



Original Article

The Relationship between Marital Satisfaction and Psychological Wellbeing in Couples: The Role of Gratitude as a Moderator

Saima Arzeen¹, Naeema Arzeen² and Hayat Muhammad^{*}

¹Department of Psychology, University of Peshawar, Peshawar, Pakistan

²Department of Applied Psychology, National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad, Pakistan

ARTICLE INFO

Key Words:

Gratitude, Marital Satisfaction, Psychological Well-Being, Regression Analysis, Moderation

How to Cite:

Arzeen, S. ., Arzeen, N. ., & Muhammad, H. . (2023). The Relationship between Marital Satisfaction and Psychological Wellbeing in Couples: The Role of Gratitude as a Moderator: Marital Satisfaction and Psychological Wellbeing. *Pakistan Journal of Health Sciences*, 4(06).
<https://doi.org/10.54393/pjhs.v4i06.816>

***Corresponding Author:**

Hayat Muhammad
 Department of Psychology, University of Peshawar,
 Peshawar, Pakistan
Hayat_bangash@hotmail.com

Received Date: 31st May, 2023

Acceptance Date: 21st June, 2023

Published Date: 30th June, 2023

ABSTRACT

Marriage holds social significance and plays a vital role in individual well-being and societal structure. **Objective:** To investigate how gratitude moderates the relationship between marital satisfaction and the psychological well-being of couples. By exploring this moderating role, the study aimed to enhance our understanding of the complex dynamics between these variables.

Method: A total of 400 married couples (200 wives and 200 husbands) from Wah Cantt were included in the sample, selected using purposive sampling techniques. From June 2022 to August 2022, the selected participants were administered a reliable set of measures, including scales for marital satisfaction, psychological well-being, and gratitude. **Results:** The study employed correlational and hierarchical regression analyses to analyze the data. The results demonstrate a substantial positive correlation between marital satisfaction and psychological well-being ($r = .603$). Additionally, the findings provide evidence for the moderating influence of gratitude on the association between marital satisfaction and psychological well-being ($\Delta R^2 = 0.29, F = 21.47^{***}$).

Conclusions: This study highlights the significant role of gratitude as a moderator in the connection between marital satisfaction and the psychological well-being of couples. The findings provide valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of marital relationships and emphasize the importance of cultivating gratitude within the context of marriage. These results contribute to the existing body of knowledge and have implications for interventions and strategies aimed at promoting marital satisfaction and enhancing the psychological well-being of couples.

INTRODUCTION

Marriage holds social significance and plays a vital role in individual well-being and societal structure. Marital satisfaction, which reflects the overall contentment and fulfillment within a marital relationship, is crucial for the happiness and well-being of couples. Extensive research consistently demonstrates a positive correlation between marital satisfaction and various dimensions of well-being. For instance, asserted that married couples who experience happiness within their relationship enjoy additional benefits compared to single or divorced couples [1]. These advantages include improved mental and physical well-being, excellent financial stability, more robust social connections, and heightened personal

fulfillment. Therefore, the significance of marital contentment is widely recognized as a critical component for successful marriages [2, 3]. However, achieving and maintaining marital satisfaction can be challenging, leading to increased divorce rates even in societies that highly value marriage. Dissatisfaction within marriages is associated with higher levels of depression and negatively impacts the mental well-being of couples [4]. Psychological well-being is essential for an individual's overall mental health and functioning, encompassing positive emotions, life satisfaction, self-acceptance, personal growth, a sense of purpose, and positive relationships. Extensive research consistently shows a

strong positive correlation between marital satisfaction and psychological well-being, indicating that individuals in happy marriages tend to have higher levels of well-being [5]. Additionally, gender-specific differences exist in well-being measures, as shown by studies on married individuals [6]. Men and women may experience and express well-being differently within the marital context. Further research is needed to understand the complexities of the relationship between marital satisfaction and psychological well-being, which can inform interventions for enhancing satisfaction and well-being in couples. The current study examines gratitude as an intervening variable because it has gained attention in understanding relationship dynamics and individual well-being, as it reinforces marital bonds and enhances physical and psychological well-being [7, 8]. However, limited research has focused on the relationship between gratitude, marital satisfaction, and psychological well-being. Further exploration is needed to understand how gratitude influences the connection between marital happiness and psychological well-being. The study aims to explore how gratitude moderates the relationship between marital happiness and psychological well-being. By conducting a thorough literature review and empirical investigation, it seeks to fill gaps in knowledge and provide insights for interventions promoting positive marital relationships and overall well-being.

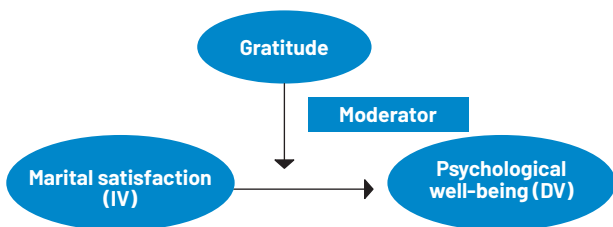


Figure 1: Conceptual model of study

METHODS

The present study employed a survey design to gather data and investigate the research questions. A purposive sampling technique was utilized to select a sample of 400 married couples (200 husbands and 200 wives) from various institutes in Wah Cantt. To ensure a representative sample, the estimated sample size was initially determined as N=371, with a 90% confidence interval and a predicted margin of error of 10%, using Raosoft software. The inclusion criteria for the study specified that the couples should have a minimum qualification of intermediate level, belong to the middle class, have no physical disabilities, and no history of psychopathology. Illiterate couples, those from lower-class backgrounds, and individuals involved in polygamous relationships were excluded from the study. The study employed a correlation research design to

examine the predictive role of the moderating variable (gratitude) among the selected sample of married couples from Wah Cantt. Data collection involved the use of three scales: the ENRICH marital satisfaction scale consisting of 15 items, the Ryff scale of psychological well-being comprising 42 items, and a 6-item gratitude scale [9-12]. The internal consistency of these scales was assessed, and the Cronbach alpha coefficients were found to be 0.92, 0.85, and 0.71, respectively. The data collection period spanned from June 2022 to August 2022. To collect data, the researchers physically approached married couples, provided an explanation of the study's purpose, and obtained consent. Questionnaires with detailed instructions were then administered, ensuring the confidentiality of participants. Upon completion of the questionnaires, the participants were thanked for their cooperation. Finally, the collected data were subjected to appropriate statistical analyses using SPSS version-21.0.

RESULTS

Table 1 presented the frequency distribution of demographic variables within the desired sample. The table revealed an equal representation of male and female participants from both neutral and joint family systems. Additionally, the participants' age profile, with the majority falling within the 31-40 age range, and family system data were also taken into account.

Table 1: Frequencies distribution of the sample According to Gender, Age and Family system (N=400)

Demographic variables	Categories	F (%)
Gender	Male	200 (50)
	Female	200(50)
Age	20-30	160(40)
	31-40	180(45)
	41-50	60(15)
Family system	Neutral	200(50)
	Joint	200(50)

Table 2 showed the descriptive analysis of the studied variables in the sample of 400 married couples. The study's findings indicated that the alpha reliabilities of all the measured constructs were entirely satisfactory. This showed that all the scales (GQ6, ENRICH & PWBS) were reliable for the study sample.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of Gratitude Questionnaire, ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale, and Psychological Well Being Scale (N=400)

Variables	M ± SD	No of items	A	Skewness	Kurtosis	Range	
						Min	Max
ENRICH	66.65 ± 9.30	15	0.79	0.54	0.94	30	75
PWBS	215.84 ± 16.13	42	0.83	0.65	0.29	164	254

GQ=Gratitude Questionnaire, ENRICH=Marital satisfaction scale, and PWBS=Psychological well-being scale

Table 3 showed the correlation coefficient of three study measures, i.e., ENRICH, PWBS & GQ-6. The results confirmed that marital satisfaction was positively correlated with psychological well-being and gratitude ($r=.68^{**}$, $r=.53^{**}$). Moreover, results also indicated that psychological well-being and gratitude were positively correlated ($r=.45^{**}$).

Table 3: Correlation analysis between Gratitude, Marital Satisfaction, and Psychological well-being measures (N=400)

	ENRICH	PWBS	GQ-6
ENRICH	-	.68**	.53**
PWB	-	-	.45**
SGQ-6	-	-	-

**P<0.01

Table 4 showed the Multiple Hierarchical Regression analysis findings regarding the moderating role of gratitude on the relationship between marital satisfaction (ENRICH) and psychological well-being (PWBS) of married couples. The first step is statistically significant ($\Delta R^2 = .214$, $F(1, 399) = 108.46$, $p < .001$) comprising of ENRICH, which is significantly predicting (PWBS) in positive direction ($\beta = .45$, $t = 10.41$, $p < .001$). Results indicated that 21% of variation of in psychological well-being was due to marital satisfaction. Second step of models also found to be significant ($F(2, 398) = 85.56$, $p < .001$) where ENRICH ($\beta = .37$, $t = 8.09$, $p < .001$) and Gratitude ($\beta = .33$, $t = 7.07$, $p < .001$) positively predicting PWBS. Step 2 explains significant unique variance ($\Delta R^2 = .086$, $\Delta F(1, 397) = 49.46$, $p < .001$). Step 3 presents interaction of ENRICH and Gratitude. Overall step is found to be significant ($F(3, 396) = 68.09$, $p < .001$) and product of ENRICH and Gratitude predicts PWBS significantly ($\beta = .21$, $t = 4.54$, $p < .001$). Interaction effect contributes additional significant variance ($\Delta R^2 = .029$, $\Delta F(1, 396) = 21.47$, $p < .001$).

Table 4: The Moderating Role of Gratitude between marital satisfaction and psychological well-being among Married Couples (N=400)

Model	Predictors	ΔR^2	B	SE
Step1	Marital Satisfaction	.21	.45***	-
Step 2	Gratitude	.086	.33***	-
	Marital Satisfaction		.37***	-
Step 3	Gratitude		.28***	-
	Marital Satisfaction		.34***	-
	Gratitude X Marital Satisfaction	.029	.21***	-
	Total R ²	.34		-

***= p<0.000

DISCUSSION

The main aim of this study was to explore how gratitude moderates the relationship between marital satisfaction and psychological well-being among married couples. The study utilized correlational and multiple regression analyses to examine the association between marital happiness and psychological well-being and the

interaction between marital satisfaction and gratitude. Table 1 provided the distribution frequencies of demographic variables (gender, age, and family system) among the participants, while Table 2 presented the satisfactory psychometric properties of the scales used in the study, indicated by alpha coefficients ranging from .71 to .80. Table 3 results of the correlation analysis supported the first hypothesis about the positive connection between marital satisfaction and psychological well-being in married individuals. These findings are consistent with previous research on the association between marital satisfaction and psychological well-being. For instance, a correlational study on dual-career couples in India, found a significant positive relationship between marital adjustment and psychological well-being [13]. Similarly, conducted a study on adult married couples and obtained similar results [14]. The correlation analysis also revealed a significant positive relationship between gratitude and the psychological well-being of married couples, which is consistent with previous research. Hemarajarajeswari et al., examined the correlation between gratitude, psychological well-being, and happiness among college students, while Salvador-Ferrer et al., investigated the relationship between gratitude and psychological well-being among married individuals in Indonesia, and both studies confirmed a positive association among these variables [15, 16]. The results presented in Table 4 highlighted the moderating effect of gratitude in the relationship between marital satisfaction and psychological well-being among married couples. The findings of the study were aligning with previous research findings. For instance, conducted a longitudinal study involving adults and confirmed a reciprocal relationship between gratitude and life satisfaction [17]. Another study conducted investigate the role of gratitude in moderating the relationship between marital satisfaction and psychological well-being. The findings of the study revealed that gratitude acted as a moderator in the relationship between marital satisfaction and psychological well-being. Specifically, individuals who reported higher levels of gratitude experienced stronger positive effects of marital satisfaction on their psychological well-being compared to those with lower levels of gratitude. In other words, gratitude enhanced the psychological benefits derived from having a satisfying marital relationship. Other studies have also emphasized the significant role of gratitude in connecting the quality of marital relationships and psychological well-being. The find-remind-and-bind theory of gratitude and the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions offer possible explanations for the moderating role of gratitude [18, 19]. According to the find-remind-and-bind theory, expressing

gratitude strengthens interpersonal bonds and enhances the positive effects of social relationships. Similarly, Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory suggests that experiencing positive emotions, such as gratitude, expands individuals' thought-action repertoires and builds long-lasting personal resources [20-23]. In the context of marriage, expressing gratitude towards one's partner not only strengthens the couple's bond but also contributes to their overall well-being. Partner's expressions of appreciation act as reinforcements for a satisfying marital relationship, leading to increased optimism, happiness, and satisfaction in both life and the relationship itself [7, 24]. The present study provides valuable insights into the relationship between marital satisfaction and psychological well-being in couples. It emphasizes the role of gratitude in this connection and highlights the positive effects of expressing appreciation and cultivating gratitude within marriages.

CONCLUSIONS

In summary, the present study contributes evidence supporting the moderating influence of gratitude in the association between marital satisfaction and psychological well-being in married couples. The results emphasize the significance of nurturing a sense of appreciation within marital relationships, as it fortifies the connection between partners and boosts their overall welfare. Understanding and fostering gratitude can be beneficial for couples striving to enhance marital satisfaction and uplift their psychological well-being. These findings have implications for interventions and strategies designed to improve marital relationships and overall well-being among couples.

Authors Contribution

Conceptualization: SA

Methodology: NA

Formal analysis: SA

Writing-review and editing: HM, SA

All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Source of Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

REFERENCES

- [1] Abreu-Afonso J, Ramos MM, Queiroz-Garcia I, Leal I. How couple's relationship lasts over time? A model for marital satisfaction. *Psychological Reports*. 2022 Jun; 125(3): 1601-27. doi: 10.1177/00332941211000651.
- [2] Heshmati H, Behnampour N, Arabameri S, Khajavi S, Kohan N. Marital Satisfaction in Refereed Women to Gorgan Health Centers. *Iranian Journal of Psychiatry*. 2016 Jul; 11(3): 198.
- [3] Du X, Liang M, Mu W, Li F, Li S, Li X, et al. Marital Satisfaction, Family Functioning, and Children's Mental Health—The Effect of Parental Co-Viewing. *Children*. 2022 Feb; 9(2): 216. doi: 10.3390/children9020216.
- [4] Perrin JS. Marital satisfaction and psychological well-being in clinical and non-clinical samples. Iowa State University; 2008. Available at: proquest.com/openview/845436f32713db996415a7d5a274b4c6/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750.
- [5] Perini U and Sironi E. Marital status and psychological well-being: A cross section analysis. *Marital Status and Psychological Well-Being: A Cross Section Analysis*. *Rivista internazionale di scienze sociali*. 2010; 41-8.
- [6] Britz-Gunn Taylor J. Gender differences in subjective well-being. *Handbook of well-being*. Salt Lake City, UT: DEF Publishers. 2018: 1-15.
- [7] Armenta CN, Fritz MM, Lyubomirsky S. Functions of positive emotions: Gratitude as a motivator of self-improvement and positive change. *Emotion Review*. 2017 Jul; 9(3): 183-90. doi: 10.1177/1754073916669596.
- [8] Fincham FD and May RW. Generalized gratitude and prayers of gratitude in marriage. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*. 2021 Mar; 16(2): 282-7. doi: 10.1080/17439760.2020.1716053.
- [9] Cazzell A, Tsang JA, Rivers AS, Ratchford JL, Schnitker SA. Find, remind, blind? Support as a context for the adaptive nature of gratitude. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*. 2023 Jul; 18(4): 636-48. doi: 10.1080/17439760.2022.2053875.
- [10] Fowers BJ and Olson DH. Enrichment inventory: A factor analytic study of a new instrument. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*. 1993 Jan; 19(3), 309-22.
- [11] Ryff CD and Keyes CL. The structure of psychological well-being revisited. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 1995 Oct; 69(4): 719. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.69.4.719.
- [12] McCullough ME and Kilpatrick SD, Emmons RA, Larson DB. Is gratitude a moral affect? *Psychological Bulletin*. 2001 Mar; 127(2): 249. doi: 10.1037/0033-2909.127.2.249.
- [13] Kaushik S. Psychological well-being, life satisfaction, gratitude, and marital satisfaction among adults. *International Journal of Research Publication and Review*. 2021 Oct; 2(10): 224-8.
- [14] Suminta RR and Ghufuron MN. The gratitude and marital satisfaction in the infertile spouses. *Psikis*:

- Jurnal Psikologi Islami. 2022 Dec; 8(2): 192-202. doi: 10.19109/psikis.v8i2.7480.
- [15] Hemarajarajeswari J and Gupta P. Gratitude, Psychological Well-being and Happiness among college students: A correlational study. The International Journal of Indian Psychology. 2021 Mar; 9(1), 532–41. doi: [10.25215/0901.053](https://doi.org/10.25215/0901.053).
- [16] Salvador-Ferrer C. The relationship between Gratitude and Life satisfaction in a sample of Spanish university students. Anales De Psicología/Annals of Psychology. 2017; 33(1): 114–9. doi: 10.6018/analesps.32.3.226671.
- [17] Unanue W, Gomez Mella ME, Cortez DA, Bravo D, Araya-Véliz C, Unanue J, et al. The reciprocal relationship between gratitude and life satisfaction: Evidence from two longitudinal field studies. Frontiers in Psychology. 2019 Nov; 10: 2480. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02480.
- [18] Algoe SB. Find, remind, and bind: The functions of gratitude in everyday relationships. Social and Personality Psychology Compass. 2012 Jun; 6(6): 455-69. doi: 10.1111/j.1751-9004.2012.00439.x.
- [19] Fredrickson BL. What good are positive emotions? Review of General Psychology. 1998 Sep; 2(3): 300-19. doi: 10.1037/1099-2903.2.3.300.
- [20] Datu JA, Valdez JM, McInerney DM, Cayubid RF. The effects of gratitude and kindness on life satisfaction, positive emotions, negative emotions, and COVID-19 anxiety: An online pilot experimental study. Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being. 2022 May; 14(2): 347-61. doi: 10.1111/aphw.12306.
- [21] Cregg DR and Cheavens JS. Gratitude interventions: Effective self-help? A meta-analysis of the impact on symptoms of depression and anxiety. Journal of Happiness Studies. 2021 Jan; 22: 413-45. doi: 10.1007/s10902-020-00236-6.
- [22] Fritz MM, Armenta CN, Walsh LC, Lyubomirsky S. Gratitude facilitates healthy eating behavior in adolescents and young adults. Journal of Experimental Social Psychology. 2019 Mar; 81: 4-14. doi: 10.1016/j.jesp.2018.08.011.
- [23] Jans-Beken L, Jacobs N, Janssens M, Peeters S, Reijnders J, Lechner L, et al. Gratitude and health: An updated review. The Journal of Positive Psychology. 2020 Nov; 15(6): 743-82. doi: 10.1080/17439760.2019.1651888.
- [24] Portocarrero FF, Gonzalez K, Ekema-Agbaw M. A meta-analytic review of the relationship between dispositional gratitude and well-being. Personality and Individual Differences. 2020 Oct; 164: 110101. doi: 10.1016/j.paid.2020.110101.

RETRACTED