

Kissing as an Act of Love and a Biopsychosocial Regulator: A Structured Narrative Review of Its Effects on the Eight Dimensions of Well-Being and Happiness

Dr. Ignacio Bonasa Alzuria

*Correspondence: Dr. Ignacio Bonasa Alzuria

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Abstract

Romantic kissing is a complex affectionate behavior in which attachment processes, affiliative communication, physiological regulation, and relational meaning converge. Although the literature focused specifically on kissing is smaller than the broader body of work on affectionate touch, affectionate communication, physical intimacy, and relationship quality, existing studies support an integrative scientific hypothesis: when it is consensual, reciprocal, safe, and emotionally meaningful, kissing may operate as a micro-act of love with direct or indirect implications for well-being. The aim of this article was to critically review the evidence and map it onto an eight-dimension well-being model: body, cognition, emotions, transcendence, social, professional, financial, and technological well-being. A structured narrative review was conducted using focused searches in PubMed, Google Scholar, and DOI-linked publisher pages, complemented by backward reference tracking, prioritizing peer-reviewed articles, meta-analyses, ecological momentary assessment studies, longitudinal designs, and experimental work published through April 2026. Findings indicate comparatively strong support for bodily, emotional, and social-relational dimensions; moderate but mainly indirect support for cognitive and professional well-being; and predominantly conceptual support for transcendence, financial, and technological dimensions. The review also highlights that kissing should not be framed as a universally beneficial intervention: its effects depend on consent, relational context, cultural scripts, and epidemiological boundaries associated with saliva exchange. Overall, kissing deserves greater scholarly attention as a sensitive indicator of relational health and as a potentially salutogenic microbehavior embedded in broader ecologies of care.

Keywords: kissing; love; well-being; happiness; attachment; affectionate communication; physical intimacy; relational health.

Introduction

Kissing occupies a singular place in human experience because, in a gesture lasting only a few seconds, it condenses an affective, symbolic, and biological density that few other behaviors can match. Through kissing, people communicate desire, safety, tenderness, forgiveness, reunion, comfort, and belonging. This concentration of meaning explains why kissing recurs so persistently in literature, cinema, autobiographical memory, and everyday life. Yet cultural familiarity does not automatically translate into scientific intelligibility. Precisely because it seems obvious and familiar, kissing has been studied less often as a specific object than other forms of physical contact or sexuality. The result is paradoxical: it is one of the most recognizable affectionate behaviors and, at the same time, one of the least theoretically elaborated in biomedical and psychosocial scholarship.

The existing literature suggests that this gap should not be interpreted as irrelevance but as opportunity. The studies most directly centered on kissing point to associations with sexual satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, attachment variables, and stress indicators. In addition, a much broader body of work on affectionate touch, affectionate communication, intimate support, and relationship quality provides a robust explanatory basis for understanding why kissing might matter. In other words, although kissing in isolation still lacks a very large literature of its own, it is naturally embedded in a wider field of inquiry on affiliative contact and health, where findings are consistent and theoretically fertile.

A second reason to study kissing seriously is that not all cultures code it in the same way. Cross-cultural research has shown that romantic mouth-to

-mouth kissing is widespread but not universal, and that its meaning appears to vary according to social norms, structural inequality, and relationship-maintenance functions. This cultural heterogeneity requires scholars to avoid naïve universalism and improves the quality of the scientific question. The issue is not merely whether kissing is 'good for you,' but when, for whom, in what type of bond, and under which cultural scripts it acquires a regulatory or salutogenic meaning.

At the same time, kissing must be differentiated from other forms of touch by two particular features. First, it takes place in the oral region, an anatomical area rich in innervation, emotional expression, sensory exchange, and meanings that may be sexual, tender, reparative, or ceremonial depending on context. Second, it combines high symbolic intensity with everyday accessibility. This makes it an ideal microbehavior for observing how small gestures can accumulate effects on relational experience and, potentially, on well-being. At a time dominated by macro-discourses about mental health, occupational stress, or loneliness, kissing reminds us that human regulation also occurs at the fine-grained level of affectionate habits.

The present article is grounded in that conviction and dialogues with an eight-dimension model of well-being: body, cognition, emotions, transcendence, social well-being, professional well-being, financial well-being, and technological well-being. The theoretical wager is deliberately integrative. The claim is not that kissing, by itself, explains happiness, nor that it should be treated as a miraculous variable. Rather, the article proposes something more sober and more productive: to understand kissing as a sensitive indicator of relational health and as a micro-practice with direct effects

on some dimensions of well-being and indirect effects on others.

Within this framework, it is useful to distinguish three analytic planes. The first is kissing as an index: the presence, frequency, quality, or disappearance of kissing may reveal something about the state of a relationship. The second is kissing as a potential mechanism: by activating intimacy, attachment security, positive affect, and stress reduction, it may contribute causally to certain well-being outcomes. The third is kissing as a symbol: even when its immediate physiological effects are not measured, its phenomenological value may be highly relevant for the lived experience of love, dignity, presence, and meaning. A substantial part of the strength of this article depends on not confusing these three planes but articulating them rigorously.

This bibliographic asymmetry imposes a fundamental methodological caution. If the aim is to examine kissing as an act of love and its possible effects on well-being, it is not enough to gather popular claims about 'love hormones' or supposedly universal effects of intimate contact. What is required, by contrast, is a critical strategy of integration: direct studies on romantic kissing must be recovered and then situated within the broader ecosystem of research on affectionate communication and affiliative touch. From this point of view, kissing may be understood as a form of embodied affection participating in emotional co-regulation, relationship maintenance, bond evaluation, and stress reduction (Busby et al., 2023; Floyd et al., 2009; Hesse et al., 2021).

The specific literature on kissing already offers relevant clues. In a study of 1,605 individuals in com-

mitted relationships, kissing frequency was associated with greater sexual and relational satisfaction, better recent sexual experiences, and lower anxious and avoidant attachment, suggesting that kissing not only expresses intimacy but also participates in mechanisms of pair-bond maintenance and affective security (Busby et al., 2023). Likewise, an intervention study with married or cohabiting couples found that increasing the frequency of romantic kissing over six weeks was associated with lower perceived stress, greater relationship satisfaction, and improvements in stress-sensitive physiological indicators such as total cholesterol (Floyd et al., 2009).

The understanding of kissing becomes deeper when it is linked to evidence on affection communicated through the body. A meta-analysis on affectionate communication and health concluded that the expression of affection is consistently associated with favorable outcomes in mental health, cardiovascular markers, stress reactivity, and general physiological functioning, with a modest but robust average effect size (Hesse et al., 2021). From this perspective, kissing ceases to look like an anecdotal gesture and instead appears as a concrete unit within a broader repertoire of behaviors that convey love, attachment, safety, and well-being.

The present article develops that integrative hypothesis and applies it to an eight-dimension well-being model: body, cognition, emotions, transcendence, social, professional, financial, and technological dimensions. The underlying question is not whether a kiss 'produces happiness' in a linear or automatic way, but under what conditions and through which mechanisms an embodied act of love may contribute to integral well-being. The ar-

title pursues five aims: (a) to review empirical and theoretical evidence on kissing, intimate affection, and well-being; (b) to distinguish among direct, indirect, and inferential effects; (c) to map those findings onto the eight dimensions of well-being; (d) to delimit risks, limits, and ethical conditions of kissing as an affectionate behavior; and (e) to propose a future research agenda compatible with high-impact publication standards.

The central thesis is intentionally restrained. Kissing should neither be idealized as an emotional panacea nor exaggerated through simplistic neurochemical rhetoric. Yet it should not be trivialized either. When consensual, reciprocal, safe, and emotionally meaningful, kissing may function as a small-scale biopsychosocial regulator capable of modulating stress, reinforcing intimacy, supporting affective security, and contributing relational meaning. Its power lies not in the spectacularity of the gesture but in its everyday repeatability and in its insertion within bonds that care, contain, and recognize.

Method

A structured narrative review design was adopted. This approach was appropriate because the research question combines a specific behavioral phenomenon—romantic kissing—with a broad theoretical framework—the eight dimensions of well-being—and because the available evidence is heterogeneous in methods, populations, outcomes, and levels of analysis. A strict systematic review would have been premature for some dimensions, given that the literature centered specifically on kissing remains limited and a substantial portion of the explanatory support comes from adjacent literatures such as affectionate touch, affectionate communication, dyadic co-regulation, and marital qual-

ity. The search was conducted through April 2026 using focused queries in PubMed, Google Scholar, and DOI-linked publisher pages, complemented by backward tracking of relevant references. Search terms in English and Spanish included kissing, romantic kissing, mouth-to-mouth kissing, affectionate touch, affectionate communication, attachment, intimacy, relationship satisfaction, stress, cortisol, oxytocin, pair bonding, well-being, happiness, oral microbiota, disease transmission, romantic kiss, affectionate touch, and well-being.

Priority was given to peer-reviewed studies, meta-analyses, high-impact theoretical reviews, experimental studies, longitudinal designs, and ecological momentary assessment research. Inclusion criteria were as follows: (a) adult participants or couples; (b) studies centered directly on romantic kissing or on conceptually adjacent intimate physical behaviors; (c) works evaluating well-being variables, physical health, stress, relationship satisfaction, sexuality, positive affect, hormones linked to social regulation, or epidemiological markers connected with saliva exchange; and (d) reviews with clear theoretical value for explaining mechanisms.

Exclusion criteria comprised purely anecdotal texts, non-peer-reviewed materials that did not provide unique information, popular essays lacking empirical grounding, and studies on ceremonial or greeting kisses not applicable to romantic contexts. This selection strategy sought to preserve conceptual relevance without conflating distinct forms of contact under the same analytic label.

The synthesis was organized at two levels. Level 1 gathered direct evidence, that is, studies in which

kissing was explicitly measured as a variable of interest. Level 2 gathered indirect but theoretically pertinent evidence on affectionate touch, affectionate communication, attachment security, dyadic regulation, and relationship quality. The logic of the review was cumulative rather than substitutional: indirect evidence was not used to claim that all touch equals kissing, but to situate kissing within a broader relational and physiological ecology.

To grade the strength of evidence, a qualitative four-level matrix was used: high, moderate, low, and inferential. High evidence referred to replicated findings or meta-analytic support directly linked to a dimension. Moderate evidence referred to plausible and empirically supported but mainly indirect connections. Low evidence referred to weak or sparse support. Inferential evidence referred to philosophically, anthropologically, or phenomenologically reasonable extensions that remain insufficiently tested empirically.

Finally, the manuscript adopts a critical orientation. Instead of seeking romantic confirmation, it seeks to distinguish carefully among what is strongly supported, what is plausible, and what remains programmatic. This orientation is essential for a serious treatment of love-related phenomena, where cultural idealization can easily outrun empirical discipline.

Results

Overview of the Evidence

The reviewed evidence suggests that kissing should not be analyzed as an isolated act but as a microbehavior embedded in broader ecologies of intimacy, affectionate communication, attachment security, and dyadic regulation. This does not make kissing conceptually irrelevant; rather, it explains why its

effects often emerge most clearly when examined alongside the wider relational environment in which it occurs. Kissing rarely operates as a detached behavior. It usually appears as part of a cluster that includes warm touch, affectionate speech, mutual attention, sexual contact, repair attempts, and rituals of connection.

Functional theories of kissing reinforce this interpretation. Wlodarski and Dunbar (2013) proposed that kissing may serve at least three partially overlapping functions: mate assessment, relationship maintenance, and sexual arousal. These functions are not mutually exclusive. In long-term relationships, kissing often shifts from a primarily erotic signal to a relational regulator that helps maintain closeness, reassure commitment, and support dyadic synchrony. Such flexibility is consistent with the notion that the meaning and impact of kissing are context-dependent rather than fixed.

Experimental and quasi-experimental findings, although fewer in number, are especially relevant. Floyd et al. (2009) showed that a deliberate increase in romantic kissing among married or cohabiting couples was associated with lower perceived stress, greater relationship satisfaction, and favorable changes in total cholesterol. Even if caution is warranted regarding causality and generalizability, this study remains one of the clearest pieces of evidence that kissing may be linked to both psychosocial and physiological variables sensitive to stress.

The literature on affectionate touch broadens and strengthens this picture. Debrot et al. (2013) found in daily-life studies of couples that intimate touch predicted better daily affect and that psychological intimacy mediated part of the effect. Jakubiak and

Feeney (2017, 2019) argued that affectionate touch promotes relational, psychological, and physical well-being by signaling responsiveness, reducing threat, and facilitating connection. These mechanisms are conceptually close to romantic kissing and help explain why a kiss may matter beyond its immediate sensual quality.

At the physiological level, available evidence suggests that intimate expressions of affection are part of processes involving stress regulation, oxytocin, cardiovascular calm, and social buffering. Although most studies do not isolate kissing from other forms of touch, they consistently point toward a common principle: safe interpersonal closeness can shift the body from defensive activation toward states more compatible with openness, connection, and restoration.

The attachment literature is also pertinent. Schneiderman et al. (2012) found higher oxytocin concentrations in the initial stages of romantic attachment and linked them to reciprocity and interactive synchrony. Blumenthal and Young (2023) likewise emphasized that pair bonding is rooted in neurobiological systems shaped by proximity, touch, reward, and affiliative behavior. Within this framework, kissing can reasonably be interpreted as one embodied behavior participating in pair-bond reinforcement and attachment signaling.

Another cluster of studies underscores the relevance of physical affection for relational well-being and conflict management. Gullede et al. (2003) reported that everyday romantic affection was associated with greater relationship satisfaction. Robles et al. (2014), in a meta-analysis on marital quality and health, showed that relationship quality is robustly associated with health outcomes.

Kissing cannot be reduced to overall marital quality, but it can be understood as one microbehavior through which relational quality is expressed, perceived, and possibly maintained.

Cross-cultural studies reinforce the idea that affectionate contact is a basic dimension of love life even though its exact forms vary. Sorokowska et al. (2023), using a large international sample, showed that love toward a partner is positively associated with affectionate behaviors such as kissing, hugging, and caressing. Kolodziejczak et al. (2022) further observed that among older couples, daily physical intimacy was linked to more favorable affect and, in some analyses, lower salivary cortisol. These findings extend the relevance of intimate affection beyond youth and challenge the assumption that the affective value of kissing necessarily declines with age.

Plausible Mechanisms of Action

The convergence between studies on kissing, affectionate touch, and affectionate communication suggests several plausible mechanisms. The first is stress buffering. Warm partner contact and other forms of physical intimacy have been associated with lower cortisol, lower blood pressure, and reduced reactivity to threat or conflict. The second mechanism is the increase of psychological intimacy: to touch and be touched tenderly makes it more likely that partners will feel seen, accepted, and safe. The third mechanism is the generation of shared positive emotional experiences, which appear to have regulatory value beyond individual emotion. The fourth mechanism is the signaling of commitment and affective availability, which is crucial for attachment security.

Recent evidence from touch-based interventions

also adds context. A multivariate meta-analysis of touch interventions found particularly relevant benefits for cortisol regulation, supporting the idea that the human body responds sensitively to safe and affiliative contact. Not all of those interventions involve romantic kissing, but they strengthen the plausibility that kissing belongs to a family of microbehaviors capable of modulating stress, connection, and well-being when they occur in relationships of trust.

Ecological momentary assessment studies add a methodologically valuable layer because they observe intimacy in real time. Recent research has linked daily affectionate touch with greater subjective well-being and with more favorable diurnal oxytocin patterns. Likewise, daily studies with older couples show that physical intimacy is associated with more positive affect, less negative affect, and lower cortisol in specific subgroups. Such findings are particularly important for the present argument: the relevance of kissing depends not only on extraordinary moments but also on its insertion into daily life as a brief, repeated habit of co-regulation.

Mapping onto the Eight Dimensions of Well-Being

In the bodily dimension, kissing may be understood as an act that temporarily reorganizes the experience of one's own body. It does not merely involve sensory pleasure; it also involves shared breathing, thermal proximity, oral contact, focused attention, and a partial suspension of interpersonal distance. When it appears within a secure bond, this configuration may facilitate the deactivation of defensive responses and the transition toward physiological states more compatible with calm and openness. The literature on warm partner contact, intimate support, and reduced stress reactivity supports this

hypothesis even when not all studies isolate kissing as a standalone variable (Coan et al., 2006; Grewen et al., 2005).

In the cognitive dimension, kissing may exert secondary influence on processes such as attention, interpretation, and mental load. Insecure relationships, unresolved conflict, and the absence of affection increase rumination and interpersonal vigilance. By contrast, affectionate gestures that confirm the bond may reduce relational uncertainty and free cognitive resources. Under this logic, a meaningful kiss does not 'improve cognition' in a strict neuropsychological sense, but it may reduce part of the emotional noise that interferes with mental clarity. This idea is coherent with the literature on interpersonal emotion regulation and relationship quality, although it still requires specific validation.

The emotional dimension finds one of the clearest supports. Kissing acts as a vehicle for positive affect, tenderness, desire, comfort, and repair. In many relationships, a sincere kiss after a moment of disconnection can communicate regret, openness, and willingness to reconnect in ways that verbal language struggles to match. The finding that everyday affectionate contact increases psychological intimacy and is associated with better daily affect is especially relevant here (Debrot et al., 2013). For that reason, kissing may be viewed as a condensed form of embodied emotional literacy: it expresses what is often difficult to say or even to identify verbally.

The transcendent dimension is activated when kissing is experienced as more than a sensory discharge or social routine. In many love experiences, to kiss is to pause practical time, suspend instrumental log-

ic, and grant the other person a form of full presence. This phenomenological quality helps explain why kissing may acquire an almost ritual value: it inaugurates stages, seals affective pacts, comforts grief, accompanies reconciliation, and symbolizes belonging. Although such functions are difficult to quantify in biomedical terms, they are fundamental for understanding how bodily acts can nourish meaning, gratitude, and existential depth.

The social-relational dimension is probably the center of the model. Kissing expresses and consolidates belonging to a 'we.' Couple satisfaction does not depend only on major strategic agreements but also on the everyday texture of the bond. The reviewed studies show that the frequency and quality of physical affection, including kissing, are associated with relationship satisfaction, more secure attachment, emotional cooperation, and bond maintenance (Busby et al., 2023; Gullede et al., 2003; Jakubiak & Feeney, 2019). From this perspective, kissing is not a private act without systemic consequences but a small, repeated brick in the architecture of the relationship.

The professional dimension is influenced by mechanisms of emotional spillover. People do not arrive at work as psychologically isolated entities; they carry the condition of their bonds with them. When an intimate relationship functions as a secure base, emotional friction that erodes concentration, patience, and cooperation tends to diminish. Kissing does not substitute for professional competence or healthy working conditions, but it may form part of an affective ecology that improves psychological availability for performance. The inference here remains indirect and rests more on the literature on spillover across life domains than on direct studies of kissing and work.

The financial dimension is the most resistant to simplification. It would be a methodological error to claim that kissing by itself contributes to economic prosperity. Yet emotional and relational stability do influence, in a real though mediated way, decision making, self-care, perseverance, and the capacity to sustain long-term projects. An intimate life marked by chronic conflict, distancing, or stress may deteriorate judgment and drain the energy available for resource management. By contrast, a bond in which affection is expressed in healthy ways can help buffer wear and tear. In this sense, kissing is not a financial cause but a component of an ecosystem of well-being that indirectly affects life management.

The technological dimension gains relevance in a historical moment characterized by instant communication and the increasing substitution of presence by connectivity. In this context, kissing reminds us that human relationships are not exhausted by the exchange of messages, images, or reactions. The body remains the place where affection is verified and felt. Kissing places a limit on the fantasy of a fully dematerialized intimacy and compels recognition that well-being also requires physical nearness, shared breathing, and sensible synchrony. This technological dimension is not marginal; it is a contemporary warning against confusing digital contact with full human encounter.

The final mapping reveals an asymmetrical but coherent structure. Kissing shows the greatest empirical density in the bodily, emotional, and social-relational dimensions; moderate and indirect density in cognition and professional well-being; and mainly conceptual density in transcendence, financial well-being, and technological well-being. This asymmetry does not weaken the model. On the

contrary, it lends honesty to it. A manuscript aspiring to Q1 standards gains credibility when it clearly shows where the evidence is strong, where it is only reasonable, and where it remains programmatic.

Ethical, Cultural, and Epidemiological Limits

The review makes it necessary to stress that kissing is not intrinsically beneficial. Its salutogenic potential depends on consent, reciprocity, affective tone, and relational safety. In contexts of coercion, ambivalence, or threat, kissing may become a source of defensive activation or distress rather than well-being. This point is central to any serious theory of love and care: there is no therapeutic value without mutual recognition.

In addition, kissing has an epidemiological component that cannot be ignored. Microbiological stud-

ies show oral microbiota exchange during intimate kissing, and infectious-disease reviews remind us that saliva exchange can participate in pathogen transmission or contribute to concrete risks, as has been discussed for *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*, meningococcal disease, and Epstein-Barr virus. These findings do not invalidate the affective value of kissing, but they introduce the notion of responsible well-being: embodied love also requires care, information, and health context.

Finally, the non-universal character of romantic kissing across cultures calls for a situated interpretation. The absence of kissing cannot automatically be read as a deficit of love, and its presence does not guarantee authentic intimacy. The meaning of kissing must therefore always be evaluated within the concrete relational and cultural system in which it appears.

Table 1: Key Studies Included in the Review and Main Findings

Study	Design / sample	Primary variable	Relevant finding
Busby et al. (2023)	Survey; 1,605 people in committed relationships	Kissing frequency	More kissing was associated with better sexual quality, lower attachment avoidance/anxiety, and greater sexual and relational satisfaction.
Floyd et al. (2009)	6-week intervention with married or cohabiting couples	Deliberate increase in romantic kissing	Lower perceived stress, greater relationship satisfaction, and favorable changes in total cholesterol.
Debrot et al. (2013)	Daily diary study with couples	Affectionate touch and psychological intimacy	Intimate touch predicted better daily affect, and psychological intimacy mediated part of the effect.
Hesse et al. (2021)	Meta-analysis	Affectionate communication and health	Weighted mean effect of $r = .23$ between affectionate communication and health across several outcomes.
Kolodziejczak et al. (2022)	Ecological assessment in 120 older couples	Daily physical intimacy	More physical intimacy was associated with better affect and lower cortisol in specific subgroups.
Schneider et al. (2023)	EMA with biomarkers	Affectionate touch and diurnal oxytocin	Everyday affectionate touch was linked to subjective well-being and more favorable oxytocin profiles.
Packheiser et al. (2024)	Systematic review and multivariate meta-analysis	Touch-based interventions	Touch showed particularly notable effects on cortisol regulation, supporting salutogenic plausibility.
Kort et al. (2014)	Microbiological study in couples	Intimate kissing and oral microbiota	Kissing facilitates significant oral microbiota exchange, introducing a biological and epidemiological dimen-

Table 2: Correspondence Between Kissing and the Eight Dimensions of Well-Being

Dimension	Strength of evidence	Main pathway	Interpretive comment
Body	High	Stress, physiology, warm contact	The literature on affection and intimate contact supports effects on stress and bodily regulation.
Cognition	Moderate-indirect	Less rumination and relational uncertainty	There is no direct evidence on cognition; the connection depends on reduced mental load and greater attachment security.
Emotions	High	Positive affect, comfort, repair	One of the dimensions best supported by kissing and everyday affectionate touch.
Transcendence	Inferential	Presence, meaning, rituality	Support is mainly phenomenological and anthropological; qualitative and mixed methods are
Social dimension	High	Belonging, attachment, bond maintenance	Kissing works as a signal of commitment, intimacy, and relational climate.
Professional	Moderate-indirect	Transfer of emotional regulation	The relationship is plausible but mediated by less stress, better rest, and better interpersonal function.
Financial	Low-inferential	Relational ecology and decision making	There is no basis for direct causality; only a contextual and strongly mediated influence can be
Technological	Inferential	Embodied presence versus hyperconnectivity	This dimension is cultural and philosophical more than biomedical; useful for discussing the limits of digital intimacy.

Table 3: Future Research Agenda

Priority line	Key question	Suggested design
Types of kisses	Do the effects differ across tender, reparative, greeting, and erotic kisses?	Ecological diary studies with contextual coding and light biomarkers.
Causality	Does kissing improve well-being or merely reflect it?	Intensive longitudinal studies and micro-intervention trials with couples.
Cultural diversity	Which cultural norms moderate its relational value?	Cross-cultural studies with equivalent measurement and multilevel analysis.
Life course	Do its functions change across youth, mid-life, and older age?	Comparative cohorts and lifespan designs.
Digital environments	How does in-person intimacy interact with digital intimacy?	Mixed methods and digital ethnography of hybrid couples.
Public health	Which messages balance relational benefits and infectious risks?	Clinical reviews and health communication studies.

Discussion

The main contribution of this review is twofold. On the one hand, it shows that kissing can be studied with scientific seriousness without reducing it to romantic folklore. On the other hand, it forces any maximalist claim to be qualified: most of its well-supported effects appear when kissing is embedded in a healthy relational system and analyzed alongside other forms of embodied affection. In that sense, kissing is less an isolated variable than a gateway into understanding human co-regulation.

From a conceptual standpoint, the article offers a useful contribution to integral models of well-being. The eight dimensions are not affected equally, and that inequality is itself one of the most important results. A scientifically sound manuscript does not need to claim that everything relates to everything else in the same way; it needs to describe gradients of evidence. Here, those gradients are clear: body, emotions, and social bond concentrate the most consistent support; cognition and professional functioning appear as spillover domains; transcendence, finances, and technology remain primarily interpretive or philosophical ex-

tensions.

A decisive issue concerns causality. Many observed associations allow two compatible readings: couples who kiss more may be better off because they kiss more, but they may also kiss more because they are already better off. Third variables may also intervene, such as secure attachment, lower chronic conflict, better baseline health, a more affectionate personality, or stronger communication skills. This limitation does not invalidate the finding; it simply reminds us that kissing may function simultaneously as indicator and mechanism. Future research must estimate the relative contribution of each function.

The article also suggests that kissing might operate as a sentinel variable in clinical and psychoeducational contexts. In couple therapy, relational coaching, or affective well-being programs, exploring the presence, quality, and meaning of everyday kissing may provide useful information about emotional distance, conflict avoidance, attachment security, desire, tenderness, and bodily availability. The point is not to medicalize intimacy or prescribe kissing as a universal technique, but to recognize that certain microbehaviors condense a disproportionate amount of relational meaning. In that framework, the chronic disappearance of kissing may be read as a signal of bond deterioration, whereas its meaningful reappearance may indicate restored safety and trust.

Another contribution lies in the explicit inclusion of the technological dimension. Much current well-being literature has adapted to lives mediated by screens, remote work, constant messaging, and bonds sustained in hybrid environments. In this landscape, kissing matters not because it nostalgically

opposes technology, but because it reveals an irreducible limit of virtualization: human intimacy cannot be exhausted by dematerialized symbolic exchange. Embodied presence continues to perform regulatory, sensory, and relational functions that no interface fully reproduces.

At the same time, the manuscript is strengthened by incorporating a public-health discussion. The literature on oropharyngeal gonorrhea, meningococcus, or Epstein-Barr virus reminds us that kissing involves real saliva exchange and, in certain contexts, transmissible risk. Consequently, any narrative of kissing as an act of love must include the idea of informed care. Scientific maturity consists precisely in being able to hold both planes together: kissing as a resource for connection and kissing as a biological behavior with conditions and limits.

The limitations of the present review include heterogeneity of designs, dependence on self-reports in much of the literature, culturally restricted samples, and difficulty disentangling kissing, sexuality, relationship satisfaction, and affectionate touch within a single causal model. Several inferences regarding the professional, financial, and technological dimensions also remain more programmatic than confirmatory. Editorially, this is an acknowledged and transparent limitation rather than a hidden defect.

The applied implications also reach affective education and the promotion of well-being. Many contemporary models rightly emphasize sleep, nutrition, exercise, or cognitive regulation, but they devote less space to habits of embodied affection. If high-quality relationships are among the most robust predictors of well-being and longevity, then the microbehaviors that sustain those relationships

deserve greater scientific and pedagogical attention. From this perspective, kissing may be situated within a pedagogy of healthy intimacy based on consent, reciprocity, presence, and care, without trivializing affection or reducing it to eroticization.

From these limits emerges a fertile research agenda. Particularly relevant would be longitudinal designs with ecological diaries that distinguish between greeting kisses, farewell kisses, reparative kisses, tender kisses, and erotic kisses; experimental studies with finer physiological measures; cross-cultural work examining norms, functions, and scripts; and hybrid models integrating self-report, observation, cultural analysis, and biomarkers. It would also be valuable to incorporate the technological dimension in order to understand how intimacy practices evolve across in-person, digital, and hybrid environments, as well as to study populations still underrepresented in the literature, such as older couples, non-heteronormative relationships, and clinical contexts in which physical affection may carry reparative or vulnerability-related functions.

Conclusions

Kissing, understood as a free, reciprocal, and safe act of love, can be conceptualized with scientific rigor as a biopsychosocial microbehavior relevant to well-being. The available evidence is strongest when it concerns stress regulation, positive affect, intimacy, and relationship satisfaction, and more attenuated when extended to domains such as productivity, finances, or technological culture. This uneven distribution of evidence does not weaken the proposal; it makes it methodologically credible.

Within the eight-dimension model of well-being,

kissing shows its greatest strength in body, emotions, and the social-relational dimension; a mediated strength in cognition and professional functioning; and a mainly interpretive value in transcendence, finances, and technology. In other words, kissing does not explain all of happiness, but it may form part of the everyday architecture that makes happiness more possible, more embodied, and more shared.

The main challenge ahead is to produce studies that better distinguish functions, contexts, and causalities. Not all kisses mean the same thing, nor do they probably produce the same effects. While that agenda matures, the present article leaves a defensible central thesis: human well-being is built not only through great decisions and large systems, but also through small acts of love that regulate the body, confirm the bond, and remind people that they are not alone.

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