

Development and Preliminary Evidences of the Validity of Erskine's Relational Needs Scale¹

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Abstract

Erskine's Integrative Relational Psychotherapy is founded in a theoretical model that proposes eight relational needs, but there is a lack of an assessment instrument to facilitate research and therapeutic exploration. The development of a new scale to assess the eight needs is described including expert analysis, comprehensibility testing, and a preliminary study of its factorial structure and validity. Results show an optimal apparent and content validity (concordance kappa coefficients between .62 and .96), a high reliability (Cronbach alpha .96 for total scale and above .76 in the eight dimensions), and promising psychometric data. Future research work is discussed, especially the possibility to refine the scale, reducing the number of items in studies with more heterogeneous and ample clinical and normative samples.

Keywords

Relational needs, relational needs scale, integrative psychotherapy, integrative psychotherapy research, integrative relational psychotherapy, attachment assessment, measuring needs, psychometrics

There is a certain consensus among professionals in the field of psychology that we, as human beings, are essentially social beings (Goleman, 2000) and that we need to relate with other people in order to maintain optimal functioning (Ryan & Deci, 2017). The needs that are nurtured by such relationships have been associated in the scholarly literature with health, well-being (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; La Guardia et al., 2000; Maslow, 1963; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ryff & Keyes, 1995), coping (Shulman, 1993), and healthy aging (Gergen & Gergen, 2002; Lou, 2022), among other constructs.

This relational component is fundamental not only for human growth and for development, but for clinical practice, to the point that some authors argue that psychological distress and mental pathology have their origin in a possible failure "when, in a repeated way, our significant relationships fail to meet basic relational needs" (Erskine et al. 2012, p. 32).

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Therefore, in recent years, several initiatives have been developed to measure the satisfaction of these relational needs, but most of them have considered them as a single general variable (Žvelc et al., 2020). Some examples can be seen in Hendrick's "Relationship Assessment Scale" (1988), which measures, with seven items, the subjective assessment of the satisfaction of the need for an intimate relationship with a partner, or the "Unidimensional Relationship Closeness Scale," which measures, with 12 items, closeness in social and personal relationships (Dibble et al., 2011).

Particularly significant is the work of Barrett-Lennard (1978) who developed the "Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory" in order to quantify the three attitudes, identified by Rogers, as fundamental to assess the quality of human relationships: empathy, unconditional positive acceptance, and congruence (Ganley, 1989).

Among the multicomponent scales, we can highlight the "Relationship Closeness Inventory" (Kelley et al., 1983) which identifies three factors (frequency, diversity, and strength) related to the stability and maintenance of romantic, friendship, or family relationships; or the "Interpersonal Relationship Inventory," proposed by Tilden et al. (1994), which focuses on two dimensions that interact with the quality of social relationships: the degree of conflict, and the degree of perceived reciprocity in the relationship.

Based on the Baumeister and Leary model, Leary et al. (2013) developed the "Need to Belong Scale," which measures, with 10 items, the two conditions necessary for the need to belong to be satisfied: that interactions are frequent and positive, and that the individual perceives mutual affection, as well as that the relationship will continue into the foreseeable future.

Based on self-determination theory, the nine-item "Basic Psychological Needs Scale" considers that the basic needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness are universal and must be continuously satisfied in order for people to develop and function in a healthy and optimal manner (La Guardia et al., 2000). Finally, based on Kohut's object relations theory, Banai's group (2005) developed the "Self-Object Needs Inventory" in order to measure self-object needs. This tool measures the constructs of mirroring, idealization, and twinship, which correspond in part to Erskine's needs for validation, acceptance, and confirmation of personal experience. However, this scale measures the strength of the needs but not the satisfaction of the needs in the relationship itself (Žvelc et al., 2020).

In the light of the works reviewed, there is a need to develop a tool that addresses, from a consolidated and coherent theoretical model, the different dimensions that make up the need for a relationship. To fill this gap, Žvelc and his collaborators (2020) developed a new 20-item tool, inspired by Richard Erskine's Integrative Psychotherapy model, the "Relational Needs Satisfaction Scale." Although the initial intention was that this instrument would include the eight needs described by Erskine, the reality is that the psychometric analysis of the results led to the fact that it can only include a general factor and five dimensions (authenticity, support and protection, making an impact, shared experience, and taking the initiative). The difficulty in differentiating three of the dimensions proposed in the questionnaire led Žvelc to have to merge them into one, rename it, and adapt its content to represent all three.

Despite this, the questionnaire has been adapted to several languages (Pourová et al., 2020; Toksoy et al., 2020) among which is our sociocultural context (Iraurgi et al., 2022). However, the conclusions reached in those works were similar because, although the mathematical models obtained were satisfactory, their conceptual fit with Erskine's theoretical model was not sufficiently convergent.

Richard Erskine developed a model of human needs, based on interpersonal relationships, which constitutes today a fundamental component of integrative psychotherapy and contemporary transactional analysis (Erskine, 2016; Erskine & Trautmann, 1996; Erskine et al., 2012; O'Reilly-Knapp & Erskine, 2003; Žvelc et al., 2020). The understanding of human needs in terms of relationship represents a significant change in the way psychology conceptualizes human functioning (Erskine, 2011; Erskine & Moursund, 2023) by being considered not only as a means to an end (pleasure, power, emotions, etc.) but as an end in itself. "The need for relationship, as well as the needs experienced within those relationships results in itself a primary motivating experience of human behavior" (Erskine & Moursund, 2023, p. 45).

These relational needs, exclusively directed to interpersonal contact, throughout the life cycle, are part of the background of every human relationship, enhancing the quality of life and the sense of self-in-relationship (Erskine & Moursund, 2023). They emerge into consciousness as longings or desires and recede into the background when they have been recognized or satisfied (Erskine, 2016). When they are not satisfied, feelings of desolation, persistent loneliness, intolerance to frustration, anger, aggression, or shutting down and withdrawing from contact are often experienced. Over time they may lead to a loss of energy or hopelessness (Erskine & Moursund, 2023).

This model has its origins in attachment theory, object relations theory, transactional analysis, and self-psychology, which emphasize the need for relatedness as the primary human motivation (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Berne, 1964; Bowlby, 1969; Erskine, 2011; Fairbairn, 1952, 1954; Guntrip, 1968; Kohut, 1971, 1977; Stern, 1985; Winnicott, 1971).

The proposed needs emerge from a qualitative study of transference and crucial values in significant relationships conducted at the New York Institute for Integrative Psychotherapy, and represent those that people describe as most prevalent when striving to maintain or change their way of being and relating to others (Erskine, 2016).

The eight proposed relational needs are described below. Safety is "the visceral experience that our physical and emotional vulnerabilities are respected and protected" (Erskine et al., 2012, p. 185). Erskine (1998) argues that in any relationship one needs to feel safe to be who he or she really is and to show oneself without the fear of losing respect and approval from other people, nor the fear of feeling aggrieved if he or she makes a mistake. It is the feeling of being vulnerable and being in harmony with the other at the same time. It arises from the repeated experience of sharing, without risk, aspects of oneself (Erskine & Moursund, 2023).

The second need is to feel validated, valued, cared for, accepted, important, and significant in the relationship (Erskine, et al., 2012). It refers to the recognition of one's own psychological process of inner functioning. This need is the recognition of not only "what one does, but why one does it" (Erskine et al., 2012, p. 47), and the understanding that there is a reason behind every behavior, emotion, hope, dream, and fantasy. This self-expression needs to be validated because it fulfills a significant psychological function.

Acceptance or protection refers to "being loved and respected by a stable and protective person from whom we can be nurtured and whom, in return, we can love and respect" (Erskine & Moursund, 2023, p. 47). It has to do with feeling protected and cared for by someone whose care is seen as meaningful, reliable, and secure (Erskine, 1998).

Confirmation of personal experience, or reciprocity, is described as the need to be with someone who has lived through similar situations and understands what one is going through because they have experienced something similar in real life or in their imagination (Erskine & Moursund, 2023). Part of that need arises from the natural desire to not have to explain everything

and to be understood without the need to use words. “Reciprocity gives depth to acceptance and valuing” (Erskine & Moursund, 2023, p. 48).

The need for self-definition has to do with being able to experience and express one’s uniqueness and to feel that the other person recognizes and values that uniqueness. It is the complement of reciprocity; the need to feel different in contrast to the need to be similar (Erskine et al., 2012). People need within the relationship to also recognize one’s differences, disagreements, or even irritation and anger as an aspect of one’s individuality.

The sixth need has to do with making an impact on the other person. A person’s sense of competence in the relationship manifests itself in the ability to attract the other person’s attention and interest, to influence what he or she might do or think, and to elicit an emotional response from him or her. What is important in this need lies not only in provoking it but in perceiving that the response has occurred as a consequence of my action (Erskine & Moursund, 2023).

Having the other take the initiative, sometimes, is an important need when it is always the same person who has to make the first move. When this is the case, over time, the relationship becomes unsatisfactory (or even painful) because we need, at some point, the people we love to convey by their decisions (in a way that is recognizable to us) that they care about us (Erskine & Moursund, 2023).

Finally, the need to express affection is an essential component in maintaining any relationship. In any stable interaction, members experience affection, appreciation, or even love and devotion. Not being able to express such feelings (denying or ignoring them) means turning away from and denying the inner experience and self-definition within the relationship. For “part of who I am with you is how I feel about you” (Erskine & Moursund, 2023, p. 49). When the expression of such affect is hindered, self-expression in the relationship is thwarted.

Understanding and recognizing the nature of relational needs and the reciprocal affective responses necessitated by those needs are important facets of therapeutic skill that are routinely brought into play in clinical practice (Erskine et al., 2012). Therefore, the aim of this work has been to formulate, develop and evaluate a tool that assesses the eight relational needs formulated by Erskine in order to facilitate research and therapeutic inquiry.

Method

For the development of the scale, the standards for the creation of psychological measurement instruments were followed (AERA-APA-NCME, 2014; Muñiz and Fonseca-Pedrero, 2019), and the phases followed will be described below, according to the process carried out, for each of which mention will be made of the procedure and the sample used.

Phase One. Development of the Item Pool

Taking Richard Erskine’s theoretical model of Relational Needs as a reference, and based on the definitions proposed by the author, two of the researchers elaborated a battery of 74 statements-items that measured the eight relational needs identified by the model. Between seven and 10 items per dimension were proposed, with each researcher initially working independently in their elaboration, and finally reaching a consensus on the resulting set. In later phases, these same researchers were responsible for reformulating items questioned by the judges’ criteria or for generating new items if necessary. This task was supervised in later phases by the author of the theoretical model.

Phase Two. Content Validity Testing

Design. The Delphy methodology was used for the evaluation of the items by expert judges.

Participants. A group of 14 experts (3 men and 11 women) in integrative relational psychotherapy, all of them active professionals accredited by the International Integrative Psychotherapy Association and teachers knowledgeable about the theoretical model, was gathered.

Procedure. A list of the 74 statements was generated and randomly ordered so that the different dimensions-needs to which they referred were disordered. In the first phase of Delphy, the expert judges were asked to assess whether the statements were relevant to the theoretical model and to identify the need to which each statement referred as the first, second, and third option. The convergence of the decisions was assessed by calculating the percentage of inter-judge agreement, rejecting all those statements with a percentage of agreement below 60%, a total of 17 items. A total of 35 items with an agreement higher than 80% were accepted in this first phase, and 22 items with agreements between 60 and 80% were revised and reformulated. A new list of 25 items was developed (22 reformulated and three new items), which were subjected to the same procedure in a second Delphy phase. In this step, one item with a degree of agreement below 50% was eliminated and some items were minimally reformulated. The battery resulting from the two phases of the expert analysis consisted of 59 items.

Phase Three. Apparent Validity Tests

Design. Observational study with an opportunity sample.

Participants. Thirty-six adult lay persons in the area of exploration were invited to participate, completing all tasks. The mean age was 39 years (SD = 14.54), mostly women (53%) and with university education (60%).

Procedure. Under the indication “to what extent do you consider the following statements are understandable to you,” the participant is presented with a list of the 59 items retained in Phase Two, using a six-point Likert scale from “not at all understandable” to “perfectly understandable” to assess each item. The degree of convergence of the responses is evaluated and six items with values below 75% agreement are eliminated.

Phase Four. Expert Assessment

The result of the previous phases concludes with the configuration of a matrix scale of 53 items that are translated into English for evaluation by the author of the theoretical model who indicates, with a 10-point scale, the extent to which each item evaluates the proposed need. The expert judgment indicated that the average adequacy of the items to the evaluated need was 9.79%. This analysis and some suggestions offered on the wording of the items resulted in the final scale of 53 items.

Phase Five. Tests of Goodness of Measure and Psychometric Characteristics

Design. Observational study with a convenience sample.

Participants. 142 university students in the health sciences area, aged between 18 and 24 years (M = 20.8; SD = 2.1), mostly women (83.1%).

Procedure. By means of a survey methodology, participants were asked to collaborate by answering a battery of paper questionnaires that included the rating scale. Participants were informed of the characteristics and objective of the study, and passive consent was requested after completing the questionnaire. Participation was voluntary, and subjects could withdraw from

participation once the study had begun if they considered it appropriate. All subjects completed the battery without any loss of information.

Instruments. In addition to the scale that is the subject of this article, whose characteristics are described in the following section and in the results section, other psychological constructs were assessed as convergent validity criteria, using the following dimensions and instruments. For the assessment of symptomatic manifestations of emotional distress, the GHQ-12 in its Spanish version (Goldberg & Hillier, 1979; Lobo et al., 1986; Rocha et al., 2011; Sánchez-López & Dresch, 2008) and Cohen's Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen et al., 1983; Remor, 2006) were used. For the assessment of the perception of well-being in its versions of hedonic, psychological, and social well-being, as well as the concept of Positive Mental Health, the following validated instruments adapted to Spanish were used: the Diener Life Satisfaction Scale (Vázquez et al., 2013), Watson's Positive and Negative Affect Scale (Espejo et al., 2020), Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scales (Díaz et al., 2006), and Keyes' Social Well-Being Scales (Blanco & Díaz, 2005). Perception of happiness, also as a component of this well-being construct, was assessed through a 10-point visual analog scale. As trait psychological constructs, self-control perception was assessed through the Baumeister Brief Self-Control Scale (Tangney et al., 2004) and Resilience through the CD-RISC (Connor & Davidson, 2003).

Data Analysis

For the description of item characteristics, we used count (n) and percentage (%), as well as mean (M), standard deviation (SD), skewness (Sk) and kurtosis (K). Deviations of Sk and K greater than one, in absolute values, are considered indicative of the presence of these distribution characteristics (Pardo et al., 2009). The presence of distribution ceiling or floor effects was also assessed, and those that exceeded 50% of responses at either end of the response range were considered as aberrant.

For the assessment of inter-judge agreement, we primarily used the percentage of simple agreement (number of concordant judges divided by the total number of judges), and given that multiple agreements were used, the Fleiss kappa coefficient (κ) was used (Escobar-Pérez & Cuervo-Martínez, 2008; Fleiss et al., 2003) for the correction of agreements by chance.

The association between items and/or variables was carried out using Pearson's correlation coefficient (r). To assess the internal consistency of the items, both with respect to the global scale and to each of the theoretical dimensions proposed by Erskine's model, two criteria were used. First, the correlation value of the item with the rest of the scale, where values of $r > .40$ are considered adequate, and second, the value that Cronbach's alpha coefficient (α) would reach in the scale if the item were removed, where an increase or decrease of .05 would contribute to removing or maintaining the item as a component of the final scale.

Given that the instrument is newly created, the analysis of the latent construct structure was examined through the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) technique, using the FACTOR program (Lorenzo-Seba & Ferrando, 2013) for processing. Given the univariate asymmetry of the set of items, the matrix of polychoric correlations was used, verifying the adequacy of the factorization through the following tests: KMO coefficient and test of sphericity, the measure of sampling adequacy (MSA), and the quartile ranking of ipsative measures (QIM). Likewise, the parallel test was used for the estimation of factors to be retained, and essential unidimensionality indices (unidimensional congruence [UniCO], explained common variance [ECV] and the mean of the residual absolute loadings of the items [MIREAL]) (Ferrando & Lorenzo-Seba, 2018).

Results

The content validity analysis of the statements developed in the matrix instrument (74 items), with respect to the theoretical constructs to which they should refer, were evaluated and classified by 14 experts in integrative psychotherapy, retaining for a second analysis those where at least nine of the 14 judges showed convergence of judgment (inter-judge agreement greater than 64.3%). Twenty-one statements were rejected for lack of sufficient agreement, and a total of 53 were finally retained (Table 1), of which 36 (67.9%) showed a high degree of inter-judge agreement (>75%) in the first phase of the Delphi procedure, and 18 were reformulated for resubmission to inter-judge agreement in a second phase. Finally, all of the retained items present a degree of inter-judge agreement close to or above 70%, and in 75.5% of the items the degree of inter-judge agreement is above 80%. Continuing with the evidence of content validity, Table 2 presents the results of inter-judge agreement ($j = 14$) on the classification of the items in the different theoretical dimensions based on the Fleiss Kappa coefficient. The resulting coefficients, their 95% confidence intervals, and the agreement ranking according to Landis and Kock (1977) are presented; both for the total scale ($\kappa = .82$ [.81 to .84], reflecting an almost perfect degree of agreement), and for each of the dimensions explored (agreement values between $K_{\text{minimum}} = .62$

Table 1. Content and Apparent Validity. Items, Percentage of Inter-Judge Agreement of the Delphy Method, Comprehensibility, and Expert Judgement

Id_no	Item	Proc.1 Delphy		Proc.2	Proc.3
		%iJA - F1	%iJA - F2	Comprehensibility (%)	Expert Agreement
1	To feel respected.	78.6	---	9.2	9
2	To feel, most of the time, that I am valued and appreciated by the other person.	85.7	---	9.2	10
3	To feel cared for by a person who is dependable, stable, and protective.	78.6	---	8.1	10
4	To be able to spend time with a person that has experienced similar difficulties as I do.	78.6	---	8.6	10
5	To be able to build my own path and act as I really am and think.	64.3	93.8	9.7	10
6	To feel that I significantly contribute to the relationship.	64.3	68.8	8.9	10
7	To be able to see that I am truly important for the other person, seeing how she/he takes the initiative to look for me to be with me.	92.9	---	9.4	10
8	To feel comfortable giving him/her a present if I feel like doing it.	78.6	100	9.7	10
9	To know that I will not be forced to do something I do not want to do.	---	81.3	8.9	9
10	To know that the other person tries to understand, not only what I do, but also the motives behind what I do.	85.7	---	9.2	10
11	That the other person is strong and able to help me face challenges and difficulties in life.	78.6	81.3	9.4	10
12	To concur in the way we see life because we have experienced similar difficulties.	100	---	8.3	9
13	To feel the other person values my particular way of behaving and thinking.	---	---	---	10
14	To be in a relationship in which I can feel that I can influence the other person's point of view.	100	---	8.9	10
15	That, sometimes, the other person takes the initiative to solve the conflicts or problems we might have.	92.9	---	9.6	10
16	To be able to express my love and affection and to be welcomed.	92.9	---	9.4	10
17	To feel secure expressing and sharing anything, with freedom, spontaneity, and confidence.	64.3	87.3	9.4	10

Table 1. (Continued)

Id_no	Item	Proc.1 Delphy		Proc.2	Proc.3
		%iJA - F1	%iJA - F2	Comprehen- sibility (%)	Expert Agreement
18	That he/she acknowledges and understands my efforts, even though I might not always be successful.	85.7	---	8.9	10
19	To entrust that, even if I am mistaken, that person will continue to support me and believe in me.	85.7	---	9.2	10
20	To be understood, almost with no words, because the other person knows what I have gone through based on his/her own experience.	92.9	---	8.0	10
21	To be able to express my opinions without feeling shame.	---	---	---	10
22	That the other person takes into account my perspective on issues relevant for her/him.	71.4	81.3	8.3	10
23	That, sometimes, the other person takes the responsibility of taking initiative.	100	---	9.4	10
24	To openly communicate my positive feelings to the other person.	92.9	---	8.9	10
25	To be able to relax and show myself without fear of being judged or rejected.	64.3	81.3	9.4	10
26	To be recognized and respected for why I do the things I do.	71.4	87.5	9.4	10
27	To know that he/she is attentive to my needs and feelings.	71.4	---	9.4	10
28	That the other person understands how I feel, without having to explain in detail everything that happened, because he/she has experienced similar things.	100	---	9.2	10
29	To feel good expressing who I am.	---	87.5	8.9	10
30	That the other person accepts my suggestions or follows my advice.	78.4	81.3	9.4	9
31	That the other person proposes activities that enrich our relationship.	100	---	9.4	10
32	To express my feeling of gratitude and love.	71.4	75.0	8.1	10
33	To have the security that nothing will happen if I make a mistake or say something inadequate.	92.9	---	9.2	10
34	To feel that my needs are addressed and taken into account.	78.6	75.0	9.1	10

Table 1. (Continued)

Id_no	Item	Proc.1 Delphy		Proc.2	Proc.3
		%iJA - F1	%iJA - F2	Comprehen- sibility (%)	Expert Agreement
35	To know that the other person is there to support and guide me.	57.1	---	9.4	10
36	To feel the other person knows what I am talking about or how I feel	92.9	---	9.4	9
37	To have the possibility to be guided by my own values.	92.9	---	9.2	10
38	To confirm that I can have an influence in what the other person feels or does.	100	---	9.1	10
39	That, in some occasions, the other person takes the lead and surprises me by preparing something for me.	100	---	8.3	10
40	To be able to tell the other person how much I treasure him/her and to be welcomed.	85.7	---	9.4	10
41	To show, with confidence, what makes me vulnerable, being sure that he/she will not hurt me.	100	---	9.1	10
42	To know that the other person values what I say, do, or think, even though it might not be interesting or lack meaning for him/her.	64.3	68.8	8.3	10
43	To feel that person is ready to stand by me in times of need.	78.6	75.0	9.4	10
44	That the other person really knows how it is to be in my situation.	100	---	8.6	10
45	To be able to freely express who am I and how I think.	64.3	87.5	9.4	10
46	To be able to see that what I share has an effect on the other person.	92.9	---	8.1	10
47	That the other person reaches out to me.	85.7	100	9.2	10
48	To show the bond I feel in the relationship.	85.7	---	8.6	10
49	To feel completely accepted and safe despite my limitations and weaknesses.	100	---	9.1	10
50	To fell that a protective person is concerned about my well-being.	---	---	---	10
51	To realize what I do matters to the other person.	100	---	9.1	10

Table 1. (Continued)

Id_no	Item	Proc.1 Delphy		Proc.2	Proc.3
		%iJA - F1	%iJA - F2	Comprehen- sibility (%)	Expert Agreement
52	That, on some occasions, the other person plans our meetings.	100	---	9.2	9
53	To share the love and affection I feel.	100	---	9.4	10

Notes: Id_lo: Identification of the item according to the order of presentation; Proc: Procedure 1, 2 and 3; %iJA-F: Percentage of inter-judge agreement in Phase One and Two.

and $K_{\text{maximum}} = .96$). In four dimensions (1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 5th) the agreement is considerable, and in the remaining four dimensions (4th, 6th, 7th, and 8th) almost perfect.

Apparent validity was assessed through the evaluation of the comprehensibility of the statements by 36 adults from the normative population, using a scale ranging from 0 (Not at all comprehensible) to 10 (Very comprehensible), obtaining an average value of 9.06, with a minimum score of 8 (Table 2). It should be noted that practically two out of three statements (62.3% of the items: 33/53) reached a comprehensibility score above 9 points. Finally, the final version of the retained statements was evaluated by an expert judge—the author of the theoretical model—on its relevance and adequacy, giving an average value of 9.88 out of 10.

Table 2. Content Validity. Inter-Judge Agreement ($j = 14$) Based on Fleiss' Kappa Coefficient

Dimensions	Kappa	CI 95%	Agreement*
1 – Security	0.743	(.708 to .778)	Substantial
2 – Feeling valued	0.719	(.683 to .754)	Substantial
3 – Protection	0.616	(.581 to .652)	Substantial
4 – Reciprocity	0.889	(.854 to .924)	Almost Perfect
5 – Self-definition	0.625	(.589 to .660)	Substantial
6 – Making an impact on the other	0.940	(.905 to .975)	Almost Perfect
7 – The other taking the initiative	0.956	(.921 to .991)	Almost Perfect
8 – Expressing love	0.881	(.846 to .916)	Almost Perfect
Total Scale	0.822	(.808 to .836)	Almost Perfect

Notes: * Landis and Kock (1977) criteria

Table 3 presents the metric behavior results of the 53 items selected from a sample of 142 university participants. The items have been ordered by the theoretical dimensions for which they have been constructed (Id_ID—Dimension Item Identification; e.g., D15, item 5 of Dimension 1), and are also identified by the order in which they have been presented in the questionnaire (Id_Io—Item Identification Item Order; e.g., It_17, item occupying position 17 in the questionnaire). The distribution of the percentage of responses, the values of the mean (between a minimum of 3.30 and a maximum of 4.44 for a range of possible values between 1 and 5), as well as the values of asymmetry which are mostly of negative sign, point to the fact that all participants have positioned themselves in high values of satisfaction of their relational needs. Twelve and six items, respectively, present marked asymmetries ($As > |1|$) and kurtosis ($K > |1|$), and in thirteen cases, clear ceiling effects are observed (percentage of participants above 50% marking the maximum item rating category 5). The internal consistency of the total scale composed of the 53 items offers a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .96, and the removal of none of its items allows improving the observed reliability. Likewise, the average correlation value of the item with the total scale was .56, ranging between a minimum and maximum value of .41 and .72, respectively. On the other hand, the reliability value based on the McDonald omega coefficient was .97 for the total scale. If we look at the internal consistency behavior of the items according to their grouping by theoretical dimensions, high reliability values are also observed; from a minimum of $\alpha = .76$ in dimension 4 (Reciprocity) to a maximum of $\alpha = .88$ in dimension 8 (Expressing love), and in no case does the removal of any item improve the reliabilities achieved. Besides, the omega coefficients obtained in the respective dimensions (.82, .78, .76, .80, .80, .81, .84, and .87) were equally high.

Table 3. Item Analysis

Id_ID	Id_lo	Distribution of Scores					Descriptive Statistics				Internal Consistency and Reliability				
		1	2	3	4	5	M	SD	As	K	r _{it-Tot}	α	r _{it-Dim}	α	Ω / α
D11	lt_01	0.0	4.2	8.5	26.8	60.6	4.44	0.82	-1.43	1.38	0.410	0.961	0.489	0.820	
D12	lt_09	0.0	7.7	21.1	26.8	44.4	4.08	0.98	-0.65	-0.75	0.542	0.961	0.495	0.822	
D13	lt_17	0.0	2.1	10.6	31.7	55.6	4.41	0.76	-1.13	0.64	0.595	0.961	0.703	0.790	
D14	lt_25	0.7	4.2	21.8	26.8	46.5	4.14	0.95	-0.79	-0.22	0.543	0.961	0.638	0.797	
D15	lt_33	0.0	3.5	19.0	28.9	48.6	4.23	0.87	-0.77	-0.47	0.653	0.961	0.549	0.811	
D16	lt_41	0.7	5.6	26.8	23.9	43.0	4.03	0.99	-0.58	-0.68	0.524	0.961	0.600	0.804	0.821
D17	lt_49	0.0	2.8	10.6	21.8	64.8	4.49	0.79	-1.44	1.23	0.518	0.961	0.602	0.804	0.830
D21	lt_02	0.7	4.2	11.3	31.0	52.8	4.31	0.88	-1.27	1.22	0.541	0.961	0.523	0.775	
D22	lt_10	0.0	3.5	18.3	36.6	41.5	4.16	0.84	-0.67	-0.40	0.607	0.961	0.568	0.766	
D23	lt_18	0.0	2.1	11.3	31.0	55.6	4.40	0.77	-1.11	0.52	0.644	0.961	0.565	0.768	
D24	lt_26	0.0	10.6	31.7	28.9	28.9	3.76	0.98	-0.17	-1.08	0.606	0.961	0.630	0.850	
D25	lt_34	0.0	8.5	19.0	32.4	40.1	4.04	0.96	-0.65	-0.61	0.449	0.961	0.463	0.791	0.784
D26	lt_42	0.0	8.5	26.8	31.0	33.8	3.90	0.97	-0.36	-0.95	0.571	0.961	0.594	0.759	0.799
D31	lt_03	0.0	7.7	14.1	34.5	43.7	4.14	0.93	-0.86	-0.16	0.572	0.961	0.571	0.716	
D32	lt_11	1.4	9.9	23.9	40.1	24.6	3.77	0.98	-0.52	-0.28	0.601	0.961	0.409	0.752	
D33	lt_19	0.7	1.4	11.3	25.4	61.3	4.45	0.80	-1.49	2.14	0.629	0.961	0.585	0.717	
D34	lt_27	0.0	4.2	19.0	31.0	45.8	4.18	0.88	-0.73	-0.47	0.687	0.961	0.593	0.712	
D35	lt_35	0.0	4.2	20.4	31.7	43.7	4.15	0.89	-0.66	-0.58	0.439	0.961	0.426	0.746	
D36	lt_43	0.0	9.9	20.4	33.1	36.6	3.96	0.98	-0.56	-0.75	0.445	0.961	0.428	0.748	0.761
D37	lt_50	0.0	7.0	12.0	31.7	49.3	4.23	0.92	-1.03	0.15	0.514	0.961	0.400	0.752	0.764
D41	lt_04	0.7	19.0	17.6	23.9	38.7	3.81	1.16	-0.46	-1.17	0.552	0.961	0.583	0.767	
D42	lt_12	5.6	15.5	19.7	34.5	24.6	3.57	1.18	-0.52	-0.65	0.480	0.961	0.634	0.755	
D43	lt_20	2.8	8.5	20.4	25.4	43.0	3.97	1.11	-0.82	-0.20	0.442	0.961	0.627	0.757	
D44	lt_28	3.5	13.4	23.9	26.1	33.1	3.72	1.16	-0.50	-0.74	0.549	0.961	0.713	0.735	
D45	lt_36	0.7	6.3	28.9	38.0	26.1	3.82	0.91	-0.36	-0.41	0.487	0.961	0.376	0.808	0.799
D46	lt_44	4.2	21.8	32.4	23.2	18.3	3.30	1.12	-0.01	-0.86	0.487	0.961	0.430	0.802	0.803
D51	lt_05	2.1	5.6	14.1	31.7	46.5	4.15	1.00	-1.15	0.84	0.516	0.961	0.507	0.788	
D52	lt_13	0.0	3.5	20.4	38.0	38.0	4.11	0.84	-0.55	-0.54	0.655	0.961	0.556	0.776	
D53	lt_21	1.4	8.5	21.8	31.7	36.6	3.94	1.02	-0.67	-0.34	0.443	0.961	0.547	0.779	
D54	lt_29	0.0	0.7	17.6	30.3	51.4	4.32	0.78	-0.73	-0.70	0.657	0.961	0.641	0.761	
D55	lt_37	0.0	9.2	23.2	38.0	29.6	3.88	0.94	-0.43	-0.72	0.458	0.961	0.546	0.778	0.799
D56	lt_45	0.7	3.5	23.9	29.6	42.3	4.09	0.92	-0.66	-0.32	0.471	0.961	0.604	0.764	0.804
D61	lt_06	1.4	14.1	1.4	27.5	42.3	3.95	1.12	-0.74	-0.61	0.672	0.960	0.378	0.822	

Table 3. (Continued)

Id_ID	Id_lo	Distribution of Scores					Descriptive Statistics				Internal Consistency and Reliability				
		1	2	3	4	5	M	SD	As	K	r it-Tot	α	r it-Dim	α	Ω / α
D62	It_14	4.9	18.3	19.0	28.2	29.6	3.59	1.22	-0.43	-0.93	0.516	0.961	0.658	0.771	
D63	It_22	0.0	19.7	22.5	40.8	16.9	3.55	0.99	-0.22	-0.99	0.464	0.961	0.365	0.820	
D64	It_30	2.8	9.9	21.8	31.7	33.8	3.84	1.08	-0.67	-0.32	0.566	0.961	0.722	0.761	
D65	It_38	5.6	19.7	30.3	27.5	16.9	3.30	1.13	-0.14	-0.78	0.516	0.961	0.661	0.771	
D66	It_46	1.4	14.8	32.4	30.3	21.1	3.55	1.02	-0.15	-0.78	0.547	0.961	0.625	0.779	0.809
D67	It_51	0.7	3.5	20.4	26.8	48.6	4.19	0.93	-0.87	-0.02	0.636	0.961	0.486	0.802	0.815
D71	It_07	2.1	9.2	26.8	26.1	35.9	3.85	1.08	-0.54	-0.58	0.494	0.961	0.510	0.840	
D72	It_15	0.7	5.6	22.5	32.4	38.7	4.03	0.95	-0.65	-0.32	0.523	0.961	0.542	0.834	
D73	It_23	2.8	16.9	25.4	26.1	28.9	3.61	1.15	-0.32	-0.95	0.552	0.961	0.523	0.839	
D74	It_31	0.7	5.6	15.5	35.2	43.0	4.14	0.92	-0.93	0.30	0.672	0.961	0.674	0.817	
D75	It_39	1.4	11.3	22.5	35.9	28.9	3.80	1.02	-0.53	-0.49	0.644	0.961	0.710	0.810	
D76	It_47	2.8	14.8	26.8	21.8	33.8	3.69	1.16	-0.37	-0.95	0.427	0.962	0.597	0.827	0.844
D77	It_52	0.7	12.0	19.0	28.9	39.4	3.94	1.06	-0.64	-0.70	0.609	0.961	0.705	0.810	0.847
D81	It_08	2.1	5.6	22.5	28.2	41.5	4.01	1.03	-0.81	0.02	0.652	0.961	0.586	0.870	
D82	It_16	0.7	2.1	14.8	30.3	52.1	4.31	0.85	-1.13	0.92	0.703	0.960	0.673	0.859	
D83	It_24	1.4	12.7	23.9	26.1	35.9	3.82	1.10	-0.48	-0.84	0.500	0.961	0.443	0.891	
D84	It_32	0.7	4.9	16.2	28.2	50.0	4.22	0.93	-1.02	0.31	0.701	0.960	0.730	0.851	
D85	It_40	0.0	8.5	17.6	28.9	45.1	4.11	0.98	-0.76	-0.54	0.724	0.960	0.769	0.845	
D86	It_48	0.0	5.6	10.6	31.7	52.1	4.30	0.78	-1.14	0.54	0.652	0.961	0.750	0.849	0.875
D87	It_53	0.7	7.7	13.4	26.1	52.1	4.21	0.99	-1.09	0.24	0.692	0.960	0.733	0.850	0.877

Notes: Id_ID: Item identification within the dimension to which it belongs; Id_lo: Item identification according to the order of presentation; M: Mean; SD: Standard Deviation; As: Asymmetry; K: Kurtosis; r it-Tot: Correlation of the item with the total of the scale (52 items); r it-Dim: Correlation of the item with the total of the dimension to which it belongs (5-6 items, as appropriate); α : Reliability value of the scale if the item were removed; Ω / α : Omega and alpha reliability values, respectively.

There is no non-compliance of multivariate skewness (Coef.: 1365.58; $p > .20$), but there is for kurtosis (Coef.: 3075.67, $p < .001$). Given that the set of items presents negative univariate asymmetry, it was decided to perform the factor analysis on the polychoric correlation matrix. The latter presents very adequate factorization criteria (KMO = .92; Bartlett's χ^2 of 1421.8, $p = .200$; Determinant $< .000001$). The measure of sampling adequacy (MSA) presents a range of values between .87 and .94, with only five items among the total (5/53: 9.4%) located in quartile 1 of ipsative means (QIM), the rest being located in the central quartiles (Q2 and Q3). These results indicate that the correlation matrix is suitable for factoring and that the set of items contributes effectively to the common variance. Parallel analysis reveals that a single dimension accounts for 38.6% of the common variance and suggests the extraction of a single factor. Table 4, columns 3 and 4, presents the factor weights (λ) and communalities (h^2) of this solution, which range between values of .40 and .82, and .28 and .85, respectively; and whose averages stand at .60 and .56, also respectively. In addition, the values of the essential unidimensionality index were UNICO = .929, ECV = .880, and MIREAL = .268. These results also point to the possibility of a single dimension being adequate for the data set.

Regarding the evidences of convergent validity of relational needs satisfaction (RRNN) with other psychological constructs, the degree of association was explored using Pearson's correlation coefficient (Table 5). First, RRNN were associated with two symptomatic variables (affective symptomatology assessed with the GHQ-12 and the degree of perceived stress, first two columns) being in all cases the association of negative type, i.e. a higher expression of satisfaction with RRNN is associated with a lower expression of symptoms, or vice versa, a greater presence of symptoms would be associated with a lower reflection of satisfied needs. All the associations were statistically significant for the case of stress, but only three were significant with the GHQ (Safety $r = -.18$; Protection; $r = -.17$; and Reciprocity $r = -.18$).

On the other hand, five variables related to well-being constructs (hedonic, psychological, social, positive mental health, and happiness) have shown statistically significant and positive associations in most cases. Only the dimension "the other taking the initiative" has not shown significant association with any of these variables. Finally, the relationship of the RRNN with two trait constructs, self-control and resilience, has been explored, showing no significant relationship with the former, and moderate and significant effect correlations of all dimensions with the latter.

However, given that the proposal for the development of the instrument contemplates the existence of eight dimensions of relational needs, a new PFA was carried out requesting an eight-factor solution. Table 4 presents the factor weights greater than .35 that saturate in the different dimensions. The eight retained factors presented eigenvalues greater than 1 (20.32, 4.99, 2.11, 1.73, 1.44, 1.32, 1.29, and 1.10) which together explain 68.74% of the variance. As can be seen, between the first and second eigenvalue there is a ratio of 4.14, that is, the first factor exceeds the second eigenvalue by more than three times, which would support the criterion of a single factor (Gorsuch, 1983). Three factors (F1, F6, and F7) saturate a considerable number of items with weights above .35 belonging to different theoretical dimensions. Other factors, F5 for example, are saturated by a very small number of items, two in this case. It is also observed that some items do not saturate sufficiently in any factor (It_33, It_10, It_34, and It_13).

Table 4. Construct Validity. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) on the Matrix of Polychoric Correlations

Id_ID	Id_lo	λ	h^2	F ₁	F ₂	F ₃	F ₄	F ₅	F ₆	F ₇	F ₈
D11	It_01	0.615	0.828	0.356					0.788		
D12	It_09	0.651	0.536	0.398					0.421		
D13	It_17	0.527	0.379	0.450							
D14	It_25	0.676	0.853	0.630		0.542					
D15	It_33	0.540	0.312								
D16	It_41	0.456	0.357	0.514							
D17	It_49	0.794	0.834	0.482	0.606						
D21	It_02	0.713	0.741	0.510					0.624		
D22	It_10	0.510	0.312								
D23	It_18	0.785	0.786	0.417					0.429	0.465	
D24	It_26	0.500	0.358	0.368		0.356					
D25	It_34	0.412	0.340								
D26	It_42	0.679	0.696	0.628							
D31	It_03	0.706	0.618						0.578		
D32	It_11	0.682	0.591						0.417	0.441	
D33	It_19	0.787	0.809	0.463					0.520		
D34	It_27	0.795	0.707						0.530	0.423	
D35	It_35	0.570	0.686	0.448							0.625
D36	It_43	0.399	0.366	0.451							
D37	It_50	0.658	0.866		0.764					0.448	
D41	It_04	0.646	0.787						0.507	0.591	
D42	It_12	0.558	0.645							0.750	
D43	It_20	0.562	0.647							0.747	
D44	It_28	0.452	0.379							0.544	
D45	It_36	0.411	0.336								0.439
D46	It_44	0.565	0.706					0.582		0.423	
D51	It_05	0.651	0.752						0.670		
D52	It_13	0.534	0.309								
D53	It_21	0.576	0.803	0.403		0.580					0.359
D54	It_29	0.793	0.745	0.434	0.428				0.479		
D55	It_37	0.404	0.306	0.414							
D56	It_45	0.428	0.448	0.623							
D61	It_06	0.775	0.745	0.477					0.554		
D62	It_14	0.413	0.408							0.620	
D63	It_22	0.558	0.664			0.694					
D64	It_30	0.640	0.756							0.789	
D65	It_38	0.567	0.778							0.824	
D66	It_46	0.609	0.679					0.436		0.576	
D67	It_51	0.530	0.378		0.424						
D71	It_07	0.426	0.286						0.358		
D72	It_15	0.630	0.519							0.512	
D73	It_23	0.631	0.805			0.764				0.377	
D74	It_31	0.757	0.720				0.375			0.617	
D75	It_39	0.503	0.380							0.489	
D76	It_47	0.510	0.770							0.842	
D77	It_52	0.492	0.380							0.467	
D81	It_08	0.522	0.343							0.453	
D82	It_16	0.819	0.762						0.378	0.480	0.397
D83	It_24	0.425	0.351			0.454					
D84	It_32	0.815	0.804				0.447		0.413	0.537	
D85	It_40	0.812	0.854	0.410			0.561			0.460	
D86	It_48	0.551	0.415				0.410				
D87	It_53	0.800	0.831		0.491		0.423			0.429	

Notes: Id_ID: Identification of the item within the dimension to which it belongs; Id_lo: Identification of the item according to the order of presentation; λ : Factor weight/saturation; h^2 : Commonality.

Table 5. Convergent Validity. Association of Relational Needs Satisfaction with Other Psychological Constructs

Dimension	GHQ	PS	Sub. W-B	Psy W-B	Soc. W-B	PMH	Happy	Self-Control	Resilience
1 – Security	-0.18	-0.26	0.19	0.30	0.33	0.32	0.20	0.06	0.24
2 – Feeling valued	-0.06	-0.16	0.16	0.27	0.27	0.28	0.15	0.00	0.25
3 – Protection	-0.17	-0.30	0.23	0.40	0.31	0.38	0.24	0.10	0.26
4 – Reciprocity	-0.18	-0.26	0.18	0.21	0.12	0.20	0.34	0.02	0.29
5 – Self-definition	-0.14	-0.30	0.17	0.25	0.30	0.28	0.26	0.02	0.30
6 – Making an impact on the other	-0.12	-0.24	0.31	0.26	0.27	0.31	0.27	0.07	0.28
7 – The other taking the initiative	-0.10	-0.25	0.10	0.15	0.01	0.11	0.10	0.10	0.22
8 – Expressing love	-0.07	-0.21	0.17	0.30	0.29	0.31	0.17	0.01	0.17
Total Scale	-0.15	-0.27	0.23	0.32	0.27	0.32	0.23	0.05	0.27

Notes: r values > .16 are statistically significant for $p < .05$. GHQ: Affective symptomatology; PS: Perceived Stress; Sub W-B: Subjective Well-Being; Psy W-B: Psychological Well-Being; Soc W W-B: Social Well-Being; PMH: Positive Mental Health; Happy: Self-perception of happiness.

Discussion

The aim of the present study was to develop a measurement instrument that, under the paradigm of Richard Erskine's (1998; Erskine & Moursund, 2014, 2023; Erskine et al., 2012) theoretical model, attempts to collect and measure the expression of relational needs implicit in people's meaningful interaction contexts. The results obtained allow us to present evidence on its face and content validity in a consistent manner, and on its psychometric characteristics with encouraging results.

For this purpose, a systematic procedure has been followed for the creation and verification of the relevance and adequacy of the items' statements to the measurement objectives, and for the assessment of the metric characteristics. The result is a matrix instrument of 53 items that thematically gather the dimensional proposal of eight basic needs and give reason for a general common dimension that would allude to the general concept that aims to be an expression of the degree of personal perception of the satisfaction of relational needs.

The evidence of content and face validity has been surprising; with high rates of agreement among expert judges regarding its relevance and fit with the theoretical model, and with the applicability of the items given their clear comprehensibility. Inter-judge agreement coefficients above 80%, and kappa coefficients above .60, are evidence of its high consistency.

Furthermore, the evidence of psychometric performance has also reflected highly encouraging results. A reliability value of .93 for the total scale and Cronbach's alpha values and omega reliability coefficients above .70 in all its dimensions are indicative of the high consistency and relationship between the component items. However, there was a clear tendency to offer responses oriented towards high scores, which could be a reflection of a social desirability bias responding about a construct understood as positive, or it could be a reflection of the characteristics of the participants whose relational experience may be determined by their youth. Likewise, the data suggest the retention of a single general latent factor, and would not sufficiently support the existence of eight clearly differentiated dimensions. This effect could also be the result of the characteristics of the sample used and, therefore, it is suggested to extend the exploration framework to other types of samples, more heterogeneous in age and sex distribution, as well as in different relational contexts, for example, in a normative population in contrast with people who express relational problems or conflicts and who ask for help because of them. In this respect, the proposed instrument could well be a tool for the assessment of relational needs which, in the context of clinical practice in the field of integrative therapy, could offer support for diagnosis, prognosis, and assessment of therapeutic results.

To satisfy this purpose, it is necessary to provide more evidence of validity, for example, with respect to its discriminative and predictive capacity, its temporal consistency, and its latent dimensional structure related to the eight theoretical needs. It would also be desirable to reduce the number of items, which would make the scale much more plausible and applicable in research and clinical practice contexts.

In conclusion, we are faced with a new tool for measuring relational needs that presents clear evidence of content and face validity; it also offers highly encouraging psychometric characteristics, but for the time being these should be considered preliminary. All this encourages to continue in this field of research for the sake of the construct of "relational needs from Erskine's theoretical model" and the homogenization of measurement that allows the comparability of results and the accumulation of evidence.

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