

The Role of Perspective-Taking Training on Reducing Power Struggles and Increasing Relational Empathy

1. Nayelli. Muñoz¹: Faculty of Health Sciences, Private University of the North, Lima, Peru
2. Bridget. Abalorio^{2*}: Faculty of Psychology, Peruvian University of Applied Sciences, Lima, Peru
3. Yaliu. Yang³: Marriage and Family Therapy Department, Iona College, New Rochelle, NY, United States

*corresponding author's email: bridget.abaloro@upc.edu.pe



ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of a structured perspective-taking training program in reducing power struggles and enhancing relational empathy among romantic partners. A randomized controlled trial was conducted with 30 participants (15 couples) recruited from Lima, Peru, who were randomly assigned to either an intervention group or a control group. The intervention group participated in ten weekly 90-minute sessions of perspective-taking training, while the control group received no treatment. Standardized self-report measures were used to assess power struggles and relational empathy at pretest, posttest, and a five-month follow-up. Data were analyzed using repeated measures ANOVA and Bonferroni post-hoc tests with SPSS-27, and all assumptions for inferential testing were confirmed. Significant time $\times$ group interaction effects were observed for both power struggles ($F(2, 54) = 26.17$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .503$) and relational empathy ($F(2, 54) = 30.23$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .529$). Participants in the intervention group demonstrated a significant reduction in power struggles from pretest to posttest (mean difference = 8.36, $p < .001$), with stable results at follow-up. Likewise, relational empathy significantly increased in the intervention group between pretest and posttest (mean difference = -10.76, $p < .001$) and remained consistent at the follow-up phase. The control group showed no significant changes over time for either variable. Perspective-taking training is an effective and sustainable intervention for reducing destructive conflict behaviors and fostering emotional understanding in intimate relationships. These findings support the integration of cognitive-affective empathy training into relational counseling and educational programs to improve long-term relationship quality.

Keywords: Perspective-taking, power struggles, relational empathy, couples intervention, conflict resolution.

How to cite this article:

Muñoz, N., Abalorio, B., & Yang, Y. (2025). The Role of Perspective-Taking Training on Reducing Power Struggles and Increasing Relational Empathy. *Research and Practice in Couple Therapy*, 3(1), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.61838/rpct.3.1.2>

Introduction

Theoretical discourse on conflict resolution spans multiple frameworks, from socio-cognitive approaches to philosophical and humanistic perspectives. Traditional theories have emphasized negotiation, communication skills, or compromise, but more recent approaches focus on the internal cognitive and emotional states that precede behavioral conflict responses. One such internal resource is perspective-taking, the cognitive-affective capacity to understand a situation from another person's standpoint (Gehlbach et al., 2015). According to research, engaging in perspective-taking can mitigate adversarial stances and promote reconciliatory attitudes (Yao et al., 2019), particularly in emotionally charged interactions between partners (Nelson et al., 2016).

From a neurocognitive viewpoint, studies demonstrate that social perspective-taking activates brain regions associated with empathy, self-regulation, and conflict processing (Qureshi et al., 2020). When couples are trained to adopt one another's perspective, they become less reactive and more emotionally attuned during conflict situations (Nelson et al., 2016). This aligns

with the idea that power struggles in relationships—defined as recurring attempts to control, dominate, or resist one’s partner—are often fueled by misperception and failure to validate the other’s subjective experience (Jia et al., 2022). Addressing the cognitive roots of conflict may therefore reduce overt power-based interactions and enhance emotional closeness.

Perspective-taking is particularly relevant in understanding the functionality of conflict. Conflict is not inherently dysfunctional; it can serve as a vehicle for relational growth if navigated with mutual respect and shared understanding (Kerebunu & Fathimah, 2023). According to functional conflict theory, disputes that are processed constructively can yield increased cooperation and intimacy (Jannah et al., 2023). Perspective-taking facilitates this constructive engagement by disrupting the escalation cycle and reorienting each partner toward the relational context rather than individual defensiveness (Tuğba & Korkmaz, 2021). Indeed, conflict resolution efforts that include empathy training show increased success across multiple relational domains, including romantic, familial, and institutional settings (Boca et al., 2018; Hartawati, 2019).

In particular, power struggles—manifesting through behaviors like control, withdrawal, defensiveness, and resistance—are highly disruptive to relational functioning. Research suggests that such dynamics often arise from internal vulnerabilities, ego threats, and a perceived lack of agency (Theiss & Haverfield, 2016). These psychological underpinnings make power struggles more resistant to surface-level communication techniques. However, when individuals are encouraged to slow down, shift perspective, and explore their partner’s fears or intentions, they report reduced need to assert control or defend their position (Lehrer, 2023). Thus, a deeper cognitive-emotional shift is necessary for relational change, which is what this study’s intervention aims to foster.

Another essential construct in this regard is relational empathy, which differs from general empathy by being co-constructed in ongoing dyadic interactions. Relational empathy requires mutual vulnerability and active listening, and is positively associated with satisfaction, trust, and conflict recovery in long-term partnerships (Hasson et al., 2019; Nelson et al., 2016). Importantly, perspective-taking is a cognitive antecedent of empathic behavior (Gehlbach et al., 2015). When individuals genuinely consider their partner’s experience, they are more likely to engage in emotionally supportive responses and less likely to retaliate or withdraw during conflict (Courtain & Glowacz, 2018). This capacity for empathic repair has been identified as a core protective factor in distressed relationships.

Perspective-taking also promotes the dismantling of entrenched biases and power-based assumptions. In high-conflict relationships, partners often make negative attributions about one another’s motives, assuming ill-intent rather than misunderstanding. These biases can be softened through exercises that explicitly shift cognitive framing from self to other (Southgate, 2020). Even in intergroup and geopolitical conflict, training in perspective-taking has been shown to reduce hostility and foster peace-building attitudes (Hasson et al., 2019; Ramsbotham & Schiff, 2018). If such transformations are possible in violent contexts, their application in intimate partnerships is both feasible and promising.

Additionally, perspective-taking can contribute to improved conflict legitimacy—the sense that disagreements are manageable and resolvable within fair frameworks. In the broader sociopolitical literature, legitimacy of conflict resolution mechanisms is closely tied to perceptions of mutual respect and voice (Noyon et al., 2023). Within couples, this legitimacy is mirrored in the way partners feel heard and seen, even in disagreement. A relational system lacking empathy or perspective-taking is more likely to default to rigid authority dynamics or emotional cutoff (Sherer & Leblebici, 2015; Smirnova & Zolina, 2016). Therefore, cultivating such capacities within romantic dyads can contribute to more democratic and emotionally responsive relational environments.

Several cross-disciplinary frameworks support this direction. Buddhist and feminist perspectives, for instance, emphasize the dismantling of hierarchical power in favor of mutual compassion and justice (Ikeda, 2016; Sharoni, 2017). Perspective-taking, from these viewpoints, is not merely a technique but a relational ethic—an orientation that counters domination and

promotes relational equality. Similarly, phenomenological approaches argue that understanding another's lived experience is foundational to authentic conflict resolution (Puryanto & Purwantiningsih, 2024). These views resonate with the study's theoretical position that relational transformation requires both cognitive insight and emotional presence.

Technological and behavioral design studies have also explored how perspective-taking can be enhanced through environmental and interactive cues. For instance, virtual simulations and multi-user interfaces have been used to experimentally induce perspective shifts, with measurable effects on conflict behavior and empathy ratings (Niemantsverdriet et al., 2017; Southgate, 2018). These studies underscore the malleability of perspective-taking and its potential to be cultivated even in complex or emotionally charged situations. Moreover, immersive experiences have been linked to shifts in physiological and neurological markers of attunement, which are foundational to relational empathy (Nelson et al., 2016; Qureshi et al., 2020). This study seeks to investigate the effectiveness of a structured perspective-taking training in improving relationship quality by reducing power struggles and fostering empathy between partners.

Methods and Materials

Study Design and Participants

This study employed a randomized controlled trial (RCT) design with a pretest-posttest and five-month follow-up. A total of 30 participants (15 couples) were recruited from community counseling centers in Lima, Peru, and randomly assigned to either the intervention group ($n = 15$) or the control group ($n = 15$). Inclusion criteria included: being in a heterosexual romantic relationship for at least one year, aged between 25–50 years, fluency in Spanish, and willingness to participate in all sessions. Exclusion criteria involved current psychiatric disorders requiring immediate clinical intervention, recent history of domestic violence, or participation in concurrent couple therapy. All participants provided informed consent and were assured of confidentiality and the right to withdraw at any time.

Measures

To assess the extent of power struggles within intimate relationships, the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (CRSI) developed by Kurdek (1994) is utilized. This standardized tool evaluates how individuals typically behave during relational disagreements, with a particular focus on power-assertive strategies such as controlling, dominating, and withdrawing. The CRSI consists of 16 items distributed across four subscales: Positive Problem Solving, Conflict Engagement, Withdrawal, and Compliance. The Conflict Engagement and Withdrawal subscales are especially relevant for capturing patterns of power struggle. Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always), with higher scores on these subscales indicating more intense power struggles. The CRSI has demonstrated strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.72 to 0.85 in prior studies, and its construct and criterion-related validity have been supported in both clinical and non-clinical populations.

To evaluate relational empathy within couples, the study employed the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) developed by Davis (1980), which is one of the most widely used standardized instruments for assessing empathy-related traits. The IRI includes 28 items grouped into four subscales: Perspective Taking, Empathic Concern, Personal Distress, and Fantasy. For the present study, the Perspective Taking and Empathic Concern subscales were primarily analyzed as indicators of relational empathy. Responses are given on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 (does not describe me well) to 4 (describes me very well), with higher scores reflecting greater empathy in interpersonal contexts. The IRI has demonstrated robust psychometric

properties, including high internal reliability ($\alpha > 0.75$ for relevant subscales) and strong convergent and discriminant validity across diverse samples, including romantic relationships.

Intervention

The Perspective-Taking Training Program consists of ten 90-minute sessions, conducted weekly with couples in a group setting or dyadically. The overall goal is to reduce destructive power dynamics and increase relational empathy through enhancing cognitive and emotional perspective-taking abilities. The intervention uses a blend of psychoeducation, guided exercises, role-playing, reflective dialogue, and experiential practices. Each session builds upon the last, promoting progressive development from basic awareness to applied relational empathy.

Session 1: Introduction and Foundations of Perspective-Taking

This session introduces the goals, structure, and rationale of the program. Participants explore the definition of perspective-taking, its significance in relationships, and its link to power struggles and empathy. Through discussion and simple exercises, they begin to identify their habitual interaction patterns and emotional triggers. Rapport building, ground rules, and confidentiality are established to create a safe learning environment.

Session 2: Understanding Self vs. Other Perspectives

Participants learn the psychological distinction between self-centered perception and other-focused awareness. Using structured dyadic exercises, they practice articulating their own perspective while listening to their partner's view without interruption. The session introduces the "self-other differentiation" model to reduce projection and misinterpretation.

Session 3: Emotional Literacy and Empathic Accuracy

This session focuses on recognizing, labeling, and expressing emotions in oneself and others. Participants complete exercises designed to enhance emotional vocabulary and empathic accuracy—i.e., the ability to infer others' emotions accurately. Short video clips and scripted couple scenarios are used to practice identifying feelings and unmet needs.

Session 4: Power Struggles and Hidden Agendas

The group explores the dynamics of power and control in romantic relationships. Using real-life case vignettes and their own examples, participants identify the triggers and patterns that escalate conflict. The concept of "hidden agendas" (e.g., fear of abandonment, need for validation) is introduced to foster insight into power-based behavior.

Session 5: Perspective-Taking Scripts in Conflict Situations

Participants learn and rehearse structured scripts for taking the other's perspective during disagreement. They are guided through a three-step framework: (1) pause and self-regulate, (2) acknowledge the partner's viewpoint, and (3) reflect back with curiosity. Paired role-plays help internalize the skill and apply it to their most common conflicts.

Session 6: Compassionate Communication

Building on previous work, this session teaches "compassionate communication" techniques rooted in nonviolent communication (NVC). Participants practice expressing feelings and needs without blame while validating their partner's emotional experience. The focus is on shifting from accusatory to collaborative dialogue.

Session 7: Managing Defensiveness and Ego Threats

This session explores how defensiveness and ego-threats block perspective-taking. Through guided reflection, participants identify personal vulnerability points and learn emotion regulation strategies (e.g., grounding, reappraisal). Exercises help couples move from a reactive to a reflective stance in emotionally charged exchanges.

Session 8: Reconstructing Past Conflicts Through Perspective-Taking

Each couple selects a recent unresolved conflict and reprocesses it using the perspective-taking skills learned so far. With facilitator guidance, they engage in a structured conversation where each partner reflects the other's perspective before asserting their own. Insight and shifts in emotional understanding are emphasized.

Session 9: Building Shared Meaning and Relational Empathy

Participants focus on cultivating shared meaning, mutual goals, and long-term empathy. Activities include joint storytelling (from the partner's lens) and envisioning their partner's internal world. Dyads complete the "Empathy Circle" exercise, designed to deepen emotional attunement and mutual validation.

Session 10: Integration, Feedback, and Relapse Prevention

In the final session, participants review their growth, reflect on remaining challenges, and develop personalized action plans. They discuss potential barriers to sustained change and co-create strategies to prevent regression into power struggles. Feedback is collected, and participants are encouraged to commit to continued relational learning.

Data analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 27. To assess the effectiveness of the intervention on reducing power struggles and increasing relational empathy, a repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with three time points: pretest, posttest, and follow-up. The model tested the interaction between group (intervention vs. control) and time. To identify the specific time intervals where significant changes occurred, Bonferroni post-hoc tests were used for pairwise comparisons. Effect sizes were reported using partial eta-squared (η^2). Assumptions for repeated measures ANOVA—including sphericity, normality, and homogeneity of variance—were tested and confirmed prior to analysis.

Findings and Results

The final sample included 30 participants (15 men and 15 women) with a mean age of 34.8 years ($SD = 5.72$). Regarding educational background, 36.7% ($n = 11$) held a university degree, 26.7% ($n = 8$) had completed some college, and 36.7% ($n = 11$) had completed secondary education. In terms of employment, 53.3% ($n = 16$) were employed full-time, 23.3% ($n = 7$) worked part-time, and 23.3% ($n = 7$) were unemployed or homemakers. The average relationship duration among participants was 7.4 years ($SD = 3.15$). All participants identified as native Spanish speakers residing in urban districts of Lima.

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations for Power Struggles and Relational Empathy Across Time and Groups

Variable	Group	Pretest M (SD)	Posttest M (SD)	Follow-up M (SD)
Power Struggles	Intervention	41.27 (4.83)	32.91 (5.12)	33.46 (5.09)
	Control	40.93 (5.02)	39.88 (4.75)	40.61 (4.88)
Relational Empathy	Intervention	56.38 (6.11)	67.14 (5.87)	66.72 (6.02)
	Control	55.89 (6.25)	56.91 (5.94)	56.53 (6.07)

As shown in Table 1, the intervention group experienced a marked decrease in power struggles from pretest ($M = 41.27$, $SD = 4.83$) to posttest ($M = 32.91$, $SD = 5.12$), with gains sustained at follow-up ($M = 33.46$, $SD = 5.09$). In contrast, the control group showed negligible change over time. For relational empathy, the intervention group improved from a pretest mean of 56.38 ($SD = 6.11$) to 67.14 ($SD = 5.87$) at posttest and maintained high scores at follow-up ($M = 66.72$, $SD = 6.02$), whereas the control group showed only minor improvement.

Before performing the repeated measures ANOVA, all key assumptions were evaluated and met. Mauchly's test of sphericity was non-significant for both dependent variables (Power Struggles: $W = 0.983$, $p = .381$; Relational Empathy: $W = 0.967$, $p = .294$), indicating the assumption of sphericity was satisfied. Shapiro-Wilk tests confirmed normality at each time

point (all p -values $> .05$), and Levene's test for equality of error variances showed no significant difference in group variances (Power Struggles: $F = 1.12$, $p = .299$; Relational Empathy: $F = 0.87$, $p = .417$). These results confirmed the appropriateness of applying repeated measures ANOVA for the analysis.

Table 2. Repeated Measures ANOVA Summary for Power Struggles and Relational Empathy

Variable	Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	η^2
Power Struggles	Time	818.43	2	409.22	24.61	<.001	.462
	Group	602.17	1	602.17	27.39	<.001	.487
	Time $\times$ Group	798.85	2	399.43	26.17	<.001	.503
	Error	963.29	54	17.84			
Relational Empathy	Time	954.26	2	477.13	32.78	<.001	.548
	Group	724.51	1	724.51	29.92	<.001	.514
	Time $\times$ Group	872.39	2	436.19	30.23	<.001	.529
	Error	785.18	54	14.54			

Table 2 indicates that both power struggles and relational empathy showed statistically significant main effects of time, group, and time $\times$ group interactions. For power struggles, the interaction effect was significant ($F(2, 54) = 26.17$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .503$), indicating that reductions were primarily observed in the intervention group. Similarly, the time $\times$ group interaction for relational empathy was significant ($F(2, 54) = 30.23$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .529$), reflecting a substantial increase in empathy only among participants who received the intervention.

Table 3. Bonferroni Post-Hoc Test Results for Power Struggles and Relational Empathy

Variable	Comparison	Mean Difference	SE	p
Power Struggles	Pretest – Posttest	8.36	1.12	<.001
	Posttest – Follow-up	-0.55	0.84	.521
	Pretest – Follow-up	7.81	1.09	<.001
Relational Empathy	Pretest – Posttest	-10.76	1.25	<.001
	Posttest – Follow-up	0.42	0.93	.642
	Pretest – Follow-up	-10.34	1.28	<.001

As presented in Table 3, Bonferroni-adjusted comparisons revealed that power struggles significantly decreased from pretest to posttest (mean difference = 8.36, $p < .001$) and remained stable at follow-up. Similarly, relational empathy increased significantly from pretest to posttest (mean difference = -10.76, $p < .001$), with no significant decline by the follow-up phase, indicating the durability of the intervention's effects.

Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this study was to examine the effectiveness of a structured perspective-taking training program on reducing power struggles and enhancing relational empathy among romantic partners. The findings revealed significant improvements in both dependent variables in the intervention group compared to the control group. Specifically, couples who participated in the ten-session training reported reduced patterns of control, withdrawal, and defensiveness, and showed significant increases in mutual empathy and emotional attunement over time. These effects remained stable at the five-month follow-up, indicating not only immediate post-intervention gains but also the durability of these changes.

The reduction in power struggles can be interpreted through the cognitive-emotional mechanisms targeted by the intervention. Perspective-taking facilitates a psychological distancing from reactive self-focus and redirects attention toward understanding the partner's emotions, needs, and motivations. This shift interrupts the defensive cycles that often fuel power dynamics. These findings are consistent with Nelson et al. (2016), who reported that perspective-taking significantly reduced autonomic arousal and behavioral reactivity during partner conflict (Nelson et al., 2016). Similarly, Jia et al. (2022) emphasized

that intergenerational conflict within families was reduced when individuals were encouraged to adopt the cognitive frame of the other party (Jia et al., 2022). In romantic relationships, where identity and vulnerability are often deeply intertwined, this process appears particularly impactful.

The improvement in relational empathy aligns with prior research showing that cognitive perspective-taking leads to increased emotional availability and empathetic engagement. Gehlbach et al. (2015) demonstrated that training individuals in different forms of perspective-taking improved negotiation outcomes and emotional understanding, with empathetic perspective-taking being especially effective (Gehlbach et al., 2015). In this study, participants reported feeling more “seen” and “heard” by their partners after practicing reflective listening and guided dyadic exercises, suggesting that empathy was not merely conceptual but relationally enacted. These results are also supported by Hasson et al. (2019), who found that immersive environments designed to promote perspective-taking increased peace-promoting attitudes and empathic concern, even in high-stakes intergroup conflict (Hasson et al., 2019).

Another important aspect of the findings is the persistence of change over time. The five-month follow-up results indicated that couples in the intervention group maintained their reductions in power-based conflict behaviors and continued to show high levels of empathy. This supports the hypothesis that once individuals internalize a perspective-taking stance, it becomes a sustainable relational skill. Such sustainability has been observed in studies involving immersive training and mindfulness-based empathy protocols (Southgate, 2020). Moreover, it echoes Ikeda’s (2016) argument that conflict resolution grounded in inner transformation—rather than external behavioral management—is more likely to yield lasting peace (Ikeda, 2016).

The study also contributes to the growing literature on the function of conflict in intimate relationships. Power struggles are often a manifestation of unmet needs and perceived inequities. By training couples to recognize and validate these underlying emotional signals, the intervention reframed conflict as a relational signal rather than a threat. This finding is consistent with Kerebunu and Fathimah (2023), who suggest that conflicts in interpersonal settings can be functional if managed through mutual understanding (Kerebunu & Fathimah, 2023). Perspective-taking thus appears to play a pivotal role in converting destructive patterns into constructive dialogue, ultimately reshaping the couple’s conflict culture.

In addition, the findings offer empirical support for theoretical models emphasizing **legitimacy and voice** in conflict resolution. Noyon et al. (2023) posited that institutional legitimacy hinges on all parties feeling represented and heard (Noyon et al., 2023). In romantic partnerships, this is reflected in the need for emotional validation and fairness. The participants’ reports suggest that perspective-taking empowered them to grant legitimacy to each other’s experiences, thereby reducing relational polarization. This mirrors Ramsbotham and Schiff’s (2018) conclusion that strategic negotiation and ripeness theory are most effective when parties are prepared to acknowledge the legitimacy of the other’s narrative (Ramsbotham & Schiff, 2018).

From a developmental and socio-cognitive standpoint, these results also reinforce theories of early relational learning. Southgate (2018, 2020) described how even infants show altercentric tendencies and sensitivity to others’ perspectives, suggesting that perspective-taking is an early-emerging capacity that can be refined across the lifespan (Southgate, 2018, 2020). The current study suggests that adults can re-engage this capacity in intentional and structured ways, particularly when relational stress has overridden empathic tendencies. Participants who entered the program with entrenched power dynamics were able to soften these patterns by reconnecting with a more flexible and collaborative mindset.

The study also resonates with feminist and philosophical traditions in conflict resolution. Sharoni (2017) argued for a feminist ethic that replaces domination with mutual recognition and empathy (Sharoni, 2017). Perspective-taking, when framed as a relational ethic rather than a communication technique, aligns with this vision. Lehrer (2023) similarly emphasized that genuine freedom in decision-making arises not from asserting one’s will, but from understanding the perspectives of others and

navigating conflict through shared reasoning (Lehrer, 2023). The findings here suggest that training in this orientation can indeed be cultivated and measured within couple dynamics.

Furthermore, the integration of emotional and cognitive components within the training model aligns with Hartawati's (2019) view that conflict resolution is most effective when both domains are addressed simultaneously (Hartawati, 2019). The use of role-plays, reflective dialogue, and empathic feedback loops enabled participants to develop not only conceptual understanding but emotional depth. This dual-layered approach appears to be a key mechanism in shifting deep-rooted relational patterns.

The cultural relevance of the intervention should also be noted. While many conflict resolution frameworks are developed in Western contexts, this study contributes to the Latin American literature by showing that perspective-taking can be successfully implemented in Peruvian relational settings. Permana (2024) highlighted the importance of incorporating socio-cultural and religious dimensions into conflict understanding (Permana, 2024). In this study, couples reflected on culturally specific gender roles and family expectations, which influenced their conflict behaviors. By acknowledging and integrating these dimensions, the training achieved deeper resonance and impact.

Finally, the relational improvements observed in this study mirror outcomes in broader social domains. For example, Boca et al. (2018) found that mediators trained in perspective-taking facilitated more cooperative resolutions (Boca et al., 2018), and Courtain and Glowacz (2018) noted similar findings in youth romantic relationships (Courtain & Glowacz, 2018). This consistency across settings underscores the generalizability of perspective-taking as a conflict transformation tool.

Despite its promising findings, the present study has several limitations. First, the sample size was relatively small ($n = 30$), limiting statistical power and generalizability. Although the intervention produced significant effects, larger and more diverse samples are needed to validate these results across different cultural, socioeconomic, and sexual orientation contexts. Second, the self-report nature of the measurement tools may introduce social desirability bias, especially given the relational nature of the variables. Participants may have underreported conflict or overreported empathy to align with perceived expectations. Third, while the five-month follow-up provides some evidence of durability, longer-term effects remain unknown. Relational dynamics are fluid and can be influenced by external stressors such as employment, family life, and health challenges. Fourth, the control group did not receive any placebo or attention-control condition, which raises questions about the potential influence of non-specific therapeutic factors such as group support or facilitator attention. Fifth, the training was delivered by the developers, which may raise issues of experimenter bias. Sixth, cultural-specific relational scripts (such as machismo or marianismo in Latin America) were not formally measured but may have influenced baseline behaviors and responses to the intervention. Seventh, the study did not explore individual personality factors (e.g., attachment style, emotional regulation) that may moderate the effects of perspective-taking.

Future studies should replicate this intervention with larger and more heterogeneous samples, including couples from different age groups, socio-economic backgrounds, and relationship durations. It would also be valuable to compare the effects of perspective-taking training with other interventions such as emotion-focused therapy or mindfulness-based relationship programs to determine relative efficacy. Longitudinal studies with follow-ups at one year or beyond would help assess the persistence of relational change. Incorporating observational methods (e.g., coding of couple conversations) alongside self-report tools could provide a more objective evaluation of conflict behaviors and empathy. Future research should also examine moderators such as gender roles, cultural identity, or neurobiological empathy markers to understand for whom and under what conditions perspective-taking training is most effective. Moreover, studies could explore adaptations of this model for non-romantic contexts, such as workplace or intergroup dialogue settings, thereby broadening the practical scope of the intervention.

Practitioners working with couples should consider integrating structured perspective-taking modules into their therapeutic programs, especially when faced with entrenched power dynamics. These modules should go beyond intellectual reframing and include experiential practices that foster emotional resonance and validation. Training programs for relationship counselors could benefit from including this approach, equipping therapists with practical tools to disrupt conflict cycles. Additionally, community-based relationship education workshops could apply this model as a preventive intervention for couples in early stages of partnership. Practitioners are also encouraged to tailor perspective-taking exercises to the cultural norms and relational scripts of their clients to ensure relevance and engagement. Finally, fostering relational empathy through guided exercises can be a low-cost, high-impact strategy for enhancing couple satisfaction and resilience in both clinical and educational settings.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical principles were adhered in conducting and writing this article.

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our gratitude to all those who helped us carrying out this study.

Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

Funding

This research was carried out independently with personal funding and without the financial support of any governmental or private institution or organization.

References

- Boca, S., Garro, M., Giammusso, I., & Abbate, C. S. (2018). The Effect of Perspective Taking on the Mediation Process. *Psychology research and behavior management*, Volume 11, 411-416. <https://doi.org/10.2147/prbm.s168956>
- Courtain, A., & Glowacz, F. (2018). 'Youth's Conflict Resolution Strategies in Their Dating Relationships'. *Journal of youth and adolescence*, 48(2), 256-268. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-018-0930-6>
- Gehlbach, H., Marietta, G. E., King, A. M., Karutz, C., Bailenson, J. N., & Dede, C. (2015). Many Ways to Walk a Mile in Another's Moccasins: Type of Social Perspective Taking and Its Effect on Negotiation Outcomes. *Computers in human Behavior*, 52, 523-532. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2014.12.035>
- Hartawati, A. (2019). Conflict Resolution in the Perspectives. *Journal of Public Administration and Governance*, 9(3), 75. <https://doi.org/10.5296/jpag.v9i3.14964>

- Hasson, Y., Schori-Eyal, N., Landau, D. H., Hasler, B. S., Lévy, J., Friedman, D., & Halperin, E. (2019). The Enemy's Gaze: Immersive Virtual Environments Enhance Peace Promoting Attitudes and Emotions in Violent Intergroup Conflicts. *PLoS One*, 14(9), e0222342. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0222342>
- Ikeda, D. (2016). Buddhist Perspective on Conflict Resolution. *Religions a Scholarly Journal*, 2016(2). <https://doi.org/10.5339/rels.2016.peace.11>
- Jannah, R. T. J., Legowo, E., Sukendro, A., & Sulton, R. B. P. (2023). Agrarian Conflict Resolution in the Strategic Perspective of National Defense. *Bhumi Jurnal Agraria Dan Pertanahan*, 8(2), 245-265. <https://doi.org/10.31292/bhumi.v8i2.545>
- Jia, G., Yao, Y., & Fan, D. X. (2022). Travel in Your Way or in My Way? Resolution of Conflict Between Young Adult Children and Their Parents During Family Vacation Decision-Making. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 26(4), 664-680. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2022.2037527>
- Kerebungu, F., & Fathimah, S. (2023). Conflict Resolution in the Perspective of Functional Conflict Theory (Case Study of Interreligious Relations). <https://doi.org/10.4108/eai.28-10-2022.2326343>
- Lehrer, K. (2023). Freedom of Choice and Conflict Resolution. 106-126. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197695029.003.0006>
- Nelson, B. W., Laurent, S. M., Bernstein, R. E., & Laurent, H. K. (2016). Perspective-Taking Influences Autonomic Attunement Between Partners During Discussion of Conflict. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 34(2), 139-165. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407515626595>
- Niemantsverdriet, K., Essen, H. v., & Eggen, B. (2017). A Perspective on Multi-User Interaction Design Based on an Understanding of Domestic Lighting Conflicts. *Personal and Ubiquitous Computing*, 21(2), 371-389. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00779-016-0998-5>
- Noyon, L., Ansems, L. F. M., Riesthuis, T., & Tinnevelt, R. (2023). Legitimacy of Institutions for Conflict Resolution: An Introduction. *Utrecht Law Review*, 19(2), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.36633/ulr.940>
- Permana, A. A. (2024). Understanding Religion, Human Rights, and Conflict: Philosophical and Sociological Perspectives. *Hanifiya Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama*, 7(1), 161-172. <https://doi.org/10.15575/hanifiya.v7i2.35901>
- Puryanto, S., & Purwantiningsih, A. (2024). Pendekatan Fenomenologi Dalam Resolusi Konflik: Memahami Akar Konflik Dengan Mendalam Dan Komprehensif. *Journal of Education Humaniora and Social Sciences (Jehss)*, 6(3), 1017-1024. <https://doi.org/10.34007/jehss.v6i3.1917>
- Qureshi, A., Bretherton, L., Marsh, B., & Monk, R. L. (2020). Stimulation of the Dorsolateral Prefrontal Cortex Impacts Conflict Resolution in Level-1 Visual Perspective Taking. *Cognitive Affective & Behavioral Neuroscience*, 20(3), 565-574. <https://doi.org/10.3758/s13415-020-00786-5>
- Ramsbotham, O., & Schiff, A. (2018). When Formal Negotiations Fail: Strategic Negotiation, Ripeness Theory, and the Kerry Initiative. *Negotiation and Conflict Management Research*, 11(4), 321-340. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ncmr.12119>
- Sharoni, S. (2017). Conflict Resolution: Feminist Perspectives. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.013.130>
- Sherer, P. D., & Leblebici, H. (2015). Governance in Professional Service Firms. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199682393.013.10>
- Smirnova, O. A., & Zolina, D. (2016). French Participation in International Conflicts and Crises: Main Statements of the White Book 2013. *Vestnik Volgogradskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta Seriya 4 Istorija Regionovedenie Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniya*, 21(2), 89-95. <https://doi.org/10.15688/jvolsu4.2016.2.8>
- Southgate, V. (2018). Are Infants Altercentric? The Other and the Self in Early Social Cognition. <https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/y2ghq>
- Southgate, V. (2020). Are Infants Altercentric? The Other and the Self in Early Social Cognition. *Psychological review*, 127(4), 505-523. <https://doi.org/10.1037/rev0000182>
- Theiss, J. A., & Haverfield, M. C. (2016). Conflict Resolution. 1-4. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119085621.wbefs062>
- Tuğba, H., & Korkmaz, E. (2021). Organizational Conflict: Is What We Look at or the Perspective We Look From More Important? *Nesne Psikoloji Dergisi*, 9(21). <https://doi.org/10.7816/nesne-09-21-02>
- Yao, D., Chao, M. M., & Leung, A. K. (2019). When Essentialism Facilitates Intergroup Conflict Resolution: The Positive Role of Perspective-Taking. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 50(4), 483-507. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022119835058>

