PARTNERSHIP QUESTIONNAIRE: FACTORIAL STRUCTURE, GENDER INVARIANCE, AND CONCURRENT VALIDITY

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The objectives of the present study were: a) to examine the factor structure of the Partnership Questionnaire (PFB) through confirmatory factor analyses, b) to test for the invariance of this structure across genders, and c) to analyze the PFB concurrent validity through its associations with the Marital Satisfaction Inventory Revised (MSI-R) and the Dyadic Coping Inventory (DCI) in a sample of 448 Italian couples. Results indicate that PFB presents a gender invariant 3-factor structure (Quarreling, Tenderness, and Sexuality), and correlates significantly, in the expected directions, with the MSI-R and DCI scales.

Key words: PFB; Validation of PFB; Factor structure of PFB; Gender invariance for PFB.

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The last 20 years have seen a growing interest in relationship satisfaction and its related topics (Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000; Fincham & Beach, 2010), because of the evidence highlighting its centrality for personal and family wellbeing (Stack & Eshleman, 1998), relationship duration and stability (Laub, Nagin, & Sampson, 1998), its role of shelter from divorce and separation (Amato & Booth, 1997; Rogers & Amato, 1997). Relationship satisfaction is widely considered the key indicator of marital quality together with relationship stability (Spanier & Lewis, 1981) and it is a correlate of good individual and relational skills, good physical health and personal wellbeing (Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001). However, its definition is complex because of the absence of a specific theoretical foundation (Fincham, 1998; Fincham & Bradbury, 1987; Karney & Bradbury, 1995). Relationship satisfaction should be considered as a global evaluation of the relationship (Dainton, Stafford, & Canary, 1994), but it is composed of a wide range of relationship aspects, such as communication and conflict (Glenn, 1990). Various studies demonstrated the multidimensionality of relationship satisfaction (Beach & O'Leary, 1985; Palma, Simonelli, Venturini, & Gori, 1995; Snyder, 1979; Spanier & Lewis, 1980), and specifically the co-existence under this term of both positive and negative dimensions (Fincham & Linfield, 1997) that are important to consider when describing the complexity of the quality of marital relationships (e.g., Bertoni & Bodenmann, 2010).

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Indeed, finding reliable ways to assess satisfaction, in its different aspects, is important to understand the processes that operate within the couple relationship and to guide preventive and clinical interventions (Stack & Eshleman, 1998). To this aim Hahlweg (1996) developed the Partnership Questionnaire (PFB; *Partnerschaftsfragebogen*) to assess the quality of the couple relationship in the German context and to distinguish between happy and distressed couples, with diagnostic and therapy purposes.

The 30-item version of the PFB assessed satisfaction through a global scale, made up of three subscales. The Quarreling subscale described negative and aggressive or devaluing conflict behaviors; the Tenderness subscale was composed by positive and caring or appreciating behaviors, and also comprised the sexual aspects of the relation; the Togetherness/Communication subscale expressed the feeling of closeness of the couple, describing activities that the couple might do together and the partners' tendency to communicate about events (e.g., their working day), feelings, and needs. In addition to the 30 items, the scale provided a final global item assessing partners' overall satisfaction with the relationship. This scale is widely used in Germany and the subscales can be used separately (Doering, Baur, Frank, Freundl, & Sottong, 1986).

The validity of the German 30-item version of the PFB was studied by Hahlweg, Klann, and Hank (1992) in a sample of 534 participants, of whom 235 in a normative couple and 299 in a couple following therapy, as well as in a larger sample of 1,580 participants (Hinz, Stöbel-Richter, & Brähler, 2001). Both studies confirmed the good psychometric properties of the scale. More recently, the factor structure as well as the second-order global satisfaction factor was tested in a sample of 1,289 German participants (Kliem, Kröger, Stöbel-Richter, Hahlweg, & Brahler, 2012). Results of the confirmatory factor analysis showed good model-fit indices for the 3-factor structure as well as the second-order global satisfaction factor.

In addition, the authors developed a shorter version of PFB (PFB-K) to be used for research purposes or to be included in more extensive diagnostic batteries. Hahlweg and colleagues (see Kliem et al., 2012) selected a pool of nine items from the 30-item version of the PFB, three for each subscale and one global item. In this short version the items more directly referring to sexuality and partners' communication about professional life were omitted because they referred to too specific aspects of the couple relationship or to experiences (e.g., work experiences) not shared by all couples. The structure and psychometric characteristics of the PFB-K were tested in a community sample of 1,390 individuals through a confirmatory approach, with standardization conducted separately for gender and age, and the results showed good values of internal consistency for the total score of both women and men.

The scale appears a valid and reliable tool both for research and for clinical purposes, but before it can be applied to other linguistic and cultural contexts it is important to assess its factor structure and psychometric properties in other samples. A recent examination of the French version of the PFB has replicated the theoretical 3-factor structure and showed a good cross-language replicability of the structure (Rossier, Rigozzi, Charvoz, & Bodenmann, 2006). Moreover, Rossier and colleagues found a high correlation with the Dyadic Adjustment Scale, as emerged in previous studies as well (Halhweg et al., 1992). No studies, however, have assessed the structure and psychometric properties of PFB in the Italian context, and more generally, no studies, to our knowledge, have tested the gender invariance of the PFB factor structure.

Testing the invariance of PFB across genders is important in order to compare partners' perceptions of their marital quality (e.g., when studying partner's similarities or interpersonal

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perceptions; Donato, Iafrate, Bradbury, & Scabini, 2012; Iafrate, Bertoni, Margola, Cigoli, & Acitelli, 2012; Iafrate, Donato, Bertoni, & Finkenauer, 2011; Luo & Klohnen, 2005), but also when both partners are included in research assessing correlates or determinants of partners' marital quality (e.g., Donato & Parise, 2012). Most studies on marital quality, in fact, are based on the assumption that partners' conception of it, as assessed through marital quality scales, is similar and comparable. When testing the psychometric attitudes of a marital quality scale it is, therefore, important to test the invariance of its factor structure across partners' gender.

OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

The objectives of the present study were: a) to examine the factorial structure of the Partnership Questionnaire (PFB) through confirmatory factor analyses; b) to test for the invariance of this structure across genders; and c) to analyze the PFB concurrent validity through its associations with the Marital Satisfaction Inventory Revised (MSI-R) and the Dyadic Coping Inventory (DCI); d) to examine the sensitivity of the PFB to individual characteristics, testing the impact of relevant demographic variables, such as gender, age, relationship duration, the presence of children, and the level of education.

The MSI-R was chosen as a comparison in light of its completeness, as it considers almost every dimension assessed by PFB. In particular, several scales of the MSI-R measured aspects covered by the PFB as well: Communication (comprising both emotional disclosure and communication about practical matters), togetherness and care for the relationship, global distress/satisfaction with the relationship, and sexual (dis)satisfaction. The DCI was selected because dyadic coping was found to be an important correlate of couple satisfaction in several studies (e.g., Bodenmann, Pihet, & Kayser, 2006). In fact, positive dyadic coping styles (partners show understanding and are supportive toward each other, or both partners engage in a joint problem-solving discussion), were found to be associated with higher relationship satisfaction while negative dyadic coping styles (that are hostile, ambivalent, or superficial behaviors, such as open disinterest, or sarcasm) were found to be associated with lower satisfaction. We expected positive correlations between the positive aspects of relationship quality measured by the PFB items and the positive aspects of relationship quality and functioning measured by the MSI-R and Dyadic Coping scales, that is, the Affective Communication (AC), Problem-solving Communication (PC), and Time Together (TT) scales of the MSI-R and the Positive Dyadic Coping and Common Dyadic Coping scales. We also expected negative correlations between the negative aspects of relationship quality measured by the PFB items and the negative aspects of relationship quality and functioning measured by the MSI-R and Dyadic Coping scales, that is, the Global Distress (GD) and Sexual Dissatisfaction (SD) scales of the MSI-R and the Negative Dyadic Coping scale.

METHOD

Participants and Procedure

Four hundred and forty-eight heterosexual couples from the North of Italy were invited to participate in research projects focused on the couple relationship using two methods: first, by

placing advertisements in different venues and contexts, (e.g., schools, churches, premarital courses), and second, by snowball sampling. Criterion of eligibility was to be in a relationship for at least six months. Participants were given a pack of two self-report questionnaires and were asked to complete the materials independently from their partner and not to talk about the study before returning them. Data confidentiality was guaranteed. All participants took part voluntarily and gave informed consent. Seventy-six percent of partners were married, while 23% were not married, and 1% were separated/divorced. Separated/divorced participants responded to the questionnaire referring to the relationship with their new partners. Sixty-five percent of couples did not have children. The average duration of relationship was 13 years ($SD = 11$), ranging from 6 months to 50 years. Men's mean age was 40.8 ($SD = 12$), ranging from 18 to 81, and women's was 38.2 ($SD = 11.5$), ranging from 17 to 78. The couples were well-educated; in particular, 44% of participants had up to 13 years of education, 23% up to 11 and 33% had over 16 years of education (see Table 1). Partners in the present sample were comparable to community couples in Italy in terms of age and they reported a medium-high level of education as compared to the national distribution of education level for individuals above 15 years of age (ISTAT, 2010).

TABLE 1
Couples' demographic characteristics

Variables	Women ($N = 448$)				Men ($N = 448$)			
	N	%	M	SD	N	%	M	SD
Age			38.22	11.55			40.79	11.98
Years of education								
Up to 11 years	90	20.1			117	26.2		
13 years	200	44.6			194	43.4		
More than 16 years	158	35.3			136	30.4		
Marital Status								
Unmarried	105	23.4			105	23.4		
Married	338	75.4			338	75.4		
Separated/Divorced	5	1.1			5	1.1		
Children								
Yes	156	34.8			156	34.8		
No	292	65.2			292	65.2		
N. of years of relationship			13	11			13	11

Measures

Partnership Questionnaire (PFB; Hahlweg, 1996). The PFB is a 30-item self-report questionnaire, measuring relationship quality through three subscales (10 items for each subscale): Quarreling (Q), Tenderness (T) and Togetherness/Communication (TC). Every item describes a typical couple behavior related to satisfaction, and is administered on a 4-point scale from 0 (*never*) to 3 (*always*). The overall satisfaction with the relationship is assessed via one question, answered on a 6-point-scale from 0 (*very unhappy*) to 5 (*very happy*). This last overall satisfaction question was not included in the factor analyses because it overlapped with the other dimensions. PFB items were

translated into Italian from German by two independent researchers, one bilingual and one Italian mother-tongue who was fluent in German. After independent translation, the two researchers compared their translations, discussed any differences, and found a final agreement on any specific point.

Marital Satisfaction Inventory Revised (MSI-R; Snyder, 1997). The MSI-R is a 150-item self-report questionnaire aimed at the survey of various positive and negative aspects and behaviors within a relationship, that provides an ultimate measure of relationship satisfaction. This measure is structured in 13 subscales: Global Distress, Affective Communication, Problem-solving Communication, Aggression, Time Together, Disagreement about Finances, Role Orientation, Family History of Distress, Dissatisfaction with Children, Conflict over Child Rearing, Inconsistency, Conventionalization, and Sexual Dissatisfaction. Indices of the MSI-R subscales were calculated by first reversing the items referring to each scale whenever needed, so that for all items "true" scores always represented the presence of the underlying construct, and then summing the items. All items are bipolar, with two response choices: true or false. In order to compare similar theoretical constructs, we selected five subscales: Global Distress, Affective Communication, Problem-solving Communication, Time Together, and Sexual Dissatisfaction. Cronbach's alphas ranged from .70 to .85. Correlations between the subscales are reported in Table 4.

Dyadic Coping Inventory (DCI; Bodenmann, 2008; for an Italian version of the scale see Donato et al., 2009). The Dyadic Coping Inventory is a 37-item measure of dyadic coping responses that assesses stress communication, positive and negative responses enacted by each partner when the other is stressed, partners' common attempts to manage the stressor together, as well as partners' satisfaction with and efficacy of their dyadic coping. Items are rated on a 5-point scale from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*very often*). In order to compare similar theoretical constructs, we selected three self-perceived subscales, Positive Dyadic Coping, Negative Dyadic Coping and Common Dyadic Coping. Indices of the DCI subscales were calculated by averaging the items referring to each scale. Alphas ranged from .66 to .84. Correlations between positive, negative, and common dyadic coping scales are reported in Table 5.

Data Analyses

In order to test the gender invariance of the structure of the PFB, we split and crossed the sample into two equivalent subsamples A and B, each composed by 448 participants (224 women and 224 men): thus the ratings provided by men and women in each group were independent. We conducted a confirmatory factor analysis on subsample A to assess the factor structure and reliability of the PFB, and a multi-group invariance analysis to assess the equivalence of the instrument across subgroups based on gender.[1] The normality of the measures allowed us to use the Maximum Likelihood estimation method. We evaluated the model fit with the χ^2/df ratio, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), the comparative fit index (CFI), and the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI). As a rule of thumb, a model is acceptable if the χ^2/df ratio is included between 1 and 3 (Carmines & McIver, 1981; Marsh, Balla, & MacDonald, 1988). For the RMSEA (Steiger & Lind, 1980), values ≤ .05 are regarded as optimal and values ranging between .05 and .08 are considered acceptable (Brown & Cudeck, 1993; Hu & Bentler, 1999). For CFI (Hu & Bentler, 1998), values of .90 or higher are considered satisfactory (Bentler, 1990), while values > .95 are regarded as optimal (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Finally, the TLI (Tucker & Lewis, 1973) normally lies between 0 and 1 (although negative values are also possible), with higher values indicative of better fit; in practice,

values greater than .90 are generally considered acceptable (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The analyses were conducted with AMOS V. 19.0 software. The final structure was then re-tested on subsample B in order to replicate it. To test the concurrent validity of the scale, we calculated Pearson's correlations between the PFB, MSI-R,[2] and DCI. Finally, the impact of demographic variables and participants' characteristics was assessed by using paired sample t-tests, one way ANOVAs, and multiple regression analyses.

RESULTS

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to test the original model and included 30 observed variables and three latent variables (Q, T, and TC) correlated to each other. The model did not fit the data sufficiently well, $\chi2 = 1187.747$, $df = 402$ ($\chi2/df = 2.95$); RMSEA = .07; CFI = .83; TLI = .82. Regarding the correlations between the factors, T and TC were strongly and positively correlated with each other (.86), while Q was negatively correlated with both T ($-.37$) and TC ($-.40$). Parameters were all significant ($p < .001$), but item 20 showed a low factor loading (.24).

In order to find a factor structure that better fitted our data, we adopted the following criteria: significance and size of parameters (we retained only items with significant and higher than $\geq .40$ loadings); significant modification indices together with the theoretical analysis of the contents of items and factors; gender invariance of the final structure. We proceeded in the following steps until we found a) a meaningful structure, coherent with the original rationale of the scale, b) a sufficiently adequate fit, and c) invariance across genders. First we eliminated item 20 ("Usually, we stay together in the evening for at least half an hour"), due to its low factor loading, suggesting that it measured another aspect of the couple relationship, $\chi^2(374) = 1136.059$ ($\chi^2/df = 3.04$); RMSEA = .07; CFI = .83; TLI = .82.

The examination of the modification indices suggested to correlate the residuals of item 11 and item 15, $\chi^2(373) = 1046.924$ ($\chi^2/df = 2.81$), RMSEA = .06; CFI = .85; TLI = .84. Both items were in fact referring to partners' communication about their professional life. Since correlations between errors indicate a source of variance other than the factor in which the items are included, we decided to eliminate one of the two items. On the basis of the lower factor loading (.37), we excluded item 15, $\chi^2(347) = 1000.557$ ($\chi^2/df = 2.88$); RMSEA = .06; CFI = .85; TLI = .84.

The same procedure was then used for items 3 and 14, both referring to physical attraction, $\chi^2(346) = 897.897$ ($\chi^2/df = 2.60$); RMSEA = .06; CFI = .87; TLI = .86. Eliminating item 3, the model adequacy improved, $\chi^2(321) = 855.089$ ($\chi^2/df = 2.66$); RMSEA = .06; CFI = .87; TLI = .86.

Further analysis of MI showed that four items (2, 9, 13, and 27) were to be correlated with each other. We, therefore, examined the content of these items that all refer to sexual relationship. We then decided to test a new latent variable that we named "Sexuality," $\chi^2(318) = 705.978$ ($\chi^2/df = 2.22$); RMSEA = .05; CFI = .91; TLI = .90, but the originally high correlation between T and TC increased to reach .91. Such a high correlation as well as the conceptual analysis of the items now composing the two factors indicated that the two dimensions were now highly overlapping. Thus, we tested a model in which the covariance between T and TC was constrained to 1 and compared it with the previous model through the $\Delta\chi^2$ test, which showed no significant differences between the two models, $\Delta\chi^2 = 27.857$, $df = 1$, ns. We therefore decided to create a single factor, $\chi^2(321) = 743.932$ ($\chi^2/df = 2.32$); RMSEA = .05; CFI = .90; TLI = .89.

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Again, the examination of the MI suggested to correlate the residuals of items 10 and 12, $\chi^2(320) = 826.668$ ($\chi^2/df = 2.22$); RMSEA = .05; CFI = .90; TLI = .90. These two items both referred to partners' sharing future plans. Eliminating item 12, the model adequacy improved, $\chi^2(296) = 676.864$ ($\chi^2/df = 2.28$); RMSEA = .05; CFI = .90; TLI = .90.

The parameters were all significant, but item 11 concerning partners' sharing about their professional life now showed a low factor loading (.36); thus we decided to eliminate it. Having eliminated item 11, the model presented adequate fit on all the indices considered, $\chi^2(272) = 599.347$ ($\chi^2/df = 2.20$); RMSEA = .05; CFI = .92; TLI = .91.

Gender Invariance

To test the invariance of the structure across genders, we conducted a multi-group analysis on subsample A. Each item factor loading was constrained to be equal across the two groups. The measurement model did not appear to be invariant across subgroups; we therefore examined the parameters for each group and we decided to release the constraint of item 8 that showed different loadings for men and women (.77 and .58 respectively). Releasing item 8, the model appeared to be invariant (cfr. Model B in Table 2). Since our goal was to find a factor structure that was invariant across genders we decided to eliminate item 8.

TABLE 2
Multigroup CFA of PFB across genders: Goodness of fit statistics and model comparisons
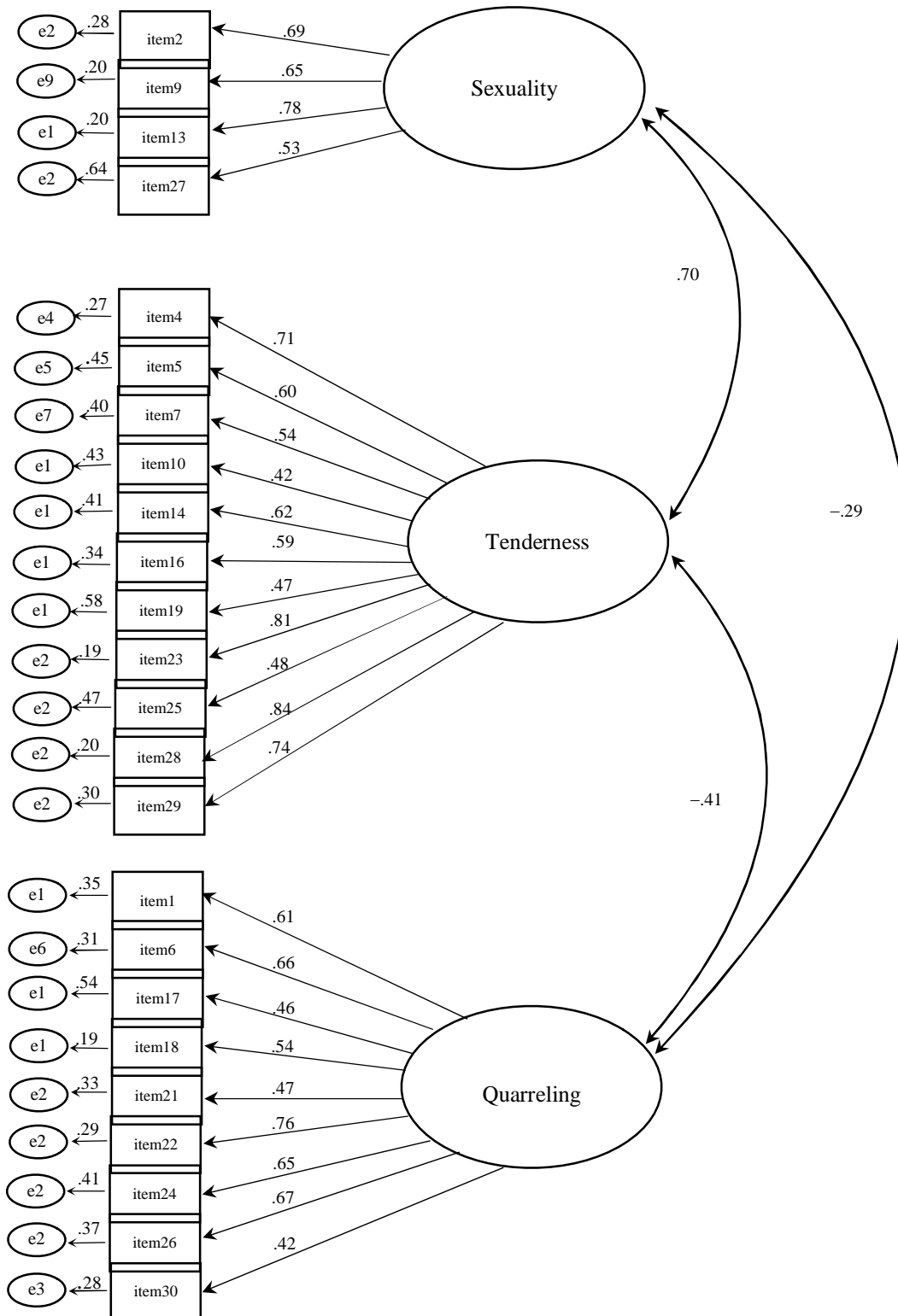
Models	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	RMSEA	CFI	TLI	$\Delta\chi^2$ (Δdf), p
Gender							
Model A	833.60	498	1.67	.04	.91	.90	
Model B	867.41	522	1.66	.04	.91	.90	
A-B comparison							33.82 (24), *ns*

Note. CFA = confirmatory factor analysis; PFB = Partnership Questionnaire; CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; TLI = Tucker-Lewis index.

The final model showed an adequate fit, $\chi^2(249) = 533.884$ ($\chi^2/df = 2.14$); RMSEA = .05; CFI = .92; TLI = .91, and resulted invariant for men and women in terms of factor loadings (see Figure 1). Regarding the correlations between factors, Quarreling correlated negatively with Tenderness (−.41) and Sexuality (−.29), which were positively correlated with each other (.70).

Model Replication

In order to corroborate our structure we tested the final model on subsample B ($N = 448$ independent participants, 224 women and 224 men). Results indicated that the structural model was acceptable, $\chi^2(249) = 566.615$ ($\chi^2/df = 2.28$); RMSEA = .05; CFI = .91; TLI = .90, and parameters were all significant ($p < .001$).

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Note. Items are reported in Appendix.

FIGURE 1
Partnership Questionnaire final model.

Furthermore, we examined the structure of PFB-K (short version of PFB) and obtained results that further confirmed our decisions in this sample: in particular, item 20 was eliminated because it loaded weakly on the original Togetherness/Communication factor (.19) and the original Tenderness and Togetherness/Communication factors were highly correlated (.99), so that collapsing them into one factor significantly increased the model fit, $\chi^2(19) = 54.27$ ($\chi^2/df = 2.86$); RMSEA = .06; CFI = .97; TLI = .96, and the adequacy was confirmed in subsample B as well, $\chi^2(19) = 61.30$ ($\chi^2/df = 3.23$); RMSEA = .07; CFI = .96; TLI = .94.

Descriptives and Concurrent Validity of the Final Factors

Table 3 reports the descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alphas for the PFB factors, for women and men, computed on the total sample. The reliability of the three subscales was good for both women and men.

TABLE 3
Descriptive statistics for the PFB factors scores

	Women ($N = 448$)			Men ($N = 448$)		
	M	SD	α	M	SD	α
PFB Quarreling	5.28	4.02	.80	6.50	4.43	.82
PFB Tenderness	23.50	5.92	.88	23.38	5.46	.87
PFB Sexuality	8.28	2.23	.69	7.47	2.30	.77

Note. PFB = Partnership Questionnaire. For Quarreling, scores range from 0 to 27; for Tenderness, scores range from 0 to 33; for Sexuality, scores range from 0 to 12.

The correlations between the three PFB factors and the four MSI-R indices ranged from .21 to .73 (see Table 4). The correlations between the three PFB factors and the three DCI indices ranged from .22 to .64 (see Table 5). These results showed that the associations among PFB factors and both the MSI-R and DCI were in the expected directions and coherent with the constructs measured by the final model. As for the MSI-R, in fact, the strongest correlation involving Q was the one with Problem-solving Communication, whereas T and S showed the highest associations with Affective Communication and Sexual Dissatisfaction. As for DCI, Q showed the strongest association with Negative Dyadic Coping, while T and S with Positive Dyadic Coping and Common Dyadic Coping. Tables 6 and 7, present correlations among PFB indices and MSI-R and DCI across partners.

Impact of Demographic Variables and Participants' Characteristics

Paired sample *t*-tests showed that gender had a significant effect on Q, $t = 5.916$, $p < .001$, and S, $t = 7.700$, $p < .001$, but not on T. Specifically, women scored lower than men on Q

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TABLE 4
Correlations for women ($N = 172$), above diagonal, and men ($N = 172$), below diagonal,
between the PFB scores and the MSI-R scores

	GD	AC	PC	TT	SD	Q	T	S
MSI-R General Distress (GD)	–	−.68**	−.64**	−.65**	.52**	.48**	−.42**	−.26**
MSI-R Affective Communication (AC)	−.60**	–	.67**	.64**	−.58**	−.52**	.65**	.51**
MSI-R Problem-solving Communication (PC)	−.57**	.54**	–	.48**	−.39**	−.70**	.34**	.20**
MSI-R Time Together (TT)	−.49**	.62**	.47**	–	−.58**	−.34**	.54**	.43**
MSI-R Sexual Dissatisfaction (SD)	.39**	−.57**	−.28**	−.53**	–	.26**	−.45**	−.59**
PFB Quarreling (Q)	.49**	−.41**	−.66**	−.32**	.28**	–	−.38**	−.24**
PFB Tenderness (T)	−.37**	.70**	.38**	.62**	−.56**	−.34**	–	.68**
PFB Sexuality (S)	−.22**	.51**	.22**	.51**	−.64**	−.16**	.73**	–

Note. PFB = Partnership Questionnaire; MSI-R = Marital Satisfaction Inventory Revised.
** $p < .01$.

TABLE 5
Correlations for women ($N = 448$), above diagonal, and men ($N = 448$), below diagonal,
between the PFB scores and the DCI scores

	PDC	NDC	CDC	Q	T	S
Positive Dyadic Coping (PDC)	–	−.49**	.55**	−.40**	.64**	.49**
Negative Dyadic Coping (NDC)	−.34**	–	−.31**	.55**	−.47**	−.31**
Common Dyadic Coping (CDC)	.60**	−.28**	–	−.25**	.56**	.56**
PFB Quarreling (Q)	−.36**	.44**	−.28**	–	−.38**	−.24**
PFB Tenderness (T)	.54**	−.37**	.62**	−.34**	–	.68**
PFB Sexuality (S)	.39**	−.22**	.46**	−.16**	.73**	–

Note. PFB = Partnership Questionnaire; DCI = Dyadic Coping Inventory.
** $p < .01$.

TABLE 6
Correlations across women ($N = 172$) and men ($N = 172$)
between the PFB factors scores and the MSI-R indices

	GD$_w$	AC$_w$	PC$_w$	TT$_w$	SD$_w$	Q$_w$	T$_w$	S$_w$
MSI-R General Distress$_m$ (GD$_m$)	.62**	−.40**	−.47**	−.41**	.38**	.35**	−.28**	−.19*

(table continues)

Table 6 (continued)

	GD$_w$	AC$_w$	PC$_w$	TT$_w$	SD$_w$	Q$_w$	T$_w$	S$_w$
MSI-R Affective Communication$_m$ (AC$_m$)	−.51**	.59**	.42**	.50**	−.49**	−.31**	.54**	.46**
MSI-R Problem-solving Communication$_m$ (PC$_m$)	−.49**	.43**	.62**	.35**	−.27**	−.40**	.27**	.15
MSI-R Time Together$_m$ (TT$_m$)	−.46**	.50**	.37**	.68**	−.52**	−.25**	.50**	.44**
MSI-R Sexual Dissatisfaction$_m$ (SD$_m$)	.31**	−.39**	−.28**	−.43**	.59**	.17*	−.42**	−.47**
PFB Quarreling$_m$ (Q$_m$)	.40**	−.35**	−.49**	−.27**	.16*	.47**	−.26**	−.15**
PFB Tenderness$_m$ (T$_m$)	−.38**	.51**	.29**	.46**	−.47**	−.26**	.63**	.52**
PFB Sexuality$_m$ (S$_m$)	−.21**	.38**	.14	.35**	−.48**	−.10	.46**	.53**

Note. PFB = Partnership Questionnaire; MSI-R = Marital Satisfaction Inventory Revised. The subscript *m* refers to men's indices, the subscript *w* to women's indices.
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

TABLE 7
Correlations across women ($N = 448$) and men ($N = 448$)
between the PFB factors scores and the DCI indices

	PDC$_w$	NDC$_w$	CDC$_w$	Q$_w$	T$_w$	S$_w$
Positive Dyadic Coping$_{men}$ (PDC$_m$)	.37**	−.29**	.29**	−.28**	.36**	.27**
Negative Dyadic Coping$_{men}$ (NDC$_m$)	−.23**	.49**	−.24**	.31**	−.30**	−.24**
Common Dyadic Coping$_{men}$ (CDC$_m$)	.39**	−.27**	.53**	−.20**	.47**	.44**
PFB Quarreling$_{men}$ (Q$_m$)	−.24**	.38**	−.22**	.47**	−.26**	−.15**
PFB Tenderness$_{men}$ (T$_m$)	.56**	−.25**	.46**	−.26**	.63**	.52**
PFB Sexuality$_{men}$ (S$_m$)	.27**	−.18**	.32**	−.10	.46**	.53**

Note. PFB = Partnership Questionnaire. The subscript *m* refers to men's indices, the subscript *w* to women's indices.
** $p < .01$.

and higher than their male partners on S. Given the significant correlations we found between age, relationship duration, and the presence/absence of children, we ran a series of multiple regression analyses to assess the effects of these variables together and their potential interactions,

separately for men and women. The outcome variables were the three PFB indices and the predictor variables were age, relationship duration, the presence/absence of children, their respective two-way interactions and their three-way interaction. The Durbin-Watson test was performed to check for multicollinearity. Predictors were standardized before being entered in the regression equation. Whenever an interaction was found significant, simple slope analysis was performed. As for women, only the main effect of the presence/absence of children was significant on the all three PFB indices. In particular, women with children were found to score higher in Q, $\beta = .23$, $t = 2.97$, $p < .01$ ($M = 6.09$, $SD = 4.55$), as well as lower in T, $\beta = -.43$, $t = 5.85$, $p < .001$ ($M = 19.77$, $SD = 5.85$), and S, $\beta = -.25$, $t = -3.14$, $p < .01$ ($M = 7.41$, $SD = 2.21$), than women without children ($M = 4.85$, $SD = 3.66$, for Q; $M = 25.46$, $SD = 4.94$, for T; and $M = 8.73$, $SD = 2.11$ for S). No other main effects nor interactions were found for women's PFB indices.

As for men's Q, we found a significant main effect of the presence/absence of children, $\beta = .30$, $t = 3.78$, $p < .001$, as well as of the relationship duration, $\beta = -.38$, $t = 2.20$, $p < .05$. We also found significant interaction effects, both two-way interactions (between age and relationship duration $\beta = .58$, $t = 3.23$, $p < .01$, the presence of children and relationship duration $\beta = 1.39$, $t = 2.70$, $p < .01$) and the three-way interaction, $\beta = -1.66$, $t = 2.78$, $p < .01$. Simple slope analyses revealed that, in younger men, partners with lower relationship duration scored higher in Q than partners with higher relationship duration, while no significant differences were found in terms of relationship duration for older men (Figure 2). Moreover, for men without children partners with shorter relationship duration scored higher in Q than partners with longer relationship duration, and for men with children, partners with longer relationship duration scored higher in Q than partners with shorter relationship duration (Figure 3). As for the three-way interaction, the simple slope analysis did not reveal any significant difference.
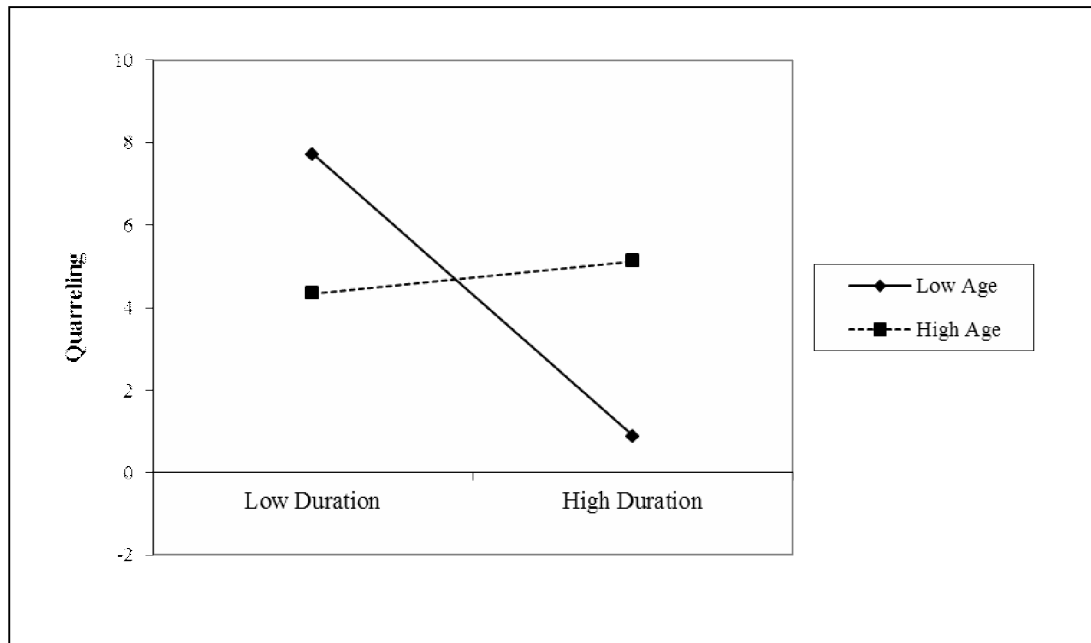

FIGURE 2
Men's Quarreling as a function of age and relationship duration.

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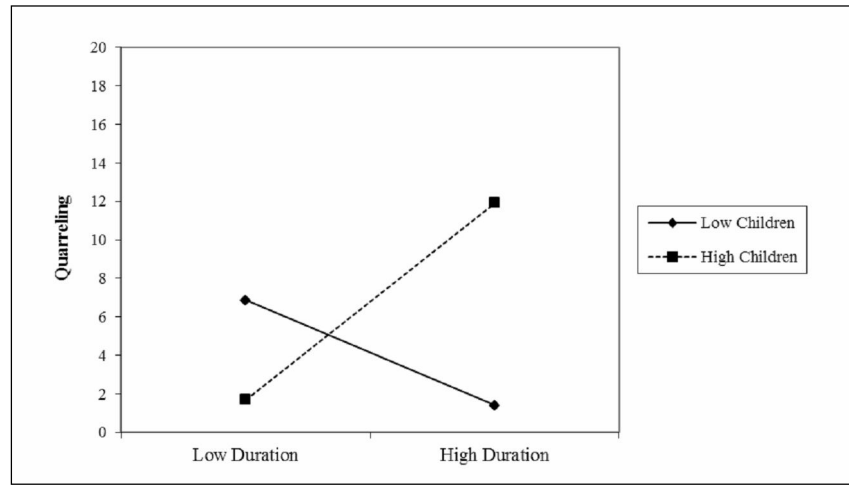Partnership Questionnaire

FIGURE 3
Men's Quarreling as a function of presence/absence of children and relationship duration.

With regard to men's T, we found a significant main effect of the presence/absence of children, β = −.43, t = 5.83, p < .001 as well as a significant interaction between age and the presence/absence of children, β = .26, t = 2.14, p < .05. Simple slope analysis revealed that, in men without children, younger partners scored higher in T than older partners, while no significant differences were found as a function of age for men with children (Figure 4). With regard to men's S, we found a significant main effect of the presence/absence of children only, β = −.16, t = 2.04, p < .05, with men with children (M = 6.74, SD = 2.14) scoring lower in S than men without children (M = 7.85, SD = 2.26). No other main effects or interactions were found for men's S. Note that in all models these effects accounted for 9% or less of the total variance in the outcome variables, with the only exception for the models predicting T for both men and women, in which the explained variance was up to 22% for women and 21% for men.
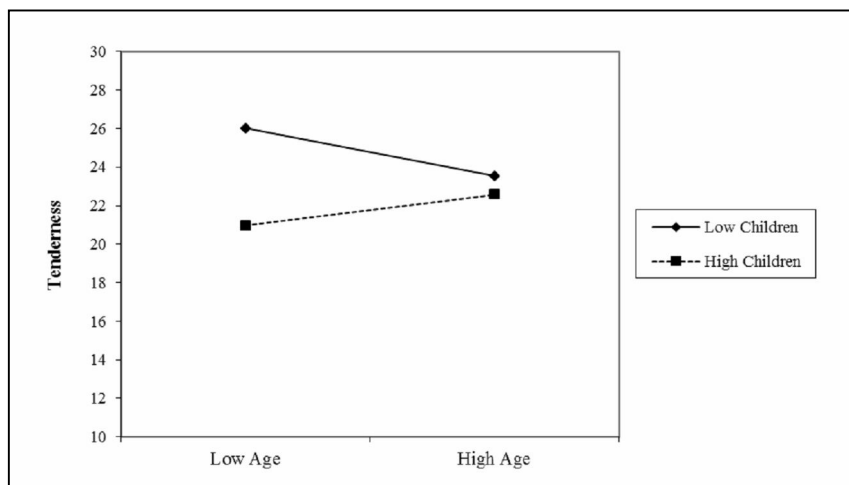

FIGURE 4
Men's Tenderness as a function of presence/absence of children and age.

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We did not observe any significant impact of the level of education on PFB scores, except for women's S, $F(2, 445) = 4.825$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = 0.02$. Women with the lowest level of education reported a lower level of sexual satisfaction ($M = 7.74$, $SD = 2.32$) as compared with women with 13 years of education ($M = 8.59$, $SD = 2.27$). Women with the highest level of education did not differ from the other groups ($M = 8.18$, $SD = 2.08$). Note that these differences accounted only for 2% of the total variance and can be considered of small magnitude (Cohen, 1988).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The present study focused on a measure of relationship quality, the Partnership Questionnaire (PFB; Hahlweg, 1996), with the aims of a) examining its factor structure in an Italian sample through confirmatory factor analyses; b) testing the invariance of this structure across genders; c) analyzing the associations of the PFB scales with the Marital Satisfaction Inventory Revised (MSI-R) and the Dyadic Coping Inventory (DCI); and finally d) examining how sensitive the PFB is to individual characteristics, such as gender, age, relationship duration, the presence of children, and the level of education.

As for the first objective, we were interested in testing the structure of the scale in a different cultural context from the one in which the scale was originally developed and tested. In fact, it is important to assess the applicability of an instrument in different settings, to compare results obtained through that instrument. In the specific context of our Italian sample, we found a structure that, though compatible with the original theoretical basis of the PFB, showed some specificities. Our analyses resulted in a final model in which six out of 30 items were dropped, though the pool of the remaining items still represented all the areas covered by the original pool. The most relevant difference between the original structure and the one we found refers to the high overlap between T and TC which showed strong correlations and were collapsed in a unique factor in the final structure, especially after eliminating problematic items and separating the sexuality factor. In our sample the positive aspects of couple satisfaction, originally tapped by T and TC in the German context, are represented by a dimension of satisfaction for partners' sexual life and by a dimension of displays of tenderness, in terms of interest for the other and expressions of affection. The separation of Sexuality as a specific factor was also in line with the designing of the PFB short version (Kliem, Job, et al., 2012), in which the sexuality items were eliminated. The negative dimension of Q remained the same as the original one: in both the German and Italian contexts, the items referring to partners' conflict expressions reflect one unique dimension.

One aspect of novelty in the present study is the assessment of the invariance of the scale across genders. Our findings show that the final 3-factor model, composed of T, S, and Q, is gender invariant, once item 8 was dropped. Item 8 ("When we quarrel, he/she showers me with insults"), in fact, showed significant differences between women and men, and specifically, showed higher factor loadings on the Q dimension for men than for women.

The adequacy of the final 3-factor model was further confirmed in the analyses of the associations between T, S, and Q scales and the corresponding scales of another measure of satisfaction, the MSI-R, and the positive and negative dyadic coping scales, which showed the expected sizes and directions.

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As for the demographic characteristics, in general, we can observe that they have only a limited impact on partners' scores in the three final indices (T, S, and Q), as shown by the low percentages of explained variance in the analyses performed. In particular, among the differences emerging, some were explained by gender: while women and men do not show different scores in the tenderness dimension, they manifest different levels of quarreling and sexuality. Women's lower scores in quarreling may reflect the fact that women were found to be uneasy when expressing negative emotions (e.g., disappointment, anger) to others (Stoppard & Gunn Gruchy, 1993; Timmers, Fischer, & Manstead, 2003), and therefore, they may be less prone to report conflictual exchanges in their couple. With regard to age, relationship duration, and the presence/absence of children, it seems that especially presence/absence of children was relevant to differentiate among partners in terms of their indices of relationship quality. In particular, for S in both men and women only the presence/absence of children explained the differences among partners in sexual satisfaction, with partners with children scoring lower in sexual satisfaction than partners without children. As for Q and T, for women, again only the presence/absence of children explained the differences emerged, with women with children scoring higher in Q and lower in T than women without children. For men, the presence/absence of children moderated the effects of their relationship duration as well as that of age on Q and T. Men's quarreling increased with relationship duration only for men with children, while it diminished with duration for men without children and for younger men. Men's tenderness diminished with age, but only for men's without children, while it did not change for men with children. This overall pattern of results seems in accordance with research showing the negative impact of childbirth on couple satisfaction (Fearnley Shapiro, Gottman, & Carrère, 2000), with partners having children showing higher levels of quarreling and lower levels of tenderness and sexual satisfaction. Finally, with regard to the level of education, scores' report on the three final scales were not affected by years of education, thereby showing good applicability with partners of different education levels.

To better interpret the findings of the present work we need to acknowledge the limitations of this study. First, the convenience sample does not allow us to generalize these results to a wider population, and replication of these analyses on different samples are warranted. In particular, replicating the findings on a clinical sample would allow us to compare community and clinical couples and verify whether the scale could be a useful tool to discriminate between the two types of sample. Second, we did not test the stability of the factor scores across time. Third, only a limited set of demographic variables was chosen for the analyses. In particular, we did not have information regarding partners' cohabitation, which could be interestingly related to some of the dimensions measured by the PFB (e.g., what partners do before they go to sleep or in the evenings, cf. items # 5 and # 25; the time spent together during the day, cf. item # 20; etc.).

Despite these limitations, the study presents a number of strengths that support our findings: first, the replication of findings in two equivalent samples, in each of which participants' data were independent; and second, the examination of concurrent validity of the scale. Moreover, this study was the first, to our knowledge, to analyze the gender invariance of the factor structure of PFB.

In conclusion, the Italian version of the PFB, in the final 3-factor structure, has good psychometric properties as well as concurrent validity, it is gender invariant, and sensitive to partners' characteristics in ways concordant with the relevant literature. For all these reasons, the Italian version of the PFB, taking into account the specificities highlighted in the present study, can

be a useful measure of marital quality for research as well as for intervention purposes with community couples (e.g., to screen partners' relationship quality on admission to a preventive intervention or a couple skill-training program), though its use in the diagnosis of clinical couples, as already noted, warrants additional research.

NOTES

1. An alternative strategy could be the one proposed by Kenny, Kashy, and Cook (2006), in which husbands' and wives' factor solutions are estimated simultaneously in a single model and constraints on corresponding loadings are placed. In this model, latent factors as well as errors across the same indicators should be allowed to correlate across men and women, reflecting nonindependence across the two members of the couple; additionally, factor loadings on each dimension should set to be equal for the two members of the couple so as to test invariance. We evaluated pros and cons of both procedures, when planning the analyses, in light of our objectives (i.e., obtaining a final structure coherent with the aims of the scale and invariant across genders), and we chose the one we adopted in the present work because it was adequate to reach the above goals. Although, by splitting the sample we did not measure partners' interdependence and therefore we did not obtain this additional piece of information, we counterbalanced this disadvantage in our procedure with the opportunity to replicate the models we tested in an equivalent sample.
2. Since the sample was composed of participants from different research projects, not all participants completed the MSI-R scale. The associations between the PFB and this measure was therefore performed on a subsample of 172 participants (86 men and 86 women). No significant differences were found between the total sample and this subsample in terms of demographic variables (age, relationship duration, and level of education) and in terms of the PFB scales, with the only exception of Q, with the subsample partners scoring higher in Q than those in the total sample.

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Partnership Questionnaire

APPENDIX

Partnership Questionnaire (Hawhleg, 1996): Italian Version

Response scale: 1 = *mai* [*never*]; 2 = *raramente* [*rarely*]; 3 = *spesso* [*often*]; 4 = *molto spesso* [*very often*]

Risponda alle seguenti domande solo se gli aspetti trattati riguardano la Sua relazione di coppia
[Answer to the following questions, only if they apply to your couple relationship]

1. Il mio/la mia partner mi rimprovera per errori commessi nel passato [My partner keeps casting up mistakes which I made in the past]

2. Durante i preliminari il mio/la mia partner mi accarezza in modo da eccitarmi [My partner caresses me during foreplay so that I get sexually excited]

3. Penso che il mio/la mia partner mi trovi fisicamente attraente [I notice that my partner finds me physically attractive]

4. Il mio/la mia partner dice di essere contento/a quando è con me [When we were alone together my partner feels happy]

5. Prima di dormire, a letto, ci coccoliamo [Before going to sleep we kiss and cuddle each other]

6. Il mio/la mia partner mi rimprovera per qualsiasi cosa [My partner makes a row about nothing just out of spite]

7. Il mio/la mia partner mi confida i suoi pensieri e i suoi sentimenti [I think that my partner tells me frankly about his/her thoughts and feelings]

8. Quando litighiamo, il mio/la mia partner mi insulta [When we quarrel my partner showers me with insults]

9. Il mio/la mia partner soddisfa i miei desideri sessuali [My partner reacts positively to my sexual approaches]

10. Facciamo insieme progetti per il futuro [We make plans for the future together]

11. Quando il mio/la mia partner mi racconta qualcosa che riguarda il suo lavoro, vorrebbe conoscere la mia opinione a proposito [When my partner tells me about his/her work he/she likes to know my opinions]

12. Facciamo insieme dei progetti per il week-end [We make plans for the weekend together]

13. Il mio/la mia partner mi tocca con tenerezza e trovo che ciò sia piacevole [My partner caresses me gently and I find it very pleasant]

14. Il mio/la mia partner mi fa dei complimenti sinceri per il mio aspetto fisico [My partner gives me sincere compliments on my appearance]

15. Il mio/la mia partner mi parla di cose inerenti la sua vita professionale [My partner discusses matters concerning his/her working life with me]

16. Il mio/la mia partner si sforza di essere attento/a ai miei desideri e li esaudisce al momento giusto [My partner is attentive to my needs and wishes and acts accordingly]

17. Il mio/la mia partner mi critica in modo sarcastico [My partner criticises me in a sarcastic way]

18. Il mio/la mia partner disprezza le mie opinioni [My partner expresses disapproval of my opinions]

19. Quando il mio/la mia partner si comporta male nei miei confronti, in seguito se ne scusa [When my partner has obviously treated me wrongly he/she apologises]

20. Di solito, alla sera, stiamo insieme per almeno mezz'ora [Usually, we stay together in the evenings for at least half an hour]

21. Quando litighiamo, non ne usciamo più [When we quarrel we can never end the quarrel]

22. Se qualcosa va storto, il mio/la mia partner dà la colpa a me [My partner blames me when something goes wrong]

23. Il mio/la mia partner mi abbraccia [My partner puts his/her arms round me]

24. Durante una discussione il mio/la mia partner urla contro di me [During a quarrel my partner shouts at me]

25. Alla sera il mio/la mia partner mi chiede com'è andata la giornata e che cosa ho fatto [In the evenings my partner asks me how things have gone for me during the day]

26. Quando litighiamo, il mio/la mia partner stravolge tutto ciò che dico [When we quarrel my partner turns round what I say so as to mean the opposite]

27. Il mio/la mia partner mi parla dei suoi desideri sessuali [My partner tells me about his/her sexual wishes]

28. Il mio/la mia partner mi accarezza teneramente [My partner caresses me tenderly]

29. Il mio/la mia partner mi dice che mi vuole bene [My partner tells me that he/she loves me]

30. Il mio/la mia partner limita la mia libertà personale [My partner limits my personal freedom]

Come valuterebbe la Sua relazione di coppia in questo momento?
[At this moment, how do you evaluate your couple relationship?]

❑ molto infelice [very unhappy]
❑ infelice [unhappy]
❑ piuttosto infelice [somewhat unhappy]
❑ piuttosto felice [somewhat happy]
❑ felice [happy]
❑ molto felice [very happy]