



## THE POWER OF POSITIVITY: EXAMINING SELF-EFFICACY, HAPPINESS, GRATITUDE, FORGIVENESS, AND HOPE AS PREDICTORS OF RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION

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**ABSTRACT** **Objective:** In this study, we explored association between relationship satisfaction and self-efficacy, happiness, gratitude, forgiveness and hope. **Methodology:** A sample of 140 married participants of age 23- 40 individuals took part in the study which was conducted online. General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE), Oxford Happiness questionnaire, The Gratitude Questionnaire-Six Item Form (GQ-6), Forgiveness Questionnaire & Measure - (The Bolton Forgiveness Scale) were used for collecting the data. Descriptive statistics, Pearson Correlation and regression analysis were done using SPSS. **Results:** It was observed that self-efficacy, happiness, forgiveness and hope are positively associated with relationship satisfaction. Happiness and forgiveness emerged as the predictors of relationship satisfaction. **Conclusion:** Fostering self-efficacy, happiness, and forgiveness within relationships may serve as effective strategies for enhancing relational quality and stability, contributing to healthier interpersonal connections and overall well-being.

**KEYWORDS :** relationship satisfaction; self-efficacy; happiness; gratitude; forgiveness; hope

### INTRODUCTION:

Humans are social beings and the quality of romantic relationships play a crucial role in individual's overall well-being and life satisfaction. Relationship satisfaction is a key indicator of relationship quality with recent research focusing on psychological factors that predict relationship satisfaction. While external factors have been explored extensively, less attention has been given to the role of internal psychological traits in shaping relationship satisfaction.

Self-efficacy, or the belief in one's ability to attain desired outcomes, plays a vital role in navigating relationship challenges. Individuals with high self-efficacy have a tendency to approach conflicts constructively and maintain relational harmony by supporting one another.<sup>[1]</sup> Similarly, happiness which is a subjective measure of well-being, is conducive to relationship satisfaction as it promotes positive interactions and reduces stress within partnerships enhancing relational quality.<sup>[2]</sup>

Gratitude, i.e. recognition and appreciation of positive aspects within relationship, has been linked to improved relational self-efficacy and life satisfaction<sup>[3]</sup>. Expressing gratitude bolster emotional connections and fosters mutual respect.<sup>[4]</sup> The ability to forgive, to move beyond transgressions, is equally crucial. It reduces negative conflict and enhances relationships, which is essential for long-term satisfaction.<sup>[5]</sup>

Lastly, hope inspires perseverance and commitment by encouraging optimism about the relationship's future.<sup>[6]</sup>

Together, these factors create a synergistic effect that supports deeper emotional connections and enduring relationship satisfaction. Thus, the present study aimed to examine the relationship between self-efficacy, happiness, gratitude, forgiveness, and hope as predictors of relationship satisfaction.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

This correlational study was conducted on 140 married individuals between age range of 23-40 years. A purposive sampling method was employed wherein respondents meeting the inclusion criteria were selected. Informed consent was taken from all the subjects. The subjects were given Google form link. Instructions on how to respond to the questions were given in the form. They were also informed about the confidentiality of their responses. Data collection took 10-minute and included, following standardized tools: General Self-Efficacy Scale, Oxford Happiness Questionnaire, Gratitude Questionnaire-Six Item Form (GQ-6), Bolton Forgiveness Scale, Adult Hope Scale and

Relationship Satisfaction Scale.

### Statistical Analysis

The data was analyzed using statistical package for social science (SPSS-20). Descriptive statistics were used for data summarization. Pearson correlation and Regression analysis were used to understand the relationship between the variables.

### RESULTS

With regards to sample characteristics, 69 were males and 71 were females. The mean age of the participants was 30 years. The educational background of the participants was diverse. Notably, 30% had completed their 12th grade, 40% held a graduate degree, and 30% were postgraduates. In terms of occupation, the majority (46.7%) were employed. Geographically, participants were evenly split between rural and urban areas. Most participants belonged to joint families and were part of the upper middle socioeconomic class.

Relationship analysis revealed significant relationships between psychological variables and relationship satisfaction, with self-efficacy, happiness, and forgiveness showing moderate positive correlations. Specifically, self-efficacy had a correlation coefficient of  $r = 0.436$ , happiness was  $r = 0.509$ , and forgiveness was  $r = 0.364$ . Also, self-efficacy exhibited strong to moderate correlations with other psychological constructs, including a strong correlation with happiness ( $r = 0.514$ ) and moderate correlations with gratitude ( $r = 0.336$ ), forgiveness ( $r = 0.492$ ), and hope ( $r = 0.470$ ).

Regression analysis further quantified these predictive relationships, revealing that happiness accounted for 25.3% of the variance in relationship satisfaction ( $R^2 = 0.253$ ), while forgiveness explained a slightly higher variance of 29.6% ( $R^2 = 0.296$ ).

### DISCUSSION

The present study was conducted to find whether self-efficacy, happiness, gratitude, forgiveness and hope were predictor of relationship satisfaction.

Happiness emerged as the strongest predictor of relationship satisfaction. The relationship between individual happiness and relationship satisfaction is multifaceted, influenced by emotional, psychological, and neurobiological factors. According to Li et. al 2022, couples with synchronized brain activity in reward processing (e.g., nucleus accumbens) as well as social cognition regions (e.g., inferior parietal lobule) are more likely to report marital

happiness.<sup>[7]</sup> Factors such as marital disagreement, unfairness, and decision-making also influence overall marital happiness and satisfaction.<sup>[9]</sup> Shared life experiences, quality time spending and emotional resonance contribute to a feedback loop where happiness reinforces relationship satisfaction.<sup>[9]</sup>

Forgiveness was also found to be a positive predictor of relationship satisfaction in the current study. The ability to forgive a misdeed, either as a trait or as a response to a specific transgression, has been linked to higher levels of relationship satisfaction.<sup>[10,11]</sup> This was regardless of the severity of transgression. Forgiveness motivates individuals to invest more in their relationships and forgiving partners are less likely to engage in destructive behaviors during disagreements.<sup>[5]</sup> Incorporating forgiveness as a strategy can help couples address and prevent issues within their marriage, thereby enhancing overall satisfaction.<sup>[12]</sup>

In the present study positive correlation between Self-Efficacy and Relationship Satisfaction was found which supports the literature findings where individuals with higher self-efficacy tend to experience greater satisfaction in their romantic relationships.<sup>[13,14]</sup> This positive correlation is attributed to the confidence individuals have in their ability to navigate relationship challenges, communicate effectively, and maintain intimacy.<sup>[15]</sup> Similarly, research on dating partners highlighted that self-efficacy plays a crucial role in maintaining relationship satisfaction by fostering a sense of control and competence in handling relationship dynamics.<sup>[14]</sup>

Our findings also revealed a positive correlation between Hope and relationship satisfaction. Hope, helps partners accommodate each other during conflicts even when one partner exhibits destructive behaviors, by promoting constructive communication and mutual understanding.<sup>[16]</sup> Also, hope is also linked to better mental health outcomes, such as reduced stress, greater life satisfaction, and a stronger sense of purpose which can alleviate stressors that often strain relationships fostering emotional resilience and a more supportive environment.<sup>[17]</sup>

We did not find any relationship between gratitude and relationship satisfaction which is in contrast to previous studies.<sup>[18,19]</sup> A reason for this could be that the data was captured at a single point in time limiting the ability to infer causation or understand how this variable influences relationship satisfaction over time.

The study had its limitations. The demographic composition of the sample (e.g., age, gender, cultural background) may not be representative of broader populations, limiting the generalizability of the results. The study also emphasized individual psychological traits while potentially underestimating relational or systemic factors such as partner dynamics, shared goals, or external societal influences.

**CONCLUSION:**

The findings of the present study imply that self-efficacy, happiness, forgiveness, and other positive constructs play significant roles in enhancing relational well-being. However, the potential limitations of the study highlight the need for caution in interpreting the results. Future research should aim to address these limitations by employing longitudinal designs, incorporating diverse demographic samples, and exploring the interplay between individual traits and relational dynamics. Ultimately, fostering self-efficacy, happiness, and forgiveness within relationships may serve as effective strategies for enhancing relational quality and stability, contributing to healthier interpersonal connections and overall well-being.

**Table 1 Correlation Between Self-efficacy, Happiness, Gratitude, Forgiveness And Hope With Relationship Satisfaction**

	Self Efficacy	Happiness	Gratitude	Forgiveness	Hope	Relationship Satisfaction
Self Efficacy	1	0.514**	0.336**	0.492**	0.470*	0.436**
Happiness		1	0.351**	0.306**	0.300*	0.509**
Gratitude			1	0.005	0.274*	0.101
Forgiveness				1	0.679*	0.364**

Hope					1	0.268**
Relationship Satisfaction						1

\*\*p<0.01; \*p<0.05

**Table 1 Regression Analysis**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	Adjusted R2
	B	Std. Error				
Constant	3.83	4.25		0.903	0.368	
Happiness	7.36	1.06	0.509	6.93	0.000	0.253
Constant	-2.88	4.66		-0.617	0.538	
Happiness	6.34	1.08	0.438	5.86	0.000	
Forgiveness	0.166	0.054	0.23	3.07	0.003	0.296

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