assessing psychological distress in the non-clinical population, the cross-sectional survey approach limits generalizability and some limitations exist. First, our study is not representative of the entire population of Malaysian cohabiting couples because the design did not take into account all sociodemographic strata in Malaysia since the study employed online survey to capture the data. Therefore, only individuals who are literate and have access to the internet were involved in the study which leads in a selection bias. Second, because data were obtained from only one partner, the actor-partner perception was not highlighted, but rather a single side's perception of the couple's relationship quality. Therefore, future study on dyadic relationships is required in order to provide a clearer picture of the relationship quality of both spouses. Additionally, a causal conclusion of general well-being and perceived relationship quality were not able to be drawn due to nature of the cross-sectional design. The present study only examined the correlation between PRQC and WEMWBS. Thus, future researchers are recommended to further examine the causal relationship.

Despite these shortcomings, the PQRC could be a useful tool for assessing relationship quality, and its applicability in Malaysia has now been established.

Conclusion

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that the PQRC has sufficient psychometric qualities. The concurrent validity results confirmed that the PQRC was a valid measure of relationship quality, and its utility in the Malaysian context is demonstrated. The validated PQRC can be used to assess the relationship quality of Malaysian couples in order to build culturally tailored

couples' intervention programmes. Consequently, our findings could be used as a reference for future research on relationship quality research especially in the perspective of South East Asia's couples as these regions shared almost the same culture as opposed to Western data.

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