

Profile 51

Perceived Partner Responsiveness Scale (PPRS)

(Reis & Carmichael, 2006)

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Construct

The Perceived Partner Responsiveness Scale (PPRS) was designed to measure the degree to which people feel that their relationship partners are responsive to them.

Instrument Type

Self-Report

Description

The PPRS is a measure of people's perceptions of their relationship partners' responsiveness to themselves. This 18-item measure incorporates two closely related constructs, based on the interpersonal process model of intimacy originally proposed by Reis and Shaver (1988): understanding (the degree to which another person seems to "get things right" about oneself) and validation (the degree to which another person is believed to appreciate and value oneself). The measure is intended to assess a specific target's responsiveness to the respondent and is most commonly used for romantic partners. It can easily be adapted to refer to other relationship types, such as friends, family, and acquaintances. The scale pointedly asks about global perceptions of the partner's responsiveness; such perceptions will not necessarily correspond to the partner's attitudes, intentions, or perceptions, or to objectively coded behavior.

Administration

The PPRS is a self-administered instrument that takes approximately 3 to 4 minutes to complete. Items are written to be general, so that participants can complete the scale with respect to a particular relationship (e.g., a romantic partner, spouse, best friend, work supervisor, parent, or coach). The relationship of interest is inserted into the instructions, although the stem "My partner usually" can be modified to refer to a specific target as well (e.g., "My coach usually"). The stem also can be adjusted to apply to a more specific moment (e.g., "Today, my partner ...") or interaction (e.g., "During this conversation, my partner ..."), with corresponding modifications to each item's verb tense. After reading the item, participants are asked to indicate the degree to which that item applies to the individual being considered. On the original measure, each item is followed by a 9-point scale with the following anchors: 1 = *not at all true*, 3 = *somewhat true*, 5 = *moderately true*, 7 = *very true*, and 9 = *completely true*. Five-point and 7-point versions have also been used, with the same end-anchors.

Scoring

There are eight items each for the understanding and validation subscales, along with two general items. Computing a total responsiveness score is the most common usage, calculated by simple summation of ratings across all 18 items. If subscale scores are desired, they can be calculated by summing ratings for the appropriate items.

Development

The 18-item PPRS was first introduced by Harry Reis and Cheryl Carmichael (2006) in an unpublished study of married spouses' experiences of intimacy and support. A few items have undergone minor changes in wording since then. Subsequently, a 12-item version of the measure has been developed (Reis, Maniaci, Caprariello, Eastwick, & Finkel, 2011), which typically generates similar reliability and has demonstrated adequate validity compared to the longer version. A three-item version has also appeared, which is better suited to protocols that demand brevity, such as experience sampling and daily diary studies (Gable, Gosnell, Maisel, & Strachman, 2012).

Reliability

Internal consistencies for both the 12-item and 18-item PPRSs tend to be high, ranging from .91 to .98 in most published and unpublished samples (e.g., Birnbaum & Reis, 2006; Reis *et al.*, 2011; Reis, Maniaci, & Rogge, 2014).

Validity

Using data from an Internet-based sample of over 2000 individuals who were asked to complete the PPRS with regard to a close other, exploratory factor analyses using principal axis extraction with an oblimin rotation supported a unidimensional

solution, with all items loading highly on a single factor. This solution has emerged consistently (with similar factor loadings) across different relationship types (e.g., a romantic partner, close friend, and family members). In the Internet-based sample, as well as several other samples, there was mildly suggestive evidence of a two-factor solution corresponding to understanding and validation, but even in this circumstance, the two factors have a substantial correlation, $r = .94$. This likely reflects the fact that understanding and validation tend to co-occur in close relationships.

Various studies have demonstrated convergent validity through correlations with other scales designed to measure responsiveness, including relationship satisfaction ($r = .82$), trust ($r = .67$), empathy ($r = .51$), and emotional support ($r = .49$). Other findings that contribute to the measure's validity portfolio include an experimental study in which PPRS scores increased as first-year college students became better acquainted with each other (Reis *et al.*, 2011). In another study, PPRS scores were significantly correlated with reports of a partner's daily compassionate behaviors ($r = .33$), suggesting that donors and recipients agree about behavioral manifestations of responsiveness (Reis *et al.*, 2014). Another unpublished study found significant agreement in a laboratory conversation between ratings of responsiveness provided by relationship partners and independent coders ($r = .33$) (Rusbult, Kumashiro, & Reis, 2011).

Availability

The Romantic Partner version of the PPRS appears at the end of this profile. Other versions can be created by changing the wording of the relationship of interest (e.g., best friend, parent, or work supervisor). The scale is freely available to researchers with appropriate citation.

Sample Studies

PPR has been found to be associated with numerous relationship qualities, particularly those that relate to intimacy and support. For example, perceived partner responsiveness is positively associated with relationship satisfaction, trust, intimacy, and most forms of support. The PPRS has been used to clarify why, in some circumstances, social support may not be helpful. Maisel and Gable (2009) found that support provided by others is effective only when it is perceived as responsive; in other words, support intended to be helpful that nonetheless is perceived as nonresponsive tends to undermine well-being. Other studies have shown that responsiveness about personal positive events—good things that have happened in one's life—may actually benefit relationships more than responsiveness about negative events and stressors (the traditional focus of social support research). For example, ratings of PPR following a laboratory conversation about positive but not negative events predicted changes in relationship well-being over 2 months (Gable, Gonzaga, & Strachman, 2006). Another laboratory study found that socially anxious people view themselves—and are viewed by their partners—as less responsive in conversations about the partner's good news (Kashdan, Ferrisizdis, Farmer, Adams, & McKnight, 2013).

PPR also has been related to sexual desire. Among women in established relationships, PPR predicts viewing sex as exciting and as a way of strengthening a relationship; it also is negatively related to feeling distracted, distant, and ashamed during sex (Birnbaum & Reis, 2006). In a daily diary study of newlyweds, PPR mediated the relationship between sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction (Gadassi *et al.*, in press). Birnbaum and Reis (2012) found, however, that PPR piqued sexual interest in a new acquaintance only among individuals high in attachment security.

Although mostly used in established relationships, studies of new acquaintances also have used the PPRS successfully. For example, previously unacquainted individuals who had consumed a moderate dose of alcohol, compared to a placebo, were rated as more responsive following conversations about a significant person in their lives (Kirkpatrick & de Wit, 2013). Forest and Wood (2011) found that responsiveness displayed by a new acquaintance increased expressivity among individuals with low self-esteem but not among individuals with high self-esteem. In two experiments, Reis *et al.* (2011) found that randomly paired college students increased their ratings of PPR the more they chatted with each other, and that these increases mediated increases in liking. In a similar design, perceived responsiveness (and liking) was rated lower among students engaging in computer-mediated text-only conversations compared to face-to-face interactions or computer-mediated conversations that included audio or video channels (Sprecher, 2014).

These diverse studies are consistent with the broad idea that PPR is central to the development and maintenance of intimate relationships (for a review, see Reis and Clark, 2013).

Critique

PPR is best considered as an outcome of good listening skills; that is, when a listener has been effective, in the large majority of circumstances, speakers will feel responded to. As such, the PPRS can contribute to a research program on listening by providing an index of the recipient's perceptions. Although the PPRS has demonstrated excellent reliability and convergent validity, it has been used primarily in relatively intimate relationships among white, educated, middle-class Westerners. Research is needed to demonstrate the measure's usefulness in other types of relationships and more diverse samples. PPRS scores also tend to be substantially correlated with other measures of relationship quality. It would be desirable to develop a measure that better distinguishes these characteristics.

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Scale

Perceived Partner Responsiveness Scale: Romantic Partner Version

Source: Reis. Reproduced with permission of Harry Reis.

Instructions: Please answer the following questions about your current romantic partner.

Response Categories:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not at all true		Somewhat true		Moderately true		Very true		Completely true

My partner usually:

General Items

- ... really listens to me.*
- ... is responsive to my needs.*

Understanding Items

- ... is an excellent judge of my character.
- ... sees the "real" me.*
- ... sees the same virtues and faults in me as I see in myself.
- ... "gets the facts right" about me.*
- ... is aware of what I am thinking and feeling.
- ... understands me.*
- ... is on "the same wavelength" with me.*
- ... knows me well.*

Validation Items

- ... esteems me, shortcomings and all.*
- ... values and respects the whole package that is the "real" me.*
- ... usually seems to focus on the "best side" of me.
- ... expresses liking and encouragement for me.*
- ... seems interested in what I am thinking and feeling.*
- ... seems interested in doing things with me.
- ... values my abilities and opinions.*
- ... respects me.

Note: Labels should be removed and items randomized prior to administration. Items marked with an asterisk (*) are those included in the 12-item version of the PPRS.

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