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## Chronicles of Being Moved: Exploring the Impact of Emotional Experiences on Intimate Relationships

**Abstract:** The emotion of being moved enhances closeness and fosters prosocial behaviors such as sharing and commitment. Previous correlational studies have linked this emotion to higher relationship satisfaction, with closeness and intimacy mediating this link. This research aimed to experimentally test whether being moved influences relationship satisfaction, closeness, and intimacy by inducing the emotion of being moved through two methods: touching videos (Study 1) and personal memories (Study 2).

Although both studies found a positive correlation between being moved and perceived relationship quality, the experimental manipulations did not lead to changes in relationship satisfaction. These findings suggest that while being moved is associated with beneficial relationship outcomes, its experimental induction does not necessarily result in measurable improvements. Instead, the relationship between being moved and satisfaction appears to reflect pre-existing dynamics moderated by individual and contextual factors such as attachment style and narcissism.

**Keywords:** *romantic relationships, kama muta, being moved, satisfaction, intimacy*

### RELATIONSHIPS

Human beings are inherently social (see Tomasello, 2014), with romantic relationships forming crucial foundations of society. The need to belong, a fundamental driver of human behavior (e.g., Baumeister & Leary, 1995), elevates close relationships above wealth, job satisfaction, or friendships in shaping subjective well-being (see Diener & Oishi, 2000; Glenn & Weaver, 1981). Beyond psychological benefits, fulfilling relationships contribute to physiological health, as evidenced by significantly lower morbidity and mortality rates among individuals in high-quality marriages (e.g., Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001). Given the profound role of relationships in well-being, it seems important to understand what behaviors and emotions help to form satisfying relationships. One may be the emotion of being moved (aka *kama muta*; Sanskrit for “being touched by love”).

### BEING MOVED AND ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

Social psychologists assert that experiencing the emotion of being moved strengthens interpersonal bonds. Seibt et al. (2017) suggest that being moved promotes prosocial behaviors, such as sharing and a heightened sense of community. Fiske (2019) and Zickfeld et al. (2019) identify increased prosocial behavior and a stronger motivation to build relationships as two of the five core components that define this emotion (Fiske, 2019). Being moved is closely tied to the positive feeling of sharing and connecting with loved ones and is readily experienced in such relationships (Schubert et al., 2018; Seibt et al., 2017; Steinnes et al., 2019). Furthermore, Fiske et al. (2019) propose that being moved encourages commitment and sacrifice, both essential for social life.



Research indicates that the most intense emotion of being moved arises in interactions between close individuals, particularly during significant romantic moments such as proposals or reunions (Cullhed, 2020; Strick & Van Soolingen, 2018). Moreover, being moved reinforces intentions to spend time with loved ones and help others, acting as a 'reminder' of personal values (Landmann et al., 2019). This suggests that being moved may play a crucial role in fostering and maintaining satisfying relationships.

Åbom (2020, p. 3) suggests that being moved "may reward both the enactment and reception of positive behaviors towards the partner and by such motivate such behaviors and contribute to relationship satisfaction." Her studies found significant positive correlations between being moved and relationship satisfaction ( $\rho = .30, p = .006; r = .36, p = .01$ ), with attachment styles influencing being moved frequency, intensity, and tendencies to initiate love expressions.

Wiecha et al. (2024) reported similar findings, showing significant correlations between the frequency and intensity of being moved in relationships and perceived satisfaction ( $\rho = .69, p < .001; \rho = .42, p < .001$ , respectively), closeness ( $\rho = .38, p < .001; \rho = .54, p < .001$ , respectively), and intimacy ( $\rho = .47, p < .001; \rho = .62, p < .001$ , respectively). These correlations were moderated by attachment styles and dark triad traits (narcissism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy), indicating that such characteristics may affect how the emotion of being moved is experienced or interpreted.

### INTIMACY, CLOSENESS, AND BEING MOVED

Zickfeld et al. (2017) argue that cultivating closeness or observing sudden connection triggers being moved. Schubert et al. (2018) support this with evidence linking the emotion of being moved to closeness.

Notably, being moved and intimacy share several outcomes: (1) prosocial behaviors; (2) positive emotions and the desire to share them; (3) emotional and material sharing; and (4) respect, understanding, and support (Sternberg, 1986; Wiecha, 2023; Zickfeld et al., 2019). Åbom (2020) found a positive correlation between being moved frequency and relationship satisfaction, mediated by intimacy behavior, suggesting that being moved enhances satisfaction through intimacy-promoting actions. These findings align with research, which indicates that being moved is associated with satisfaction via closeness and intimacy (Wiecha et al., 2024). Thus, experiencing being moved may enhance intimacy, closeness, and expressions of love within relationships. However, causality remains unclear since Wiecha et al. (2024) and Åbom's (2020) research were correlational. It is uncertain whether being moved enhances intimacy or if relationship intimacy facilitates these experiences.

### THE PRESENT RESEARCH

The present study examined the role of being moved in romantic relationships. We propose that prosocial behaviors and emotional experiences associated with being moved

positively influence relationship satisfaction, intimacy, and closeness. Based on previous findings, we assume that being moved may serve as a reminder of a partner's value, increasing sensitivity to relationship-related cues and positively affecting relationship perception.

Study 1 investigated whether experimentally induced feelings of being moved influence relationship satisfaction, closeness, and intimacy. We hypothesized that watching a moving film would lead to greater relationship satisfaction and a stronger sense of closeness than watching a neutral film. Furthermore, we expected that films depicting romantic relationships would have a particularly strong impact on emotional responses and relationship satisfaction, as they may evoke more powerful personal associations.

Study 2 aimed to replicate the effect of being moved on relationship evaluation using different emotion induction methods. To achieve this, we employed a method in which participants recalled touching memories shared with their partner, which has been effective in prior research. We predicted that recalling partner-related touching experiences would evoke higher levels of being moved than the control condition, where participants recalled touching experiences with non-partners or reflected on good deeds performed by their partner or others. We hypothesized that the increased feeling of being moved would mediate the positive relationship between the experimental condition and relationship satisfaction at T2.

We also hypothesized that attachment styles (avoidant and anxious; as suggested by Åbom, 2020; Wiecha et al., 2024) and dark triad traits (narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy), which may inhibit empathetic responses, would moderate the effects of being moved on relationship satisfaction.

### PILOT STUDY

The pilot study aimed to assess the parameters of the films intended to serve as stimuli for inducing the emotion of being moved in subsequent studies. We examined whether emotionally touching videos—two focused on romantic relationships and two on non-romantic relationships evoke similar levels of being moved.

#### Method

##### *Participants*

Participants were required to be at least 18 years old. Of 115 individuals, 23 were excluded for incomplete responses, leaving 92 participants (25 men, 66 women, and one non-binary). Ages ranged from 18 to 54 ( $M = 25.38, SD = 7.48$ ).

##### *Measures*

An online Qualtrics survey included four touching videos: two romantic and two non-romantic. Using sliders, participants rated emotions evoked by the films (interest, being moved, amusement, sadness, anger/irritation, loneliness) on a 1–100 scale.

### Procedure

Participants, recruited via social media and snowball sampling, completed the survey independently. After providing demographic data, they viewed one randomly assigned video and rated their emotional responses using randomized sliders. The study took approximately 10 minutes.

### Results

An ANOVA tested differences in being moved across groups<sup>1</sup>. The main effect of the condition on being moved was insignificant ( $F(3, 88) = 0.59, p = 0.623, \eta^2 = 0.02$ ), showing no differences in levels of being moved between romantic and non-romantic videos. This confirms that the films were matched in their ability to elicit emotional responses and are useful as stimuli for Study 1.

## STUDY 1

Study 1 examined how being moved affects perceived relationship satisfaction, closeness, and intimacy. We used both correlational and experimental methods. In the experimental part, we induced the emotion of being moved through videos. We hypothesized that evoking being moved would increase relationship satisfaction, particularly when the feeling was induced by a romantic film. We also predicted that being moved would enhance closeness and intimacy in romantic relationships, particularly for those viewing romantic videos.

We also expected that people with a general tendency to feel moved would report higher relationship satisfaction, closeness, and intimacy. Furthermore, we assumed that anxious and avoidant attachment styles, Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy would moderate the impact of being moved on relationship satisfaction, weakening the emotion's influence in individuals with higher levels of these traits.

### Method

This study was preregistered at the Open Science Framework (OSF; <https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/U9HG2>). The preregistration included specific hypotheses, detailed design and sampling procedures, data exclusion criteria, and a pre-specified analysis plan (ANOVA, correlation, and moderation analyses). Additional exploratory analyses (moderated mediation models) were conducted post hoc. An a priori power analysis using G\*Power ( $f = .25, \alpha = .05, 1-\beta = .95$ ) indicated that a minimum of 324 participants would be required to detect a medium-sized effect with 95% power.

Statistical analyses were conducted using R Studio (Version 2024.09.0+375).

### Participants

Participants were recruited via social media and required to be in a romantic relationship for at least six months and be at least 18 years old. A total of 748 participants completed the survey. Participants were excluded from analyses for insufficient engagement time, failing

attention tests, not providing consent, or not meeting participation criteria, resulting in 67 exclusions. Additionally, 202 participants were excluded due to a procedural error where they were exposed to two videos instead of one. The final sample consisted of 479 participants (75 men, 394 women, 10 undisclosed gender) with an average age of 24.35 years (ranging from 18 to 49,  $SD = 5.32$ ) and a relationship duration of 46.99 months (ranging from 6 to 290 months,  $SD = 42.88$ ).

### Measurements

Participants completed an online survey hosted on Qualtrics, which included the following tools:

**Relationship Satisfaction.** The Relationship Satisfaction subscale from the Perceived Relationship Quality Components (PRQC; Fletcher et al., 2016), consisting of three items demonstrating good internal reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .91$ ), was used. For this study, two of the three items were selected and presented in a randomized order ("How satisfied are you with your relationship?" and "How happy are you with your relationship?"). Responses were provided on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ("not at all") to 7 ("extremely"). The items were translated into Polish for this study.

**Intimacy.** The Perceived Intimacy with Partner Scale (Van Lankveld et al., 2021) was used to measure intimacy using four items (e.g., "I feel love when I think about my partner"), aligning with Sternberg's (1986) definition of intimacy. Responses are provided on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("definitely no") to 7 ("definitely yes"). The items were translated into Polish for this study. In this study, Cronbach's  $\alpha = .89$ .

**Closeness.** The inclusion of Others in the Self Scale (IOS; Aron et al., 1992) was used in its Polish version to assess interpersonal closeness in romantic relationships. It comprises seven pairs of overlapping circles labeled "self" and "partner." Participants select the pair that best represents their sense of closeness (1 = "no overlap," 7 = "almost complete overlap").

**Being Moved.** The emotion of being moved was evaluated as an emotion and a disposition (i.e., a tendency to experience this emotion). KAMMUS-2, adapted for the Polish population, (Zickfeld et al., 2019) is a 22-item scale used to measure the experience of being moved after the experimental manipulation (e.g., "I felt moved"). Responses are provided on a 6-point Likert scale. In this study, Cronbach's  $\alpha = .96$ .

The Kama Muta Frequency Scale (KAMF; Zickfeld et al., 2019), adapted for the Polish population (Zickfeld et al., 2019), is a 7-item tool designed to measure the general tendency to experience the emotion of being moved. Participants were asked to indicate the frequency of experiencing this emotion (e.g., "When was the last time you felt moved or touched?"). In this study, Cronbach's  $\alpha = .87$ .

**Attachment Style.** The Relationship Structures Questionnaire (ECR-RS; Fraley et al., 2011), in Polish adaptation by Marszał (2015), assessed attachment using nine items across two subscales: Avoidance (Cronbach's

$\alpha = .89$ ; e.g., “I don’t feel comfortable opening up to my partner”) and Anxiety (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .87$ ; e.g., “I’m afraid that this person may abandon me”). Responses are on a 7-point Likert scale.

**The Dark Triad.** The Dark Triad Dirty Dozen (DTDD; Paulhus & Williams, 2002), in its Polish adaptation by Czarna et al., (2016) was used. This 12-item tool consists of three subscales: Machiavellianism (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .87$ ; e.g., “I tend to manipulate others to get my way.”), Psychopathy (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .52$ ; e.g., “I tend to be cynical.”), and Narcissism (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .83$ ; e.g., “I tend to want others to admire me.”). The rating scale for responses is a 7-point Likert scale, with 1 representing strong disagreement and 7 indicating strong agreement.

**Mood.** The shortened version of the General Mood Scale (GMS; Wojciszke & Baryła, 2004) assessed current mood with six items (e.g., “I feel down,” “I feel great”) on a 5-point Likert scale. In this study, Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .95$ .

Reliability estimates, means, standard deviations, and scale intercorrelations for the current study can be seen in Table 1.

## Procedure

Participants were given a survey to complete at their own pace, with no time constraints. The study took approximately 12 minutes. After consent, participants reported demographic information (age, gender, relationship duration) and rated their current mood. Baseline relationship satisfaction was assessed using the Relationship Satisfaction subscale. Next, participants watched videos evoking the feeling of being moved (a method validated in previous research; Śmieja et al., 2022; Zickfeld et al., 2019).

Participants were randomly assigned to one of three groups. Experimental group 1 (romantic) watched one of two videos designed to evoke the feeling of being moved within the romantic relationship context<sup>5</sup>. Experimental group 2 (non-romantic) viewed one of two videos eliciting the same emotion but in the context of non-romantic relationships<sup>5</sup>. Meanwhile, the control group (neutral) watched one of two emotionally neutral videos<sup>5</sup>.

After viewing the videos, participants completed the Relationship Satisfaction subscale, perceived intimacy scale, and Inclusion of Other in the Self Scale (in randomized order). Next, they reported the level of being moved, attachment styles, and dark triad traits.

The impact of being moved on relationship quality, closeness, and intimacy was analyzed through between-group comparisons of experimental and control conditions. All analyses were conducted in *R Studio* (Version 2024.09.0+375).

## Results

Analyses were performed in line with the pre-registered plan. Deviations from this plan are explicitly noted.

## Manipulation Check

Initial analyses demonstrated that the experimental groups differed significantly from the control in being moved after the experimental manipulation ( $F(2, 476) = 198.80, p < .001; \eta^2 = .46$ ). Experimentally evoked emotion of being moved was greater in the romantic group than non-romantic ( $t(476) = -16.5, p < .001$ ). What is more, both romantic ( $t(476) = -59.5, p < .001$ ) and non-romantic videos ( $t(476) = -43.00, p < .001$ ) evoked significantly more intense being moved than the neutral videos<sup>2</sup>. The results remained significant when controlling for participants’ mood ( $F(1, 475) = 2.41, p = .12, \eta^2 < .001$ ). The results are presented in Figure 1.

## General Tendency to Experience Being Moved and Relationship Characteristics

We tested how the general tendency to experience being moved relates to relationship characteristics. This tendency correlated positively with relationship satisfaction at T1 ( $r(477) = .12, p = .007$ ) and T2 ( $r(477) = .13, p = .004$ ; see Table A3 in Appendix A), and with closeness ( $r(477) = .15, p < .01$ ) and intimacy ( $r(477) = .17, p < .01$ ) (see Table A4 in Appendix A for details).

## The Influence of Being Moved on Satisfaction

We examined how experimentally evoked being moved affects relationship satisfaction. First, we confirmed that initial relationship satisfaction did not significantly differ between the experimental and control conditions ( $F(2, 476) = 0.311, p = .733; \eta^2 < .001$ ). Next, we tested whether the effect of emotion on relationship satisfaction varied across conditions based on the type of film viewed. The results showed a significant effect for time ( $F(1, 476) = 7.18, p = .008; \eta_p^2 = .01$ ), but not for condition ( $F(2, 476) = 0.60, p = .550; \eta_p^2 < .001$ ) or the interaction between condition and time ( $F(2, 476) = 1.37, p = 0.255; \eta_p^2 < .001$ ). This indicates that watching any of the videos led to increased relationship satisfaction over time, as illustrated in Figure 2.

## The Influence of Being Moved on Closeness/Intimacy

Further, we examined the association between the experimentally evoked emotion of being moved and closeness/intimacy in romantic relationships. Overall, correlations between experimentally evoked being moved and closeness/intimacy were positive (see Table A2 in Appendix A for detailed results). We tested whether the effect of the emotion of being moved on closeness/intimacy would be stronger in the romantic group than in the non-romantic group. In both cases, the assumption was not confirmed. Both for closeness ( $F(2, 476) = 2.57, p = .078; \eta_p^2 = 0.01$ ) and intimacy ( $F(2, 476) = 0.65, p = .520; \eta_p^2 < .001$ ), the main effect of condition was statistically not significant.

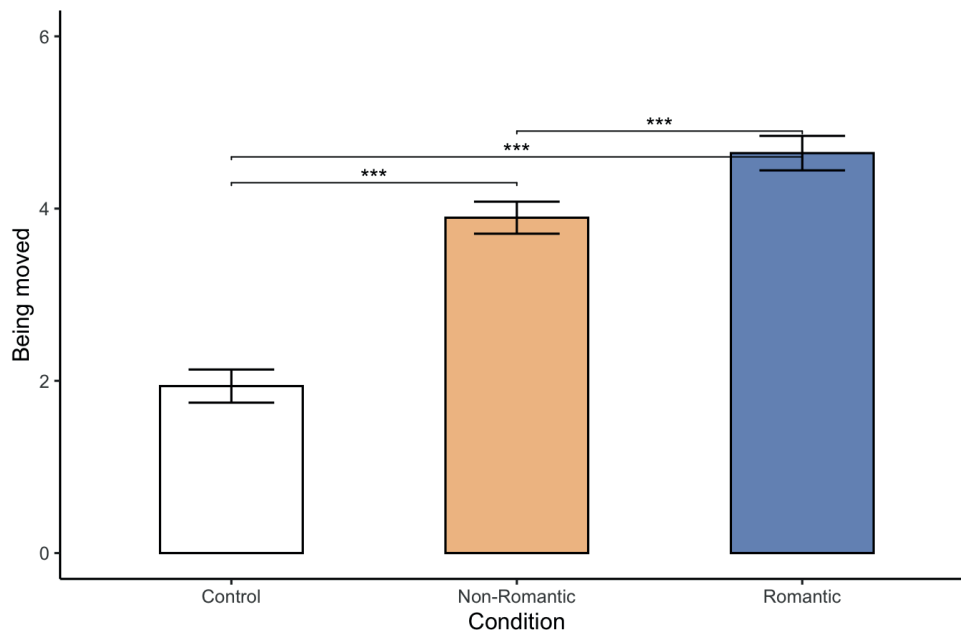
## Moderated Mediation Model

Since ANOVA revealed no significant direct effect of condition on relationship satisfaction, we next examined whether the emotion of being moved might influence

**Table 1.** Means, Standard Deviations, Scale Reliabilities and Intercorrelations of measures in Study 1

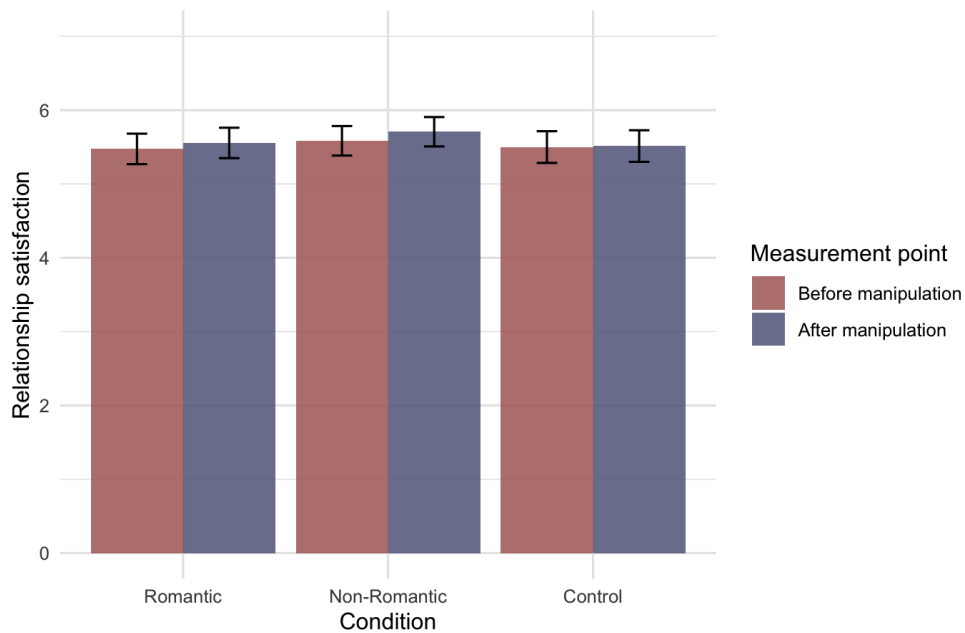
Measure	M (SD)	95% CI	$\alpha$	$\omega_t$	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Relationship Satisfaction T1	5.52 (1.33)	[5.40, 5.64]	N/A	N/A	—	0.9 ***	0.75 ***	0.54 ***	0.12	0.12	-0.71 ***	-0.34 ***	-0.11	-0.12	-0.07	0.37 ***
2. Relationship Satisfaction T2	5.60 (1.33)	[5.48, 5.72]	N/A	N/A	0.9 ***	—	0.77 ***	0.56 ***	0.11	0.13	-0.72 ***	-0.33 ***	-0.1	-0.1	-0.05	0.35 ***
3. Perceived Intimacy	6.15 (1.33)	[6.09, 6.21]	0.89	0.90	0.75 ***	0.77 ***	—	0.6 ***	0.15 *	0.17 **	-0.69 ***	-0.19 **	-0.11	-0.16 *	-0.13	0.28 ***
4. IOS	4.92 (1.45)	[4.79, 5.05]	N/A	N/A	0.54 ***	0.56 ***	0.6 ***	—	0.19 **	0.15 *	-0.54 ***	-0.19 ***	-0.09	-0.1	-0.09	0.28 ***
5. KAMMUS-2	2.93 (2.29)	[2.88, 2.97]	0.96	0.97	0.12 **	0.11 *	0.15 **	0.19 ***	—	0.25 ***	-0.11	0	0.03	-0.01	-0.06	0.08
6. KAMF	4.12 (1.75)	[4.06, 4.18]	0.87	0.92	0.12 **	0.13 **	0.17 ***	0.15 **	0.25 ***	—	-0.14	0	0.03	-0.04	-0.22 ***	0.01
7. ECR-R Avoidance	1.97 (1.38)	[1.92, 2.02]	0.89	0.94	-0.71 ***	-0.72 ***	-0.69 ***	-0.54 ***	-0.11 *	-0.14 **	—	0.35 ***	0.12	0.14	0.15 *	-0.33 ***
8. ECR-R Anxiety	3.32 (2.05)	[3.22, 3.43]	0.87	0.87	-0.34 ***	-0.33 ***	-0.19 ***	-0.19 ***	0	0	0.35 ***	—	0.12	0.15 *	0.05	-0.36 ***
9. DT Narcissism	2.41 (1.40)	[2.35, 2.47]	0.83	0.88	-0.11 *	-0.1 *	-0.11 *	-0.09 *	0.03	0.03	0.12 **	0.12 **	—	0.59 ***	0.32 ***	-0.13
10. DT Machiavellianism	1.87 (1.17)	[1.82, 1.93]	0.87	0.90	-0.12 **	-0.1 *	-0.16 ***	-0.1 *	-0.01	-0.04	0.14 **	0.15 **	0.59 ***	—	0.54 ***	-0.2 ***
11. DT Psychopathy	1.82 (1.16)	[1.77, 1.87]	0.52	0.62	-0.07	-0.05	-0.13 **	-0.09 *	-0.06	-0.22 ***	0.15 ***	0.05	0.32 ***	0.54 ***	—	-0.1
12. General Mood Scale	3.57 (1.27)	[3.53, 3.60]	0.95	0.97	0.37 ***	0.35 ***	0.28 ***	0.28 ***	0.08	0.01	-0.33 ***	-0.36 ***	-0.13 **	-0.2 ***	-0.1 *	—

Note. The 95% CI intervals refer to the confidence intervals for the mean. \*\*\*  $p < .001$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*  $p < .05$ . N/A indicates single item measures where calculating reliabilities was not applicable.



**Figure 1.** Levels of Experimentally Evoked Being Moved Across Different Conditions in Study 1

*Note.* “Romantic” refers to experimental groups watching touching romantic videos, “Non-Romantic” to experimental groups watching non-romantic touching videos, and “Control” to control groups viewing neutral videos. Asterisks indicate statistically significant differences ( $***p < .001$ ). Error bars represent 95% CIs.



**Figure 2.** Change in Relationship Satisfaction Over Time in Study 1

*Note.* “Romantic” refers to experimental groups watching touching romantic videos, “Non-Romantic” to experimental groups watching non-romantic touching videos, and “Control” to control groups viewing neutral videos. Relationship satisfaction did not significantly differ between conditions at baseline (T1, Before manipulation), nor did the change from T1 to T2 (After manipulation) vary across conditions. Satisfaction increased over time across all conditions. Error bars represent 95% CIs.

satisfaction indirectly or under specific conditions. Correlation analyses supported this direction, showing a positive association between being moved (mediator) and relationship satisfaction at T2. Therefore, a moderated mediation analysis was conducted to explore potential conditional indirect effects. Because these models were tested following the non-significant main effect and were not

preregistered, they should be regarded as exploratory, aimed at identifying possible mechanisms rather than confirming preregistered hypotheses.

The experimentally evoked emotion of being moved correlated positively with relationship satisfaction measured before (T1:  $r(477) = .12, p < .01$ ) and after the experimental manipulation (T2:  $r(477) = .11, p = .02$ ).

Within conditions, correlations at T1 approached significance in the control condition ( $r(158) = .15, p = .052$ ) and were significant in the non-romantic condition ( $r(169) = .17, p = .024$ ). At T2, correlations similarly approached significance in the control condition ( $r(158) = .15, p = .054$ ) and were significant in the non-romantic condition ( $r(169) = .16, p = .036$ ). The correlation between the evoked emotion and the change in relationship satisfaction (T2-T1) was not significant overall ( $r(477) = -.02, p = .588$ ) or within conditions (see Table A1 in Appendix A).

In our moderated mediation model, we tested how the video type influences relationship satisfaction through a mediator – being moved. We also included avoidant and anxious attachment styles, narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy as moderators. We used Model 59 from PROCESS Macro (Hayes, 2022) for *R Studio* to perform the moderated mediation. Relationship satisfaction at T1 was entered as a covariate to control for baseline levels<sup>3</sup> (see Figure 3). For the model, we applied dummy (binary) coding, with the experimental conditions coded as “1” and the Control condition as “0” (see Figure 3). This approach, commonly used in mediation analysis with categorical variables, simplifies interpretation by reducing predictor variables to a dichotomous format. It also minimizes the risk of multicollinearity, enhancing the stability and reliability of estimates (see e.g., Hayes & Preacher, 2014). Before running the model, all variables were standardized, and the results were reported as standardized beta coefficients.

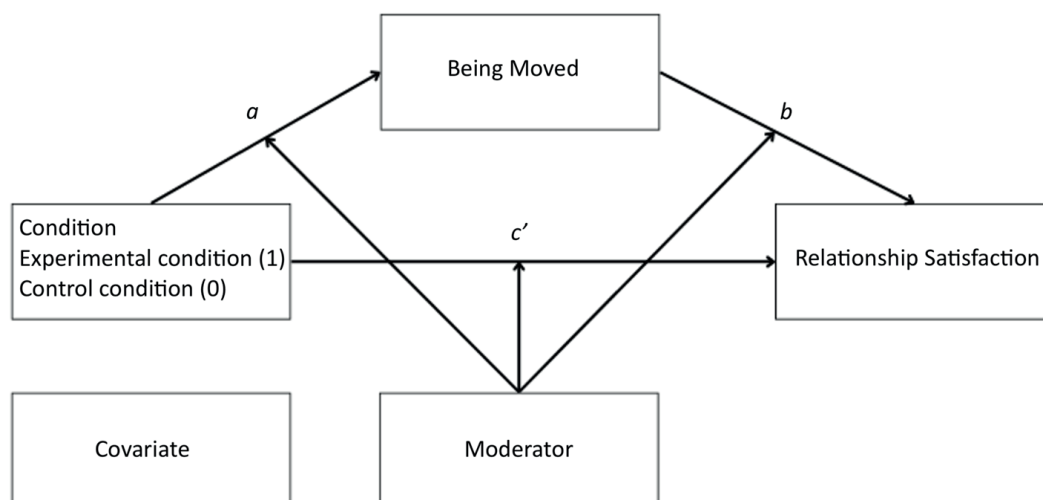
In the model, the *a* path represents the effect of the condition on the mediator (being moved), indicating whether being in the experimental (vs. control) condition influences levels of being moved. The *b* path reflects the effect of being moved on the dependent variable (relationship satisfaction), controlling for condition, thereby testing if variations in being moved are associated with changes in

relationship satisfaction. The *c'* path denotes the direct effect of the condition on relationship satisfaction, independent of the mediation effect.

In addition to the results for the paths illustrated in Figure 3, the analyses provided data on conditional direct effects (DE), indirect effects (IE), and moderator effects. The most significant findings are summarized below, with detailed results in the Supplemental Materials.

Consistent with the ANOVA results, no significant conditional direct effects of the video type on relationship satisfaction were found, nor were there significant indirect effects, indicating no evidence of mediation. However, avoidant attachment emerged as a significant moderator of the relationship between condition and being moved (*a* path;  $\beta = -0.18, SE = 0.08, p = .029$ ) when comparing the romantic and control conditions. The overall model explained 60% of the variance in being moved ( $R^2 = .601, p < .001$ ), with the inclusion of avoidant attachment as a moderator accounting for an additional 0.63% of the variance, representing a significant model improvement ( $R^2\text{-chg} = .0063, p = .029$ ). Johnson-Neyman analysis showed significant moderation across all levels of avoidant attachment. The effect size decreased as avoidant attachment increased, indicating that individuals with higher avoidant attachment were less influenced by the type of video, resulting in lower feelings of being moved.

Avoidant attachment also significantly moderated the relationship between being moved and relationship satisfaction in the comparison between the romantic and control conditions (*b* path;  $\beta = 0.09, SE = 0.04, p = .020$ ). The model explained 83% of the variance in relationship satisfaction ( $R^2 = .827, p < .001$ ), with the inclusion of avoidant attachment producing a significant improvement in model fit ( $R^2\text{-chg} = .003, p = .020$ ). Johnson-Neyman analysis revealed that the conditional effect of being moved on relationship satisfaction became significant at higher levels of avoidant attachment, starting from an



**Figure 3.** Moderated Mediation Model

*Note.* “Condition” denotes the independent variable (type of video), “Relationship satisfaction” is the dependent variable measured at T2 and “Being Moved” is the mediator. “Moderator” variables include avoidant and anxious attachment style, narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy. All analyses were performed controlling for the relationship satisfaction at T1 (“Covariate”).

avoidance score of 1.00 ( $\beta = 0.11, SE = 0.05, p = .050$ ). This finding suggests that the effect of being moved on relationship satisfaction strengthened as avoidant attachment increased. For individuals with higher avoidance, experiencing being moved resulted in greater relationship satisfaction. Combining the results for paths *a* and *b*, it appears that while individuals with higher avoidant attachment are less likely to feel strongly moved when they do, it has a more substantial positive effect on their relationship satisfaction.

Trends approaching significance were observed for narcissism and anxious attachment as moderators. Narcis-

sism marginally moderated the condition-being moved relationship (path *a*;  $\beta = -0.14, SE = 0.07, p = .052$ ), with higher narcissism reducing the condition's effect on being moved. The model explained 46% of being moved variance ( $R^2 = 0.463, p < .001$ ), with narcissism adding 0.6% ( $R^2\text{-chg} = .006, p = .052$ ). Anxious attachment showed a trend on the *c'* path; ( $\beta = -0.13, SE = 0.07, p = .047$ ), explaining 81% of relationship satisfaction variance ( $R^2 = .815, p < .001$ ), with anxious attachment adding 0.2% ( $R^2\text{-chg} = .002, p = .047$ ). The Johnson-Neyman analysis identified no significant moderation regions.

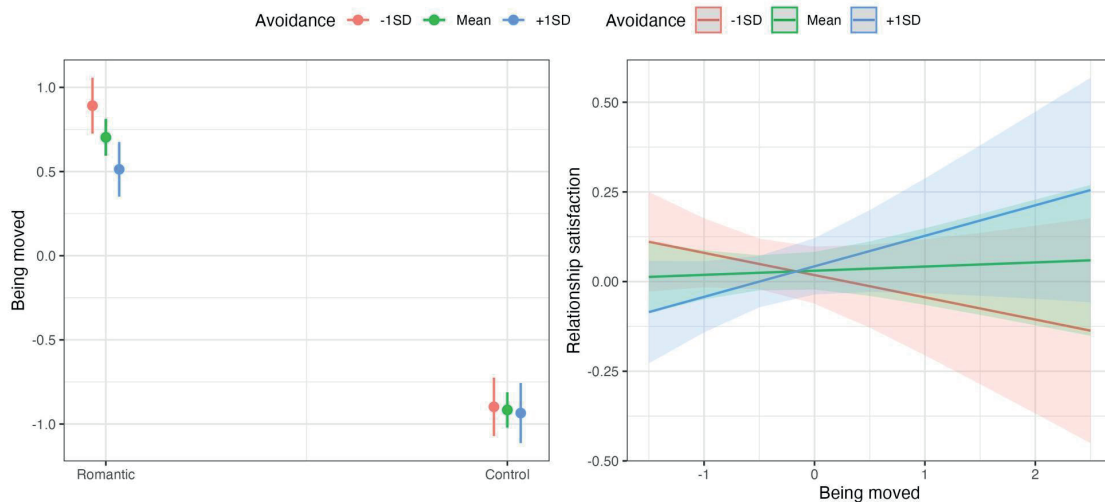


Figure 4. Plots for the Moderation Effects of Avoidant Attachment in Study 1

Note. Both graphs refer to the comparison of romantic (experimental) and control conditions. The left panel shows the moderating effect of avoidant attachment on being moved. Lines depict model-predicted values for low (-1SD), mean, and high (+1SD) avoidant attachment. The right panel displays how avoidant attachment moderates the relationship between being moved and relationship satisfaction. Shaded bands represent 95% CIs. All continuous predictors were standardized.

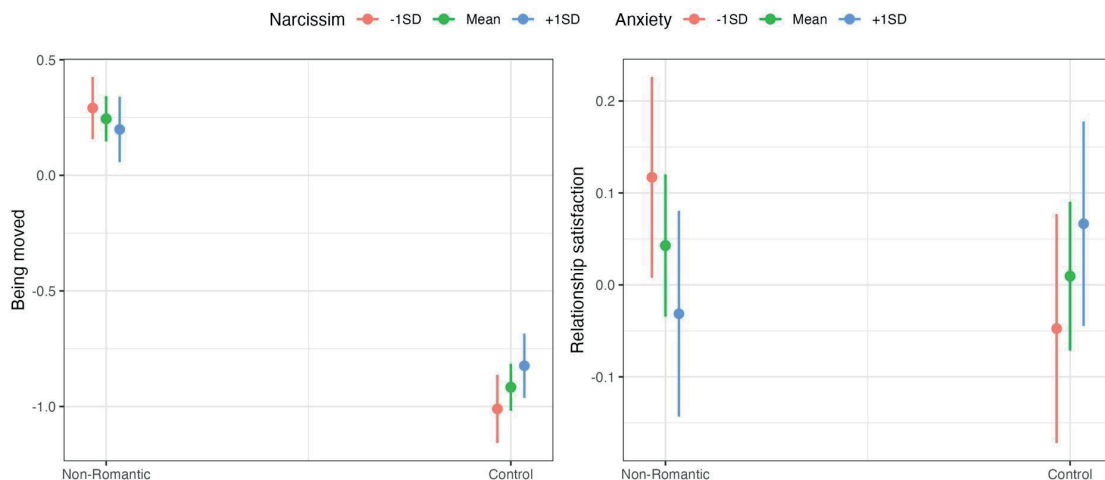


Figure 5. Plots for the Moderation Effects of Narcissism and Anxious Attachment in Study 1

Note. Both graphs refer to the comparison between non-romantic (experimental) and control conditions. The graph on the left illustrates how being moved changes across different levels of narcissism (-1SD, mean, +1SD). The graph on the right displays how anxious attachment moderates the link between being moved and relationship satisfaction. Error bars indicate 95% CIs.

## Discussion

Romantic videos elicited stronger feelings of being moved than non-romantic ones, and both emotional video types led to higher levels of being moved compared to neutral videos. This validates that a touching plot, whether romantic or not, evokes the intended emotional response, even when controlling for mood. However, the experimentally induced emotion of being moved did not lead to significant changes in either relationship satisfaction ratings or perceived closeness. Our results indicate that temporarily induced emotion, even when related to a romantic aspect, does not lead to changes in relationship evaluation.

It is worth noting that a small but significant increase in relationship satisfaction was observed over time, independent of condition. This effect likely reflects the influence of the experimental procedure rather than genuine emotional change. When participants evaluate their relationships twice within a short period—even using different items—they may engage in deeper reflection or assume that “something should have changed,” resulting in slightly higher ratings. This pattern thus suggests a methodological artifact rather than a genuine emotional shift.

At the same time, the general tendency to experience the emotion of being moved correlated positively with relationship satisfaction at both time points but was unrelated to changes in satisfaction, indicating a stable, trait-like association. These findings suggest that while being moved is positively related to relationship satisfaction, this connection appears to reflect enduring dispositions (Åbom, 2020; Wiecha et al., 2024) rather than immediate emotional causation. It may be that individuals who are generally more susceptible to the emotion of being moved also tend to perceive their relationships more positively, yet brief emotional episodes do not seem to alter satisfaction levels.

In light of the null causal effect, an alternative explanation is equally plausible: satisfied individuals may simply be more prone to feeling moved by relational cues, as they are more likely to interpret their partner’s behavior as altruistic, caring, and oriented toward their well-being. Naturally, such interpretations should be treated with caution, as the present discussion concerns correlational patterns. It cannot be ruled out that being moved merely co-occurs with positive relationship events, while it is these events themselves—rather than the emotion per se—that directly enhance satisfaction, contrary to what *kama muta* theory would suggest.

Avoidant attachment style influenced emotional reactions, with higher avoidance reducing feelings of being moved. However, when avoidant individuals felt moved, the impact on their relationship satisfaction was notably stronger, suggesting rare intense emotions positively affect their relationships. Narcissism showed a different pattern—it reduced emotional responsiveness but strengthened the direct effect of condition on satisfaction, independent of being moved, possibly reflecting a self-evaluative (Kyranides et al., 2023; Morf

& Rhodewalt, 2001) rather than emotional interpretation of relational cues.

However, because conditional effects were tested within a moderated mediation framework introduced after the non-significant main effect, they should be regarded as exploratory and interpreted with caution. Additional analyses were intended to generate hypotheses for future research rather than provide confirmatory evidence. Future studies should preregister specific moderated mediation models to test these effects more rigorously.

It should also be noted that the internal consistency of the Dark Triad Psychopathy subscale in Study 1 was relatively low ( $\alpha = .52$ ). Therefore, any effects involving this construct should be interpreted with caution, as the limited reliability of this measure may have attenuated observed relationships.

## STUDY 2

Study 2 investigated how being moved affects romantic relationship satisfaction, closeness, and intimacy, using participants’ touching memories to evoke the emotion of being moved (e.g., Fiske et al., 2019; Śmieja et al., 2022; Zickfeld et al., 2019). Relationship satisfaction was assessed through between-group comparisons of experimental and control conditions. We hypothesized that being moved would enhance relationship satisfaction when the source of being moved would be a memory related to one’s partner. Recalling being moved by another person or a positive action from either the partner or another individual was expected to have weaker effect on relationship satisfaction. Furthermore, we anticipated that being moved would similarly influence feelings of closeness and intimacy, such that these feelings would be more pronounced in the group recalling a partner-related moving experience than in other experimental conditions.

It was assumed that a greater tendency to experience the emotion of being moved would positively correlate with romantic relationship satisfaction, closeness, and intimacy. The study further hypothesized that the impact of being moved on satisfaction would be moderated by attachment styles (anxious and avoidant) and dark triad traits (Machiavellianism, narcissism, psychopathy), with higher levels of these traits weakening the effect.

## Method

Study 2 was preregistered on the Open Science Framework (OSF; <https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/DQNHX>). The preregistration specified all primary hypotheses, sampling and exclusion criteria, and the analysis plan (one-way ANOVAs, correlations, and moderation analyses). Because the preregistration did not include moderated mediation models, these additional analyses were conducted post hoc and should therefore be regarded as exploratory, intended to generate hypotheses for future confirmatory work.

An a priori power analysis using G\*Power (effect size  $f = .25$ ,  $\alpha = .05$ ,  $1 - \beta = .95$ ) indicated that a sample of

$N = 360$  would be sufficient to detect a medium-sized effect. This ensured high power for the preregistered main and moderation analyses.

Statistical analyses were conducted using R Studio (Version 2024.09.0+375).

### Participants

Study 2 enrolled 555 individuals in romantic relationships of at least six months, recruited via social media. After excluding 56 participants due to insufficient participation time, failed attention tests, lack of consent, or unmet criteria, the final sample comprised 499 participants: 48 men, 442 women, and nine who did not disclose gender. The average age was 23.93 years (18–49,  $SD = 4.61$ ), and the average relationship duration was 47.65 months (6–287,  $SD = 40.09$ ).

### Measurements

**Relationship Satisfaction.** Measured with the Relationship Satisfaction subscale from the Perceived Relationship Quality Components (PRQC; Fletcher et al., 2016), divided into two single-item measures presented in random order.

**Intimacy.** Assessed with the Perceived Intimacy with Partner Scale (Van Lankveld et al., 2021). In this study, Cronbach's  $\alpha = .93$ .

**Closeness.** Measured using the Inclusion of Other in the Self Scale (IOS; Aron et al., 1992), a single-item measure.

**Being Moved.** Evaluated with KAMMUS-2o (Zickfeld et al., 2019) for intensity following manipulation (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .94$ ) and the Kama Muta Frequency Scale (KAMF; Zickfeld et al., 2019) for general tendency (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .87$ ).

**Attachment Style.** Measured with the Relationship Structures Questionnaire (ECR-RS; Fraley et al., 2011; Polish adaptation by Marszał, 2015), was employed to measure attachment styles. In this study, Cronbach's  $\alpha = .90$  (for Avoidance) and Cronbach's  $\alpha = .86$  (for Anxiety).

**The Dark Triad.** Assessed with the Dark Triad Dirty Dozen (DTDD; Paulhus & Williams, 2002; Polish adaptation by Czarna et al., 2016). In this study, Cronbach's  $\alpha = .80$  (for Narcissism), Cronbach's  $\alpha = .85$  (for Machiavellianism), and Cronbach's  $\alpha = .58$  (for Psychopathy).

**Mood.** Measured using the shortened General Mood Scale (GMS; Wojciszke & Baryła, 2004). In this study, Cronbach's  $\alpha = .94$ .

Reliability estimates, means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations are provided in Table 2.

### Procedure

Upon receiving the research invitation, participants completed a survey at their own pace without time constraints. The study lasted ~13 minutes. After consenting, participants reported their age, gender, and relationship length. Then, they assessed their initial mood and relationship satisfaction before engaging in an event recall

task. Participants were divided into four groups: one experimental and three control.

The experimental group recalled and described a recent event in their relationship that evoked the emotion of being moved. The control groups were purposefully designed to serve specific goals: (1) recalling an event when someone else did something good, (2) recalling an event when someone else evoked the emotion of being moved, and (3) recalling an event when their partner did something good. This design was intended to differentiate the effects of being moved from other positive emotions and to isolate the unique impact of intimate relationships compared to other types of relationships. Following the event descriptions, participants again completed the relationship satisfaction subscale. The order of the pre- and post-manipulation scales was randomized. Then, they completed the intimacy scale and the Inclusion of Other in the Self Scale, with randomized sequence and filled out scales measuring the emotion of being moved, attachment styles, and dark triad traits.

### Results

All analyses followed the preregistered plan. Any deviations from this plan are noted where applicable.

#### Manipulation Check

Significant differences were observed between the experimental condition and control conditions in the evoked emotion of being moved ( $F(3, 495) = 22.73$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $\eta^2 = .12$ ). Post-hoc analyses revealed that the experimental group, recalling memories of when their partner did something that touched them, experienced more intense feelings of being moved compared to: 1) recalling someone else doing something good ( $t(495) = -8.09$ ,  $p < .001$ ), 2) touching memories involving others ( $t(495) = -3.40$ ,  $p = .004$ ), and 3) memories of their partner doing something good ( $t(495) = -3.04$ ,  $p = .013$ ). Significant differences also emerged between control 1 and control 2 ( $t(495) = -4.38$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The effects of experimental manipulation on being moved remained robust after controlling for participants' mood, which was itself a significant predictor of being moved ( $F(1, 494) = 17.91$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $\eta^2 = .03$ ). Figure 6 illustrates the levels of the experimentally evoked emotion of being moved across conditions.

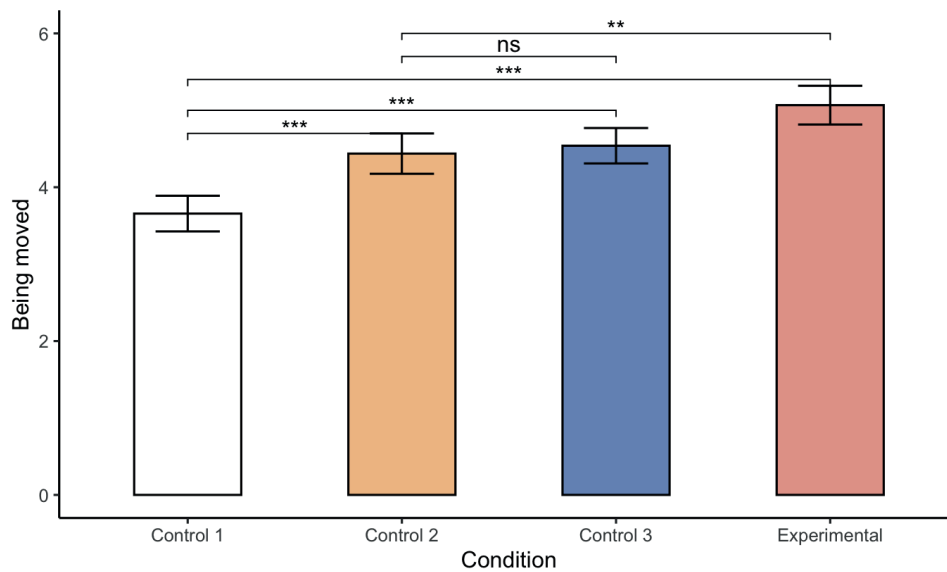
#### General Tendency to Experience Being Moved and Relationship Characteristics

Similarly to Study 1, we checked how the general tendency to experience being moved relates to different relationship characteristics. It correlated positively with relationship satisfaction at T1 ( $r(497) = .29$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and T2 ( $r(497) = .24$ ,  $p < .001$ ), significant across almost all conditions. Unlike Study 1, the correlation with the change in satisfaction (T2-T1) was significant ( $r(497) = -.11$ ,  $p = .01$ ) but not across all conditions (see Table B4 in Appendix B for details). The general tendency to experience being moved also correlated positively with closeness ( $r(497) = .28$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and intimacy ( $r$

**Table 2.** Means, Standard Deviations, Scale Reliabilities and Intercorrelations of measures in Study 2

Measure	M (SD)	95% CI	$\alpha$	$\omega_t$	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Relationship Satisfaction T1	5.72 (1.29)	[5.60, 5.83]	N/A	N/A	—	0.87 ***	0.77 ***	0.61 ***	0.31 ***	0.29 ***	-0.72 ***	-0.44 ***	0.01	-0.13	-0.13	0.39 ***
2. Relationship Satisfaction T2	5.81 (1.24)	[5.70, 5.92]	N/A	N/A	0.87 ***	—	0.77 ***	0.60 ***	0.30 ***	0.24 ***	-0.73 ***	-0.43 ***	-0.02	-0.16 *	-0.15 *	0.38 ***
3. Perceived Intimacy	6.28 (1.25)	[6.23, 6.34]	0.93	0.91	0.77 ***	0.77 ***	—	0.60 ***	0.29 ***	0.30 ***	-0.78 ***	-0.35 ***	0.06	-0.04	-0.15 *	0.33 ***
4. IOS	5.08 (1.52)	[4.65, 5.21]	N/A	N/A	0.61 ***	0.60 ***	0.60 ***	—	0.28 ***	0.28 ***	-0.61 ***	-0.34 ***	0.03	-0.07	-0.11	0.27 ***
5. KAMMUS-2	3.77 (2.46)	[3.72, 3.81]	0.94	0.95	0.31 ***	0.30 ***	0.29 ***	0.28 ***	—	0.29 ***	-0.27 ***	-0.13	0.06	0	-0.05	0.20 ***
6. KAMF	3.75 (1.69)	[3.70, 3.81]	0.87	0.91	0.29 ***	0.24 ***	0.30 ***	0.28 ***	0.29 ***	—	-0.31 ***	-0.10	0.08	0.03	-0.18 **	0.07
7. ECR-R Avoidance	1.58 (1.29)	[1.81, 1.90]	0.90	0.94	-0.72 ***	-0.73 ***	-0.78 ***	-0.61 ***	-0.27 ***	-0.31 ***	—	0.42 ***	-0.09	0.03	0.14 *	-0.38 ***
8. ECR-R Anxiety	3.31 (2.05)	[3.21, 3.42]	0.86	0.87	-0.44 ***	-0.43 ***	-0.35 ***	-0.34 ***	-0.13 **	-0.10 *	0.42 ***	—	0.09	0.07	-0.03	-0.28 ***
9. DT Narcissism	2.29 (1.29)	[2.23, 2.35]	0.80	0.85	0.01	-0.02	0.06	0.03	0.06	0.08	-0.09 *	0.09 *	—	0.50 ***	0.24 ***	-0.04
10. DT Machiavelianism	1.76 (1.04)	[1.71, 1.81]	0.85	0.88	-0.13 **	-0.16 **	-0.04	-0.07	0	0.03	0.03	0.07	0.50 ***	—	0.46 ***	-0.14 *
11. DT Psychopathy	1.78 (1.07)	[1.74, 1.83]	0.58	0.68	-0.13 **	-0.15 ***	-0.15 ***	-0.11 *	-0.05	-0.18 ***	0.14 **	-0.03	0.24 ***	0.46 ***	—	-0.05
12. General Mood Scale	3.63 (1.18)	[3.60, 3.67]	0.94	0.96	0.39 ***	0.38 ***	0.33 ***	0.27 ***	0.20 ***	0.07	-0.38 ***	-0.28 ***	-0.04	-0.14 **	-0.05	—

Note. The 95% CI intervals refer to the confidence intervals for the mean. \*\*\*  $p < .001$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*  $p < .05$ . N/A indicates single item measures where calculating reliabilities was not applicable.



**Figure 6.** Levels of Experimentally Evoked Being Moved Across Different Conditions in Study 2

*Note.* "Control 1" denotes control groups recalling an event when someone else (other than one's partner) did something good; "Control 2" – control groups recalling an event when someone else (other than their partner) did something that moved them; "Control 3" – control groups recalling an event when the partner did something good; "Experimental" – experimental groups recalling a memory from their relationship when their partner did something touching. Asterisks indicate statistically significant differences (\*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , ns – not significant). Error bars represent 95% CIs.

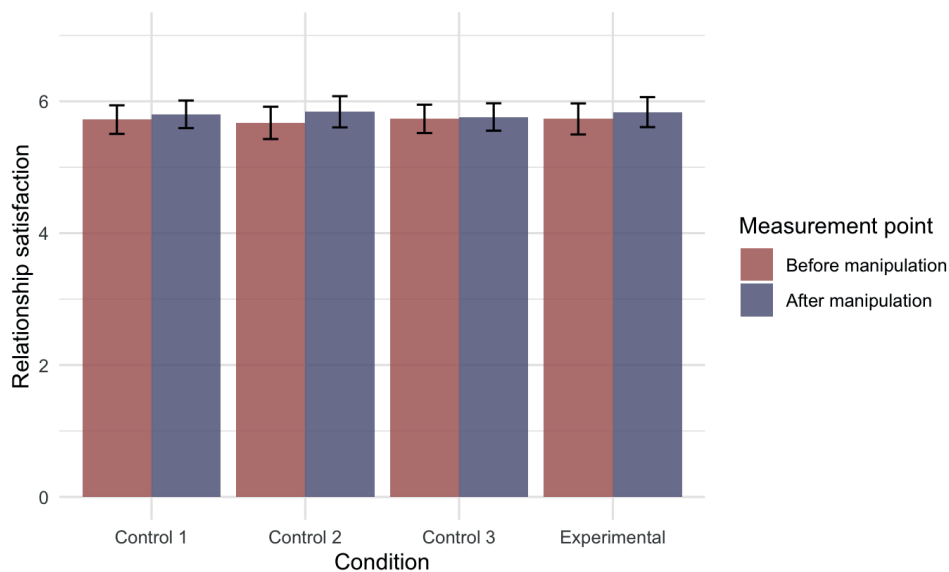
(497) = .30,  $p < .001$ ), remaining significant across all conditions (see Table B4 in Appendix B).

#### The Influence of Being Moved on Satisfaction

No differences in relationship satisfaction were found between groups before the manipulation ( $F(3, 495) = 0.06$ ,  $p = .983$ ;  $\eta_p^2 < .001$ ). However, evoked being moved correlated significantly with relationship satisfaction at T1 ( $r(497) = .31$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and T2 ( $r(497) = .30$ ,  $p < .001$ ; see Table B1 in Appendix B). These significant correlations

led us to test whether the effect of evoked being moved varied by condition. ANOVA results were significant for time ( $F(1, 495) = 10.44$ ,  $p = .001$ ;  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ ) but not for condition ( $F(3, 495) = 0.02$ ,  $p = .996$ ;  $\eta_p^2 < .001$ ) or the interaction of condition and time ( $F(3, 495) = 0.94$ ,  $p = .420$ ;  $\eta_p^2 < .001$ ). These findings indicate that recalling any memory type increased relationship satisfaction over time (Figure 7).

#### The Influence of Being Moved on Closeness/Intimacy



**Figure 7.** Change in Relationship Satisfaction Over Time in Study 2

*Note.* "Control 1" denotes control groups recalling an event when someone else (other than one's partner) did something good; "Control 2" – control groups recalling an event when someone else (other than their partner) did something that moved them; "Control 3" – control groups recalling an event when the partner did something good; "Experimental" – experimental groups recalling a memory from their relationship when their partner did something touching. Relationship satisfaction did not significantly differ between conditions at T1 (Before manipulation), nor did the change from T1 to T2 (After manipulation) vary significantly across conditions. Satisfaction increased over time across all conditions. Error bars represent 95% CIs.

Recalling touching memories with the partner (experimental condition) did not impact closeness and intimacy more than recalling when the partner did something good (Control 3). ANOVA showed no significant effect of condition on closeness ( $F(3, 495) = 0.64, p = .593; \eta^2 < .001$ ) or intimacy ( $F(3, 495) = .50, p = 0.681; \eta^2 < .001$ ).

Experimentally evoked being moved correlated positively and significantly with closeness ( $r(497) = 0.28, p < .001$ ) and intimacy ( $r(497) = 0.29, p < .001$ ). For detailed information about correlations across different conditions, see Table B2 in Appendix B.

### Moderated Mediation Model

Similarly to Study 1, ANOVA results showed no significant effects of recalled memory type on relationship satisfaction. However, recalling memories influenced the emotion of being moved, which correlated with relationship satisfaction at T2 (see Table B1 in Appendix B). Moderated mediation analyses (PROCESS Macro, Model 59; Hayes, 2022) assessed indirect effects and moderation, with variables standardized and T1 relationship satisfaction as a covariate. Because these models were tested after the non-significant main effect and were not preregistered, they should be regarded as exploratory, aimed at identifying potential conditional mechanisms rather than confirming preregistered hypotheses. Detailed findings are in the Supplemental Materials.

Controlling for T1 satisfaction (entered into the model as a covariate<sup>4</sup>), no significant indirect effects or evidence of mediation were found. However, significant moderator effects were identified for paths *a* (condition  $\rightarrow$  being moved), *b* (being moved  $\rightarrow$  relationship satisfaction), and *c'* (condition  $\rightarrow$  relationship satisfaction), alongside conditional direct effects.

For the comparison between the experimental condition and control 1, avoidant attachment significantly moderated path *a* ( $\beta = -0.35, SE = 0.12, p = .003$ ), explaining 27% of the variance in being moved ( $R^2 = .267, p < .001$ ) with an additional 2.6% explained by moderation

( $R^2\text{-chng} = .026, p = .003$ ). Using Johnson-Neyman (JN), moderation occurred at avoidance levels between  $-0.81$  ( $\beta = 1.25, SE = 0.15, p = .000$ ) and  $1.54$  ( $\beta = 0.42, SE = 0.21, p = .050$ ).

When comparing the experimental condition to control 2, avoidant attachment approached significance in moderating path *b* ( $\beta = 0.05, SE = 0.03, p = .050$ ), affecting higher avoidance levels from  $1.39$  ( $\beta = 0.09, SE = 0.05, p = .050$ ). The model explained 83% of the variance in relationship satisfaction ( $R^2 = .833, p < .001$ ), with moderation adding 0.3% ( $R^2\text{-chng} = .003, p = .050$ ). The avoidant attachment also approached significance as a moderator of the *c'* path when comparing the experimental condition to control 3 ( $\beta = -0.13, SE = 0.07, p = .049$ ). The overall model explained approx. 78% of the variance in relationship satisfaction ( $R^2 = .783, p < .001$ ); adding avoidant attachment as a moderator resulted in a significant change in model fit, with  $R^2\text{-chng} = .003, p = .050$ . The JN points of significance indicated the influence of the moderator at lower levels of avoidance, between  $-0.81$  ( $\beta = 0.16, SE = 0.08, p = .043$ ) and  $-0.71$  ( $\beta = 0.15, SE = 0.08, p = .050$ ). This included a significant conditional direct effect at  $-1$  SD (around  $-0.81$ ) level of avoidance ( $\beta = 0.16, SE = 0.08, p = .043$ ).

In Study 2, we also observed several significant moderation effects for narcissism. For the pairwise comparison between the experimental condition and control 1, narcissism significantly moderated the *c'* path ( $\beta = 0.18, SE = 0.08, p = .036$ ). In this case, the overall model explained around 78% of the variance in relationship satisfaction ( $R^2 = .784, p < .001$ ), while adding narcissism as a moderator explained an additional 0.4% ( $R^2\text{-chng} = .004, p = .036$ ). The JN point of significance was identified at a narcissism value around  $2.57$  ( $\beta = 0.46, SE = 0.23, p = .050$ ), indicating that the conditional direct effect increased as narcissism levels rose. Another significant moderation effect of narcissism was found on the *c'* path when comparing the experimental condition with control 3 ( $\beta = 0.17, SE = 0.06, p = .010$ ). This moderation effect was significant at higher levels of

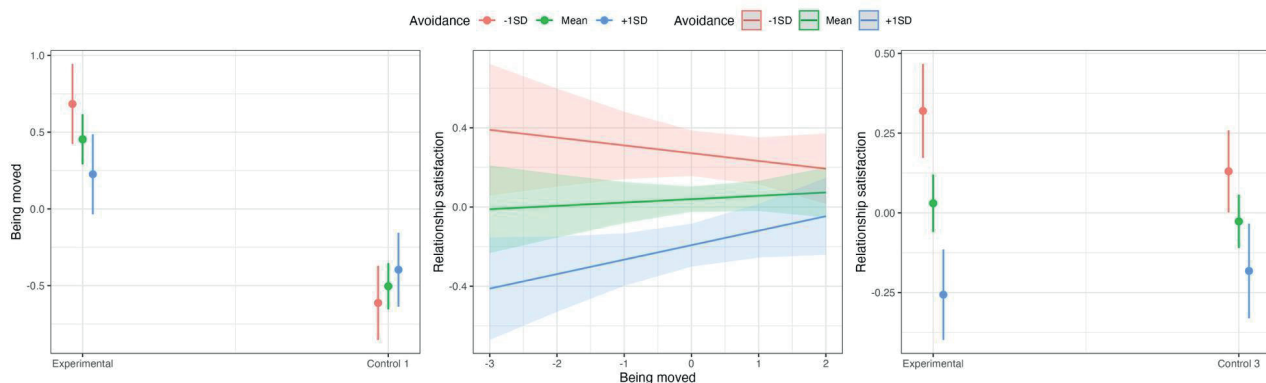


Figure 8. Plots for the Moderation Effects of Avoidant Attachment in Study 2

Note. The left panel presents the moderating role of avoidant attachment on being moved (Experimental vs Control 1 conditions). The middle panel illustrates how avoidant attachment moderates the link between being moved and relationship satisfaction (Experimental vs Control 2). The right panel displays relationship satisfaction across levels of avoidant attachment (Experimental vs. Control 3). Shaded areas and error bars indicate 95% CIs.

narcissism, starting from 0.52 ( $\beta = 0.14$ ,  $SE = 0.07$ ,  $p = .050$ ). While the overall model explained around 77% of the variance in relationship satisfaction ( $R^2 = .766$ ,  $p < .001$ ), narcissism as a moderator explained an additional 0.6% ( $R^2\text{-chng} = .006$ ,  $p = .036$ ). We also observed a significant conditional direct effect at the 1.06 level of narcissism ( $\beta = 0.23$ ,  $SE = 0.09$ ,  $p = .015$ ). Another significant conditional direct effect occurred when comparing the experimental condition to control 2, present at lower levels of narcissism around -1 SD (approx. -1.01;  $\beta = -0.19$ ,  $SE = 0.09$ ,  $p = 0.04$ ).

Finally, we observed a significant moderator effect of anxious attachment on the *a* path when comparing the experimental condition with control 3 ( $\beta = 0.22$ ,  $SE = 0.11$ ,  $p = .045$ ). The moderation effect was significant both at the mean ( $\beta = 0.37$ ,  $SE = 0.11$ ,  $p = .001$ ) and +1SD ( $\beta = 0.59$ ,  $SE = 0.16$ ,  $p < .001$ ) levels of anxious attachment. The JN significance point was identified at an anxious attachment level of -0.57 ( $\beta = 0.25$ ,  $SE = 0.12$ ,  $p = .050$ ). At the same time, the overall model explained about 25% of the variance in being moved ( $R^2 = .252$ ,  $p < .001$ ), adding anxious attachment as a moderator explained an additional 1.2% ( $R^2 = .012$ ,  $p = .045$ ).

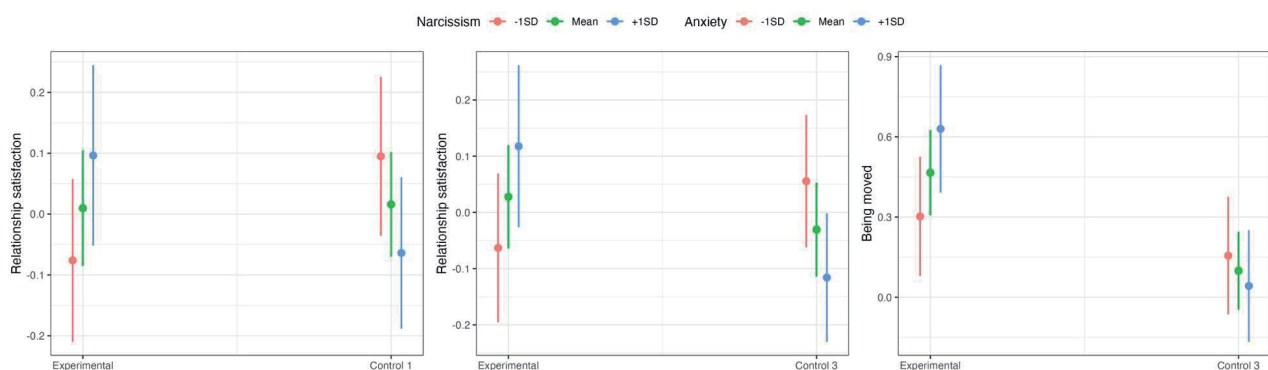
## Discussion

The objectives of Study 2 mirrored those of Study 1 but focused on participants' memories instead of touching videos. As predicted, recalling touching memories effectively evoked the emotion of being moved. The manipulation check confirmed significant differences in being moved between experimental and control conditions, with participants recalling touching moments with their partner reporting the highest levels compared to those recalling their partner's good deeds or others' good/touching deeds. Yet, despite the successful induction of emotion, there were no significant differences between conditions in relationship satisfaction, closeness, or intimacy. The slight overall increase in satisfaction observed across all groups likely reflects the effect of

recalling positive experiences, which were often accompanied by the feeling of being moved, rather than a specific causal influence of the emotion itself. Alternatively, as in Study 1, this increase may reflect a measurement artifact: even when different items are used at T1 and T2, participants might perceive the repeated assessment as implying that "something should have changed," leading them to evaluate their relationships more positively. These results suggest that the observed effect stems from positive recollection or procedural reflection, rather than from the unique influence of being moved. Because the emotion often co-occurs with warm and prosocial memories, disentangling its distinct contribution remains a methodological challenge for future research.

As in Study 1, the general tendency to experience the emotion of being moved correlated positively with relationship satisfaction, closeness, and intimacy, suggesting a stable link. It may show that individuals who are more easily moved may view their relationships through a more emotional and empathetic lens, enhancing satisfaction, or alternatively – that satisfied individuals could be more easily moved by relational cues, perceiving their partner's behavior as caring and affirming. Unmeasured factors such as general positive affect, empathy, or communal orientation might also explain both greater susceptibility to being moved and higher satisfaction. Finally, contrary to *kama muta* theory, being moved may simply accompany positive relational events as their emotional marker, with the events themselves—rather than the emotion per se—driving improvements in relationship quality.

Exploratory analyses conducted after the null findings offer additional nuance. Avoidant attachment consistently weakened emotional responses to the manipulation but strengthened the effect of being moved on relationship satisfaction when the emotion did occur. This pattern suggests that for avoidant individuals, rare moments of emotional engagement may temporarily suspend their typical deactivating strategies and enhance their perception



**Figure 9.** Plots for the Moderation Effects of Narcissism and Anxious Attachment in Study 2

*Note.* The first two panels show moderation effects of narcissism, while the third panel refers to moderation by anxious attachment. The left panel shows how narcissism moderates relationship satisfaction in the comparison between the Experimental condition and Control 1. The middle panel illustrates the moderating effect of narcissism on relationship satisfaction in the comparison between the Experimental condition and Control 3. The right panel presents how anxious attachment moderates being moved in the comparison between the Experimental condition and Control 3. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

of the relationship. In contrast, anxious attachment significantly amplified emotional responses to the manipulation, especially at higher levels of anxiety (up to +1 SD). Highly anxious individuals appeared more easily moved, likely due to their heightened need for reassurance and relational affirmation, with the effects remaining significant, though weaker, at moderate anxiety levels.

Finally, narcissism again moderated the direct effect of the experimental condition on satisfaction, independently of being moved. This suggests that narcissistic individuals may evaluate relational memories primarily in terms of self-image validation rather than emotional connectedness.

As in Study 1, the psychopathy subscale of the Dark Triad measure demonstrated relatively low internal consistency ( $\alpha = .58$ ). Consequently, results involving this dimension should be treated with caution, as the limited reliability of the scale may have reduced the strength of the observed associations.

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

Recent studies indicate that being moved plays a crucial role in forming and maintaining interpersonal relationships. This emotion, often triggered by sudden intensifications of communal sharing—such as acts of kindness or bonding moments—reinforces social bonds and promotes prosocial behavior (Fiske et al., 2019; Schubert et al., 2018; Zickfeld et al., 2019). Our study aimed to investigate the role that being moved may play in romantic relationships. Previous research has demonstrated a positive association between the frequency and intensity of experiences of being moved and relationship satisfaction, intimacy, and closeness (Åbom, 2020; Wiecha et al., 2024). However, the correlational nature of these studies limited the ability to draw causal inferences. Therefore, in the present research, we experimentally examined the interdependence between being moved and relationship satisfaction. Specifically, we sought to determine whether the induction of being moved would lead to significant changes in perceived relationship satisfaction and whether these changes would be associated with feelings of closeness and intimacy. Furthermore, we examined whether individual traits, such as attachment styles or Dark Triad personality traits, could moderate these effects.

### Main Findings

Across both studies, being moved did not lead to measurable changes in relationship satisfaction. Although satisfaction scores were higher at the second measurement, this increase was observed across all conditions, suggesting that the rise was not caused by the emotion itself but reflected general features of the procedure or the character of the tasks. When participants think about their relationships twice within a short time, they may recall positive experiences or feel that their answers should differ slightly from the first assessment, which can result in higher ratings.

The results indicate that a brief emotional episode, even when it evokes feelings of being moved, is not enough to alter how people evaluate their relationships. The emotion may have a cumulative effect only when it occurs repeatedly or in richer interpersonal contexts. The overall increase in satisfaction observed here points to the role of positive reflection and recollection, which can temporarily improve relationship evaluations regardless of emotional induction, suggesting that relational meaning develops more through recurring or shared experiences than through isolated emotional events.

### Tendency to Experience the Emotion of Being Moved

Although the experimental inductions did not lead to measurable changes in satisfaction, both studies showed that dispositional proneness to being moved consistently co-occurred with higher relationship satisfaction. This suggests that the emotion's relevance for close relationships may lie less in its immediate effects and more in a broader emotional orientation that shapes how people perceive and interpret relational experiences. Individuals who are easily moved may habitually engage with their relationships in a more empathic, reflective, and affectively responsive way. Over time, such sensitivity could accumulate into a stronger sense of intimacy and satisfaction.

From this perspective, the association between being moved and relationship quality may reflect long-term processes of emotional meaning-making rather than short-term emotional causation. Single episodes of *kama muta* may be too fleeting to influence relationship evaluations on their own, but recurrent or shared experiences of emotional resonance could gradually strengthen relational bonds.

At the same time, it is also possible that being moved merely accompanies positive relational events rather than producing their effects. The emotion may arise as a response to moments that people already perceive as caring or significant, serving as an affective marker of connection rather than as the mechanism that enhances satisfaction. Interpreting the emotion of being moved in this way situates it not as a direct cause of closeness but as part of a broader pattern through which individuals recognize and give meaning to emotionally important interactions.

### Individual Differences

Exploratory moderation analyses provided additional insights into how attachment and personality traits shape the experience of being moved. Avoidant attachment consistently reduced emotional responsiveness to the manipulations, indicating that individuals who typically distance themselves from closeness are less likely to experience being moved. However, when avoidant individuals did feel moved, the emotion was more strongly associated with satisfaction. This suggests that rare emotional openness may temporarily soften their defensive strategies and enhance their perception of closeness. Such moments may briefly override deactivating mechanisms

that typically limit intimacy (Fraley & Shaver, 2000; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2019). Although avoidant individuals habitually avoid intimacy as a form of self-protection, they still desire closeness on a deeper level (e.g., Śmieja, 2018), and when they do experience it—such as through the emotion of being moved—it may yield particularly beneficial effects for both their own well-being and their perception of the relationship.

Anxious attachment showed the opposite pattern: it amplified emotional reactions to relational cues, especially among highly anxious individuals. This may reflect their heightened need for reassurance and sensitivity to signs of affection. However, greater emotional reactivity did not consistently co-occur with higher satisfaction, implying that emotional arousal alone does not necessarily translate into a sense of security or fulfillment (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2019).

Narcissism moderated the direct effect of the experimental condition on satisfaction, independently of being moved. Individuals higher in narcissism appeared less emotionally responsive but more likely to interpret relational cues in ways that validated their self-image. This pattern aligns with prior research showing that narcissistic individuals often derive satisfaction from self-enhancement and perceived admiration rather than from genuine emotional connection (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Urbonaviciute & Hepper, 2020).

These moderation results, although exploratory, point to an important conclusion: being moved operates within the broader motivational systems that guide how people relate to others. Its effects depend not only on situational triggers but also on individuals' readiness to experience and interpret closeness.

### Summary

The findings provide partial support for the proposed link between being moved and relationship satisfaction, yet they also suggest that this relationship may not follow a straightforward causal pathway. The role of being moved in romantic relationships appears to be more complex and context-dependent than initially assumed. Rather than functioning as a direct driver of relational change, being moved may act as an emotional reflection or reinforcement of ongoing positive relational processes—a signal that such experiences are meaningful and value-affirming.

### Limitations and Further Directions

A key limitation of our research may lie in the nature of the manipulation, which involved a single, isolated instance of being moved. While the findings indicate a positive association between the general tendency to experience being moved and higher relationship satisfaction, the lack of longitudinal data and the short-term nature of the experimental effects make it difficult to determine knowing whether more frequent experiences of this emotion in everyday contexts could lead to meaningful and sustained changes in relationship perceptions over time. Additionally, the experimental manipulations — videos and recalled memories — may not have fully

captured the richness and complexity of real-life romantic experiences that evoke the emotion of being moved. Individual differences, such as attachment styles or personality traits like narcissism, could further moderate susceptibility to emotional elicitation, which may explain variability in the results.

To address these limitations and deepen our understanding, future research should employ longitudinal designs to investigate how the tendency to experience the emotion of being moved influences relationship satisfaction, intimacy, and closeness over time. Longitudinal studies would examine whether being moved has a stable, enduring effect or if its influence fluctuates in response to changes in the relationship or external circumstances. This approach would provide more robust evidence on the causality and directionality of these associations.

Moreover, future studies should explore different contexts and stimuli for evoking the emotion of being moved. Using a broader range of emotionally evocative experiences that reflect real-life relationship dynamics might provide a more comprehensive understanding of how this emotion operates within romantic relationships. Integrating diverse methods, such as daily diary studies, could capture the nuances of emotional experiences as they naturally occur, offering a more ecologically valid perspective on their impact on relationship outcomes.

Finally, as noted, the analytical shift from testing main effects to exploring moderation effects following null results should be acknowledged as a limitation. Although theoretically motivated, the analyses were not part of the original plan and should be interpreted with caution. Power analyses were conducted for simple, pre-registered analyses, such as ANOVA. Hence, the moderated mediation models in both studies were likely underpowered. Monte Carlo simulations indicated that about 300 participants per comparison group, and roughly 150 participants for the detection of interaction effects, would be required to achieve 70% power. The composition of the groups in our studies met these thresholds (Study 1: control group = 160, non-romantic = 171, and romantic = 148; Study 2: experimental = 116, control 1 = 137, control 2 = 107, control 3 = 139), however did not allow for higher power to reliably detect smaller or more subtle moderation effects.

Although the moderation patterns align with theory, they require replication in confirmatory, pre-registered designs. Only such studies will allow a more precise evaluation of when being moved contributes causally to relationship satisfaction and when it simply mirrors underlying positive relational processes.

### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> The means and standard deviations for each dependent variable are provided in the

Supplemental Materials (<https://osf.io/fgv8y/>).

<sup>2</sup> For analyses regarding individual videos, see the Supplementary Material

(<https://osf.io/fgv8y/>).

<sup>3</sup> We decided not to include mood at T1 as a covariate, as unlike satisfaction, which was assessed both at T1 and T2, there was no subsequent mood measurement. Consequently, mood's effect on satisfaction at T2 cannot be analyzed in the model. However, we note that mood and satisfaction at T1 were positively correlated ( $r(497) = 0.37$ ,  $p < .001$ ), suggesting that mood may have influenced satisfaction. We believe it is sufficient to include only satisfaction at T1 as a covariate in this analysis.

<sup>4</sup> As previously, we decided not to include mood at T1 as a covariate for the same reasons as in Study 1. In this study, mood and satisfaction at T1 were also positively correlated ( $r(497) = 0.39$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

<sup>5</sup> Videos used in each condition were as follows:  
romantic –  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IsKIqmyPeps>,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O6oom-7KsYI>;  
non-romantic –  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WvTbH-gdke4>,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GnFwLE5rAfs>;  
neutral –  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xbE5MHtevBk>,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w3TL262eHuc>.

<sup>6</sup> The premium version of ChatGPT-4o was utilized for text correction and refinement, ensuring linguistic accuracy, coherence, and clarity in the manuscript.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**CORRELATION TABLES FOR STUDY 1**

**Table A1.** Correlation Between Experimentally Evoked Being Moved and Relationship Satisfaction for T1, T2 and T2-T1 Across Conditions

Condition.	T1			T2			T2 - T1		
	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>df</i>
Romantic	.13	.119	146	.13	.108	146	.02	.853	146
Non-Romantic	.17	.024	169	.16	.036	169	-.03	.711	169
Control	.15	.052	158	.15	.054	158	-.01	.869	158

**Table A2.** Correlation Between Experimentally Evoked Being Moved and Closeness and Intimacy Across Conditions

Condition	Closeness			Intimacy		
	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>df</i>
Romantic	.13	.124	146	.09	.270	146
Non-Romantic	.24	.001	169	.23	.003	169
Control	.17	.036	158	.15	.052	158

**Table A3.** Correlation Between the Tendency to Experience Being Moved and Relationship Satisfaction for T1, T2 and T2-T1 Across Conditions

Condition	T1			T2			T2 - T1		
	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>df</i>
Romantic	.04	.664	146	.10	.218	146	.15	.065	146
Non-Romantic	.13	.092	169	.08	.293	169	-.11	.169	169
Control	.19	.019	158	.21	.007	158	-.05	.509	158

**Table A4.** Correlation Between General Tendency to Experience Being Moved and Closeness and Intimacy Across Conditions

Condition	Closeness			Intimacy		
	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>df</i>
Romantic	.03	.679	146	.01	.901	146
Non-Romantic	.10	.183	169	.18	.016	169
Control	.27	.001	158	.26	.001	158

**APPENDIX B**  
**CORRELATION TABLES FOR STUDY 2**

**Table B1.** *Correlation Between Experimentally Evoked Being Moved and Relationship Satisfaction at T1 and T2 Across Conditions*

Condition	T1			T2			T2 - T1		
	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>df</i>
Experimental	.35	< .001	114	.35	< .001	114	-.02	.795	114
Control 1	-.007	.940	135	.006	.947	135	.02	.795	135
Control 2	.37	< .001	105	.38	< .001	105	.01	.892	105
Control 3	.57	< .001	137	.51	< .001	137	-.18	.032	137

**Table B2.** *Correlation Between Experimentally Evoked Being Moved and Closeness and Intimacy Across Conditions*

Condition	Closeness			Intimacy		
	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>df</i>
Experimental	.48	< .001	114	.30	< .001	114
Control 1	.04	.670	135	.02	.840	135
Control 2	.29	.002	105	.40	< .001	105
Control 3	.34	< .001	137	.48	< .001	137

**Table B3.** *Correlation Between the Tendency to Experience Being Moved and Relationship Satisfaction for T1, T2, and T2-T1*

Condition	T1			T2			T2-T1		
	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>df</i>
Experimental	.28	.002	114	.26	.005	114	<b>-.06</b>	<b>.539</b>	<b>114</b>
Control 1	.22	.011	135	<b>.11</b>	<b>.201</b>	<b>135</b>	-.20	.017	135
Control 2	.23	.015	105	.29	.003	105	.11	.255	105
Control 3	.41	< .001	137	.33	< .001	137	<b>-.19</b>	<b>.028</b>	<b>137</b>

**Table B4.** *Correlation Between Experimentally Evoked Being Moved and Closeness and Intimacy Across Four Conditions*

Condition	Closeness			Intimacy		
	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>df</i>
Experimental	.28	.003	114	.24	.010	114
Control 1	.30	< .001	135	.24	.005	135
Control 2	.26	.006	105	.36	< .001	105
Control 3	.29	< .001	137	.37	< .001	137