

# Over-promising and future projection in romantic dating: emotional escalation, expectation formation, and relational consequences

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**Abstract.** This paper examines over-promising and future projection in romantic dating as communicative practices that accelerate emotional attachment by generating a premature sense of certainty, intimacy, and relational seriousness. It argues that these behaviors are not merely expressive features of romantic discourse, but expectation-shaping mechanisms that influence trust, vulnerability, and emotional investment. Drawing on attachment theory, expectancy violations theory, symbolic interactionism, and social exchange theory, the paper analyzes how exaggerated assurances and premature future-oriented language function within contemporary dating culture. It shows that over-promising and future projection are shaped by multiple factors, including emotional insecurity, fear of abandonment, idealized media narratives, app-based dating environments, and, in some cases, strategic or manipulative motives. The paper further demonstrates that these behaviors often appear through early talk of marriage, long-term partnership, or shared life plans, as well as through rapid emotional escalation and inconsistency between words and actions. Their consequences include distorted expectations, trust erosion, disappointment, emotional dependency, and relational instability for both partners. At the same time, the paper argues that future-oriented communication is not inherently harmful. Rather, its ethical and relational value depends on realism, pacing, honesty, and behavioral consistency. Ultimately, the study contributes to scholarship on romantic communication, emotional ethics, and relationship health in digitally mediated dating contexts.

**Keywords:** over-promising, future projection, romantic communication, emotional attachment, dating culture

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## 1. Introduction

Contemporary dating is increasingly shaped by rapid emotional escalation, a pattern that has become especially visible within digitally mediated relationship formation. Online dating platforms and mobile applications have altered how intimacy begins by expanding access to potential partners, increasing the frequency of interaction, and encouraging strategic self-presentation before partners have established relational stability offline. Scholars have noted that these environments facilitate selective disclosure and impression management, which can intensify perceived compatibility and emotional closeness early in the dating process.

As a result, romantic communication may acquire a heightened sense of immediacy, intensity, and projected seriousness long before trust has been fully developed through consistent relational experience [1-3].

Within this context, future-oriented romantic language has become increasingly normalized during the early stages of dating. References to exclusivity, marriage, cohabitation, shared homes, or long-term partnership may function as signals of seriousness and emotional investment, even when the relationship is still in a formative stage. Such communication can initially generate excitement, reassurance, and a compelling sense of emotional closeness; however, it may also create expectations that exceed the actual level of commitment or readiness present in the relationship. Expectancy violations research suggests that relational expectations formed through communication powerfully influence emotional evaluation, meaning that when promises or implied futures are not matched by later behavior, disappointment and instability are likely to follow. In this sense, over-promising and future projection are not merely expressive acts but expectation-shaping practices with important implications for trust, attachment, and relational interpretation [2, 4, 5].

Accordingly, this study investigates how over-promising affects trust and emotional investment in dating relationships, how future projection shapes expectations about commitment and compatibility, what psychological and social factors contribute to these behaviors, and how unmet promises influence relational satisfaction and emotional well-being. The argument advanced here is that over-promising and future-projecting accelerate emotional attachment by producing a persuasive sense of certainty and intimacy; however, when these verbal assurances are unsupported by behavioral consistency, they frequently distort expectations, erode trust, and contribute to emotional dissatisfaction. Attachment theory is particularly useful for understanding this pattern because attachment-related insecurity may lead individuals to seek reassurance through accelerated intimacy or exaggerated commitment language. In this way, future-oriented promises can function as attempts to regulate uncertainty while simultaneously exposing both partners to the consequences of unmet expectations [4, 6].

The significance of this study lies in its capacity to explain why some dating relationships feel intensely meaningful in their earliest stages yet later become unstable or disillusioning. By examining over-promising and future projection as forms of romantic communication embedded in modern dating culture, this study contributes to scholarship on interpersonal communication, emotional ethics, and relationship health. It also highlights the extent to which contemporary dating environments reward emotional intensity, curated desirability, and premature relational certainty, often without equivalent expectations of accountability or consistency. Understanding these dynamics is essential for clarifying how romantic meanings are produced, how emotional dependence may develop prematurely, and how healthier relational pacing might be supported through more realistic and ethically responsible communication practices [1-3].

## **2. Conceptual definitions**

In the context of romantic relationships, over-promising may be conceptualized as the use of declarations of commitment, permanence, or emotional certainty that exceed an individual's actual readiness, intention, or capacity to sustain such claims through consistent relational behavior. Rather than merely expressing affection, over-promising involves communicative assurances that imply a level of certainty not yet supported by the developmental stage of the relationship. In this sense, it functions as an expectation-setting practice: verbal commitments do not simply describe feelings, but actively shape how partners interpret seriousness, security, and future potential within the relationship [4, 7]. Future projection, by contrast, refers to the premature construction of an imagined shared future through discussions of exclusivity, marriage, cohabitation, children, or other long-term plans before the relationship has acquired sufficient depth and stability to justify such

certainty. This kind of communication can intensify intimacy because it gives the relationship symbolic direction and emotional momentum, but it can also encourage partners to become invested in a future that remains speculative rather than mutually established [1, 2]. Together, over-promising and future projection describe communicative patterns through which romantic meaning is amplified in advance of relational evidence, often producing an emotional experience of security that may not correspond to the relationship's actual level of commitment or durability [4, 5].

It is also important to distinguish these behaviors from related but less problematic forms of romantic communication. Healthy expressions of hope involve openness to future possibility while remaining grounded in present knowledge and realistic uncertainty, whereas unrealistic projection presents possibility as near-certainty before trust and compatibility have been sufficiently tested over time [5]. Similarly, genuine enthusiasm may reflect authentic affection and excitement, yet emotional impulsivity is marked by declarations that are intense but poorly regulated, unstable, or disconnected from reflective self-awareness and sustained commitment. A further distinction must be made between careless communication and intentional manipulation. Careless communication may arise from immaturity, insecurity, or a desire to maintain closeness without full awareness of the expectations being created, whereas intentional manipulation involves strategically using affection, commitment language, or future-oriented promises to secure attention, exclusivity, credibility, or emotional dependence [1, 7]. This distinction matters because not all exaggerated romantic language is deceptive in motive; however, even when intent is ambiguous, communication that creates expectations beyond what behavior can support may still produce confusion, disappointment, and relational harm. For this reason, conceptual clarity is essential to understanding how over-promising and future projection differ from ordinary romantic optimism and why they deserve close analytical attention within contemporary dating culture [2-4].

### **3. Theoretical framework**

The present study is grounded in four complementary theoretical perspectives that help explain why over-promising and future projection can become so emotionally powerful in dating relationships. Attachment Theory provides a useful framework for understanding how individuals with different attachment orientations communicate intimacy and commitment. Hazan and Shaver argue that romantic love can be understood as an attachment process in adulthood, meaning that patterns of emotional security or insecurity influence how individuals seek closeness and reassurance. From this perspective, individuals with anxious attachment may be especially likely to pursue accelerated intimacy and use future-oriented language to reduce uncertainty and secure emotional reassurance. By contrast, individuals with avoidant attachment may express interest or commitment inconsistently, at times using emotionally intense language without a corresponding willingness to sustain vulnerability or long-term reciprocity. In both cases, attachment insecurity may function as an important driver of over-promising, because verbal assurances can temporarily compensate for underlying fears of abandonment, rejection, or emotional exposure [6].

Expectancy Violations Theory helps explain how romantic language shapes emotional expectations and why broken promises can be so destabilizing. Burgoon emphasizes that interpersonal communication generates expectations that influence how subsequent behavior is interpreted and evaluated. In dating contexts, declarations about exclusivity, permanence, or a shared future do more than express affection; they establish a framework through which partners assess the seriousness and direction of the relationship. When these expectations are later contradicted by withdrawal, inconsistency, or noncommitment, the emotional consequences may include disappointment, betrayal, confusion, and diminished trust. Thus, over-promising is

significant not only because of what is said in the moment, but because of the expectations it creates and the emotional harm that follows when those expectations are violated [4].

Symbolic Interactionism illuminates the role of language in constructing relational meaning. This perspective holds that social reality is produced through repeated interaction and the interpretation of shared symbols and meanings. Applied to dating, future-oriented talk can be understood as a symbolic tool through which partners create a sense of intimacy, seriousness, and shared direction, even before the relationship has fully developed. Discussions of marriage, commitment, or long-term partnership may therefore function less as neutral predictions than as meaning-making practices that shape how each person understands the relationship in the present. Through this lens, imagined futures become socially and emotionally real because they are co-constructed through communication, and over-promising becomes influential precisely because it helps build a shared narrative of certainty and belonging [8].

Social Exchange Theory contributes an explanation of why promises and future-oriented assurances can produce strong emotional investment. Social exchange approaches emphasize that relationships are often evaluated in terms of rewards, costs, reciprocity, and anticipated outcomes. Within this framework, promises of commitment, security, or long-term partnership may be interpreted as valuable relational rewards that encourage greater emotional investment from the other partner. When one person invests on the basis of anticipated returns that do not materialize, the exchange becomes imbalanced, often resulting in dissatisfaction, resentment, or emotional distress. Over-promising can therefore be understood as a communicative act that increases perceived relational value in the short term, while also heightening the risk of dissatisfaction if those promised returns remain unfulfilled [9, 10]. Taken together, these four frameworks demonstrate that over-promising and future projection are not simply romantic habits or stylistic features of dating talk; rather, they are relational processes shaped by attachment needs, expectation formation, symbolic meaning-making, and perceived interpersonal exchange [4, 6, 9].

#### **4. Causes of over-promising and future projection**

The causes of over-promising and future projection in romantic dating are multidimensional, emerging from the interaction of psychological vulnerability, cultural expectations, digitally mediated courtship, and, in some cases, strategic interpersonal motives. At the psychological level, emotional insecurity, fear of abandonment, and a strong desire for validation or reassurance may encourage individuals to intensify intimacy through language before a relationship has developed sufficient stability to support such certainty. Attachment research suggests that romantic bonds are deeply shaped by underlying attachment orientations, meaning that individuals who experience insecurity in close relationships may attempt to regulate uncertainty by seeking premature emotional closeness or by offering exaggerated verbal commitment as a way of securing reassurance and reducing relational anxiety [6]. In this sense, over-promising may function less as a reflection of stable commitment than as an attempt to manage internal insecurity, particularly when individuals lack the emotional self-awareness necessary to recognize the gap between what they feel in the moment and what they are realistically prepared to sustain over time. These psychological dynamics help explain why future-oriented declarations may emerge even in the absence of malicious intent: they can serve as emotionally compensatory strategies through which individuals seek immediate connection, affirmation, or relief from relational uncertainty [6, 11].

Social and cultural factors also contribute significantly to the normalization of these behaviors. Popular culture frequently presents romance as intense, immediate, and destiny-driven, reinforcing the idea that genuine love is marked by instant certainty, emotional urgency, and dramatic commitment. Research on

romantic media exposure indicates that repeated engagement with romantic films and television is associated with stronger endorsement of idealized beliefs about love, such as the notion that relationships are "meant to be," that soul mates exist, or that immediate certainty is a sign of authenticity. These narratives may shape expectations about how romance should feel and how quickly it should progress, thereby creating pressure to form intense connections rapidly and to perform emotional seriousness as evidence of relational value [12, 13]. Social environments may further reward highly expressive romantic behavior by treating emotional intensity as proof of sincerity, even when such intensity is not matched by durability or accountability. As a result, over-promising may be reinforced not only by private emotional needs but also by broader cultural scripts that equate immediacy with authenticity and dramatic projection with meaningful intimacy.

Technological influences, particularly dating apps and mobile communication platforms, intensify these patterns by restructuring how intimacy is initiated and sustained. Online dating environments enable selective self-presentation, rapid impression formation, and frequent communication, all of which can compress the normal pacing of relational development. Scholars have shown that online daters actively manage impressions in order to appear desirable while maintaining enough credibility to sustain the possibility of offline connection, creating an interactional environment in which intensity and desirability are often carefully curated [1]. Mobile dating apps extend this process by encouraging constant availability, immediate responses, and a style of interaction in which matches can quickly move from superficial contact to emotionally charged conversation. Because communication is continuous and highly mediated, partners may develop a sense of intimacy that feels subjectively real even when it is based more on projection and self-presentation than on shared lived experience [2, 3, 14]. In such settings, performative seriousness can become especially attractive: future-oriented talk may help distinguish one person from other potential matches, sustain momentum, and create the impression of exceptional compatibility at an early stage. Consequently, digital environments do not simply host over-promising; they may actively incentivize it by rewarding speed, intensity, and emotionally persuasive communication.

At the same time, not all over-promising stems from insecurity or cultural conditioning alone; in some cases, it may serve more strategic or manipulative purposes. Future-oriented language can be used to secure attention, exclusivity, emotional investment, or relational leverage by creating the impression of seriousness before such seriousness has been genuinely established. Promises of commitment, permanence, or a shared future may therefore function as forms of interpersonal influence, particularly when they encourage one partner to become more emotionally available, trusting, or exclusive than they otherwise would have been. However, it is important to distinguish clearly between harmful intent and careless optimism. Some individuals may speak in exaggerated terms because they are caught up in excitement, fantasy, or poor emotional regulation, whereas others may knowingly use such language to shape another person's behavior or attachment. This distinction is analytically important because intent affects the ethical interpretation of the behavior, but both forms can still produce similar relational outcomes when promises generate expectations that are later unsupported by action. Thus, over-promising and future projection should be understood as behaviors that can emerge from a spectrum of motives, ranging from insecurity and immaturity to deliberate emotional influence, all of which are intensified by a contemporary dating culture that rewards persuasive displays of connection and commitment.

## **5. Manifestations in dating relationships**

Over-promising and future projection become visible in dating relationships through a range of recurring verbal expressions that communicate a level of certainty, permanence, or emotional seriousness that the

relationship has not yet had time to establish. These expressions may include premature talk of marriage, lifelong partnership, shared homes, children, or other major life plans, as well as repeated assurances that the relationship is uniquely meaningful, unquestionably serious, or destined for long-term success. In early-stage dating, such language can function as a powerful marker of commitment because it signals security and relational direction before those qualities have been demonstrated behaviorally. Research on digitally mediated dating suggests that romantic interaction increasingly unfolds in environments shaped by impression management, selective self-presentation, and accelerated self-disclosure, all of which can make intense future-oriented communication feel persuasive and emotionally credible even when the relational foundation remains limited [1, 2, 14]. In this way, verbal over-promising does not simply communicate emotion; it actively structures a partner's perception of what the relationship is and where it is presumed to be heading [4].

These manifestations are also evident in behavioral patterns that accompany or reinforce exaggerated romantic declarations. Intense flattery, exaggerated claims of exceptional compatibility, highly frequent communication, and rapid emotional escalation can create the impression that a deep and stable bond has formed, even when the relationship is still in a relatively undeveloped state. Such behaviors often generate a sense of exclusivity and emotional urgency, encouraging one or both partners to invest more quickly than they otherwise might. Yet the speed of this escalation can outpace the slower processes through which trust, mutual knowledge, and commitment ordinarily develop. Scholarship on idealization in intimate relationships is especially helpful here, as it shows that positive distortion and elevated perception of compatibility can strengthen emotional attachment in the short term while also laying the groundwork for later disillusionment when lived experience fails to confirm the earlier image [5]. Thus, fast emotional escalation without a corresponding relational foundation may be understood as one of the clearest manifestations of over-promising, because it translates verbal intensity into an interpersonal rhythm that implies seriousness beyond what has been tested over time [2, 5].

A particularly significant feature of over-promising in dating is the contradiction that often emerges between words and actions. After creating emotional closeness through declarations of certainty or long-term intent, a person may withdraw, behave ambiguously, or fail to follow through on the expectations their language has established. This inconsistency may appear in diminished communication, reluctance to define the relationship, avoidance of accountability, or an inability to enact the seriousness previously expressed. From the perspective of expectancy violations, these contradictions are especially harmful because relational language creates standards against which later conduct is interpreted; when behavior fails to align with earlier assurances, the result is often disappointment, confusion, betrayal, and erosion of trust [4]. In dating contexts shaped by performative seriousness and curated self-presentation, such inconsistency may be difficult to detect at first because initial declarations can appear sincere and emotionally coherent. However, the repeated failure to translate promises into action is what ultimately reveals over-promising as a destabilizing relational pattern rather than a harmless form of enthusiasm [1, 14].

## **6. Emotional and relational consequences**

Over-promising and future projection have significant emotional consequences for the recipient because they can accelerate attachment, deepen trust, and increase vulnerability before the relationship has developed a reliable foundation. Attachment theory suggests that romantic bonds are closely tied to needs for closeness and security, which means that strong assurances of commitment or permanence can quickly become emotionally meaningful to the person receiving them [6]. When such assurances are later contradicted by inconsistency, withdrawal, or noncommitment, the recipient may experience not only disappointment but also betrayal,

confusion, and self-doubt, as the collapse of the promised future destabilizes both emotional security and relational interpretation. Expectancy violations research helps explain this process by showing that interpersonal messages generate expectations that guide how later behavior is evaluated; when a partner's conduct fails to align with earlier declarations, the discrepancy can intensify negative emotional reactions and weaken trust [4]. Research on idealization and disillusionment similarly indicates that when early relational perceptions are built on exaggerated optimism or idealized meanings, later incongruence often produces a painful shift from hope to disappointment [5]. Together, these dynamics show that broken promises in dating do not simply end possibilities; they can also unsettle the recipient's confidence in their own judgment and emotional reality [5, 6].

These patterns also affect the speaker, who may experience pressure to maintain expectations that exceed their actual intentions, readiness, or emotional capacity. Once idealized declarations have created a sense of seriousness or permanence, the speaker may feel obligated to sustain an image of commitment that no longer matches reality. This mismatch can produce guilt, shame, avoidance, or emotional retreat, particularly when the person recognizes that their behavior is no longer consistent with the future they have verbally constructed. Attachment-related insecurity may contribute to this dynamic, as over-promising can serve as a temporary strategy for regulating anxiety or securing reassurance, even if it becomes difficult to uphold over time [6]. In addition, research on trust in romantic relationships indicates that insecure attachment patterns are associated with lower relational trust and greater instability, which helps explain why intimacy built on verbal idealization rather than behavioral consistency may be difficult to sustain [15]. In this sense, the speaker may become trapped by their own promises, struggling to maintain closeness that was established more through emotional projection than through mutual, stable commitment.

At the relational level, over-promising and future projection often create mismatched commitment levels, communication breakdown, and a gradual erosion of trust, security, and stability. When one partner invests emotionally on the basis of promised commitment while the other fails to enact that commitment consistently, the relationship becomes asymmetrical in both expectation and vulnerability. Such asymmetry can foster dissatisfaction, resentment, and emotional distress, especially when partners are no longer operating from a shared understanding of the relationship's meaning or future. Expectancy violations theory predicts that unmet expectations can alter relational evaluations in lasting ways, while research on idealization suggests that the transition from highly positive early perceptions to later disillusionment can destabilize relationship quality overall [4, 5]. Consequently, over-promising does not merely create isolated emotional harm; it undermines the interpretive and behavioral consistency on which durable intimacy depends, increasing the likelihood that the relationship will become marked by insecurity, dissatisfaction, and emotional strain.

## **7. The role of gender, media, and contemporary dating culture**

The dynamics of over-promising and future projection in dating are shaped not only by individual psychology but also by gendered expectations, media narratives, and the broader norms of contemporary dating culture. With respect to gender, social expectations continue to influence how emotional expression and romantic seriousness are interpreted, often assuming that women are more likely to seek commitment quickly and that men are less emotionally expressive. However, empirical research complicates these stereotypes. Ackerman and colleagues found that men are often the first to say "I love you," despite the widespread belief that women are more likely to verbalize romantic commitment first, suggesting that gendered assumptions about seriousness and emotional disclosure do not always align with actual behavior [16]. This discrepancy is important because it shapes how future-oriented language is interpreted: identical statements may be read

differently depending on who says them and how gender norms frame the meaning of commitment. Media culture further reinforces these expectations by circulating romantic narratives that idealize instant certainty, emotional intensity, and fast-moving relational development. Research on romantic screen media has shown that exposure to these genres is associated with stronger endorsement of idealized romantic beliefs, including assumptions about destiny, immediate compatibility, and the emotional legitimacy of rapid attachment [12]. In this way, media representations do not merely entertain; they help normalize the idea that authentic love should feel immediate, unmistakable, and exceptional from the outset. Contemporary dating culture, especially in online and app-based environments, intensifies these pressures by rewarding the performance of desirability, emotional distinctiveness, and relational seriousness very early in interaction. Ward's research on Tinder demonstrates that self-presentation on dating apps is shaped by impression management, meaning that users often construct profiles and interactions in ways designed to appear especially appealing, sincere, or compatible [14]. Because app-based dating environments are highly competitive and fast paced, there is often pressure to make a connection seem unusually meaningful before it has been adequately tested through time and shared experience. As a result, emotional intensity can become normalized without corresponding long-term accountability, allowing over-promising and future projection to appear romantically compelling even when they reflect performance rather than durable commitment [14]. Taken together, gender norms, media ideals, and contemporary dating environments create a cultural context in which exaggerated romantic certainty is not only tolerated but frequently rewarded, thereby increasing the likelihood that over-promising will be interpreted as a sign of authenticity rather than a potential source of relational instability.

## **8. Ethical implications**

The ethical dimensions of over-promising and future projection in romantic communication center on the responsibility individuals bear when shaping another person's expectations through language. Honesty in expectation-setting is ethically significant because romantic statements do not function merely as expressions of feeling; they also guide how partners interpret commitment, security, and the likely future of the relationship. When a person speaks beyond their actual intentions, readiness, or capacity, they risk creating a false sense of relational stability that may encourage the other partner to become more emotionally invested, trusting, and vulnerable than the circumstances warrant. From the perspective of expectancy violations, communication establishes standards against which later behavior is judged, meaning that exaggerated assurances can become ethically problematic precisely because they organize another person's emotional reality in ways that may later be contradicted [4]. In this regard, the ethical issue is not limited to whether the speaker "meant well," but whether their language responsibly reflected what they could genuinely offer in the relationship. When words imply more commitment than behavior can sustain, the result is not simply miscommunication; it is a form of relational risk production that may undermine trust and emotional safety [4, 7].

A further ethical distinction must be made between hopeful optimism and deliberate deception. Not all future-oriented romantic language is manipulative. In many cases, individuals may speak enthusiastically about the future because they feel sincere excitement, emotional hope, or a genuine desire for connection in the moment. However, sincerity alone does not eliminate ethical responsibility. Even when future projection is not intentionally deceptive, it becomes ethically questionable when it is not matched by accountability, self-awareness, and behavioral consistency. Research on deception in romantic relationships suggests that misleading communication can occur for a variety of reasons, including conflict avoidance, self-protection, impression management, or attempts to preserve closeness, rather than solely malicious intent [7].

Nevertheless, the absence of harmful intent does not erase the effects of creating expectations one cannot or does not intend to fulfill. Ethical romantic communication therefore requires more than subjective sincerity; it requires a willingness to ensure that one's words remain proportionate to one's actual intentions and relational capacity. Hopeful projection may be understandable, but when it repeatedly exceeds what a person can responsibly sustain, it begins to resemble a form of emotional negligence rather than harmless romantic enthusiasm [1, 7].

The ethics of unmet expectations become especially important when unrealistic promises produce emotional harm in another person. Because romantic communication influences attachment, trust, and perceived security, promises that create an imagined future can have consequences that extend well beyond the moment in which they are spoken. When those promises are broken or quietly abandoned, the recipient may experience not only disappointment but also betrayal, confusion, and self-doubt, particularly if they organized their emotional investment around the reality that the speaker helped construct. Research on idealization and disillusionment shows that inflated early perceptions can intensify later dissatisfaction when the relationship fails to match the meanings previously attached to it [5]. For this reason, individuals bear ethical responsibility not only for their intentions but also for the expectations they create in others. Romantic language carries moral weight because it can deepen vulnerability and shape decisions about trust, exclusivity, and emotional openness. Accordingly, the ethics of over-promising and future projection lie in the obligation to communicate with realism, restraint, and accountability, recognizing that even seemingly affectionate exaggerations can produce lasting relational harm when they encourage another person to believe in a commitment that has not been honestly established [4, 5].

## 9. Healthier alternatives and relational practices

A healthier alternative to over-promising and future projection in dating begins with slowing emotional pacing so that intimacy can develop gradually rather than being rushed through premature certainty. Relationship development research has long suggested that closeness is strengthened through progressive disclosure, repeated interaction, and the gradual accumulation of trust rather than through immediate declarations of permanence [17]. In digitally mediated dating, however, continuous messaging and rapid self-disclosure can create a compressed sense of closeness that feels emotionally real before partners have acquired sufficient relational knowledge offline [2]. For this reason, avoiding premature certainty is not a rejection of emotional openness but a practice of relational realism: allowing meanings of commitment to emerge through shared experience reduces the likelihood that imagined futures will outpace actual compatibility. Slower pacing can therefore protect both partners from investing in an idealized bond that has not yet been tested through time, consistency, and mutual accountability [2, 17].

A second healthier practice involves communicating with realism, which means expressing romantic interest without relying on exaggerated promises or guaranteed futures. Realistic communication allows individuals to articulate current feelings, attraction, and hope while acknowledging that long-term certainty cannot be ethically claimed before a relationship has matured. Research on online dating self-presentation shows that daters often balance the tension between appearing desirable and remaining authentic, indicating that honesty in romantic communication is not merely a moral ideal but a practical challenge in environments shaped by impression management [1]. Communicating with realism therefore requires resisting the pressure to make the relationship seem more serious, exceptional, or certain than it presently is. It also requires recognizing that romantic language creates expectations, and that even sincere statements can become misleading when they imply a level of commitment that behavior has not yet established [1].

Equally important is the practice of matching words with behavior, since consistency is a central basis of trust in romantic relationships. Verbal declarations alone cannot sustain intimacy if they are not supported by reliable action, responsiveness, and follow-through. Research on relationship processes indicates that perceived responsiveness and communicative consistency are associated with stronger relationship quality and more stable interpersonal trust, suggesting that commitment is experienced most credibly when it is enacted rather than merely asserted [18, 19]. In this sense, demonstrating care through dependable communication, respect for boundaries, and consistent effort is more relationally protective than offering dramatic promises early on. When words and actions remain aligned, partners are better able to form expectations that are emotionally meaningful without being misleading, thereby reducing the risk of disillusionment and relational instability [18].

Finally, healthier dating practices require emotional accountability, including greater self-awareness before making promises, reflection on the motives behind future-oriented language, and the development of more responsible communication habits. Emotional accountability involves asking whether expressions of certainty are grounded in genuine readiness or whether they are serving another function, such as reducing anxiety, securing reassurance, or preserving momentum in the relationship. Research on self-compassion and relationship functioning suggests that greater self-awareness and emotional regulation are associated with healthier relational maintenance and more constructive interpersonal behavior, which supports the view that mature romantic communication depends partly on the capacity to reflect on one's internal motives before speaking [20-23]. Developing these habits can help individuals move away from projection and toward communication that is honest, proportionate, and ethically responsive to the expectations it creates in another person. In this way, healthier relational practice is not defined by emotional restraint alone, but by a combination of openness, realism, consistency, and accountability that allows intimacy to deepen without depending on promises the relationship cannot yet sustain.

## **10. Conclusion**

In conclusion, over-promising and future projection can intensify emotional attachment in dating by creating a persuasive sense of certainty, intimacy, and relational significance during the early stages of connection. These communicative patterns often feel meaningful because they shape how partners interpret seriousness, compatibility, and future potential; however, they become harmful when the promises they convey are not supported by consistent behavior over time. As the preceding analysis has shown, over-promising is not merely a matter of excessive romantic expression but a relational process that structures emotional investment, trust, and vulnerability in ways that can produce instability when words and actions diverge [4, 6]. In this respect, the central problem is not future-oriented language itself, but the mismatch between communicated certainty and the actual level of commitment, readiness, or accountability present within the relationship [5].

The key findings of this discussion demonstrate that over-promising and future projection shape expectations, trust, and emotional investment at multiple levels. These behaviors are rooted in a combination of psychological, social, cultural, and technological influences, including attachment insecurity, fear of abandonment, idealized romantic narratives, impression management, and the accelerated intimacy encouraged by contemporary dating platforms [1, 2, 14, 22, 23]. Their consequences extend beyond the immediate moment of communication, affecting both individuals and the relationship as a whole. For the recipient, they may heighten attachment and vulnerability while increasing the risk of betrayal and self-doubt when expectations are unmet; for the speaker, they may generate guilt, avoidance, or pressure to maintain an image of commitment that cannot be sustained. At the relational level, these dynamics often produce

mismatched expectations, weakened trust, communication breakdown, and greater emotional dissatisfaction [4, 5, 15].

At the same time, future-oriented communication is not inherently harmful. Expressions of hope, interest, and relational possibility can play an important role in the development of intimacy when they remain proportionate to the actual stage of the relationship and are supported by honest, consistent behavior. Romantic health depends not on eliminating emotional openness, but on grounding that openness in realism, pacing, and accountability. When individuals communicate with greater self-awareness, match their words with their actions, and allow intimacy to develop gradually, they create conditions in which trust can deepen without relying on promises the relationship is not yet prepared to sustain. Ultimately, healthy romantic development requires not dramatic certainty but ethical communication—communication that respects the emotional weight of promises and recognizes that intimacy is most stable when it is built through honesty, consistency, and emotional responsibility [1, 18, 21].

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