

Financial Wellness and Relationship Satisfaction: Does Communication Mediate?

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This research investigated the possibility that married couples' communication patterns mediate the relationship between financial wellness and relationship satisfaction in a sample of 515 adult, cohabiting, married individuals in a large Southern state. Guided by social exchange theory, a series of structural equation models were specified that isolated both positive and negative communication patterns. A full mediating role for positive communication was not identified; however, negative communication patterns did indicate full mediation. The results provide insights into the financial wellness of married individuals and inform the growing literature on the roles finances and communication play in relationships. Specifically, there was support for the expectation that financial wellness is positively related to positive communication and negatively related to negative communication. This finding, in concert with a consistent and positive direct path from financial wellness to relationship satisfaction, was robust across numerous alternative models. The results offer insights for practitioners and for researchers. For example, the results suggest that counselors' attention to couples' communication behaviors could improve the relationship satisfaction of couples with low financial wellness, particularly in regard to the reduction of negative communication behaviors. Future research should investigate all types of committed relationships as well as utilize longitudinal designs involving couples in committed relationships. Future research could also be improved by investigating the unique contributions of both subjective and objective indicators of financial wellness, as the separate components may interact differently with relationship satisfaction and communication patterns, providing even more information into the possible mediator role of positive and negative communication patterns.

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