

Role of Gratitude, Marital Satisfaction, Relationship Quality in Psychological Well-Being among Married Couples

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Abstract

The present study examined the effects of appreciation on the psychological health, quality of the relationship and marital satisfaction of married couples. Gratitude has become a prominent concept in positive psychology because of its positive effect on other people and mental health. The study employed a quantitative correlational research approach and a sample of 200 married individuals (100 men and 100 wives) ranging in age from 25 to 60 years. The participants filled the Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ-6), Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale, ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale and Relationship Quality Scale. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, independent samples t-test and multiple regression analysis were used. The results showed a strong positive correlation between psychological well-being, relationship quality and marriage satisfaction. Stepwise multiple regression analysis indicated that gratitude and marital happiness were the next best predictors of psychological well-being for both men and wives. Gratitude was found to be a significant psychological resource for improving psychological well-being, relational functioning and marital adjustment of married couples, the study found.

Keywords: Gratitude, Marital Satisfaction, Relationship Quality, Psychological Well-Being, Married Couples, Positive Psychology

Most people think of marriage as one of the most important and lasting partnerships of adult life. In addition to its legal and social implications, it provides the foundation for emotional connection, affection, mutual care, and long term support. A successful married relationship provides the individuals with a sense of security, belonging and joint accountability that enriches the overall happiness of life. Many studies have shown that couples with happy marriage relationships report better physical health, greater emotional stability and higher levels of psychological well-being.

In contrast, persistent marital quarrel and discontent are commonly associated to stress, worry, melancholy, and a deterioration in overall quality of life.

Psychology research has shifted its attention in recent years from identifying the root causes of marital problems to identifying the traits and constructive mechanisms that help couples build fulfilling and long-lasting relationships. This action is in line with the principles of positive psychology, which highlights human traits, happy feelings, and individual assets that promote the well-being of people and communities. Among the several attributes explored in this perspective, gratitude has been found to be one of the most potent psychological tools for improving personal wellbeing and solid interpersonal relationships.

The tendency to acknowledge, respect, and appreciate the helpful contributions made by others is known as gratitude. Acknowledging a

spouse's emotional support, daily efforts, deeds of kindness, sacrifices, and care is one way to express gratitude in a married context. Partners feel valued, respected, and emotionally linked when they express thanks for these achievements. In addition to strengthening a couple's bond, these actions encourage prosocial and helpful conduct. A person's overall assessment of their marriage's quality and fulfillment is referred to as "marital contentment."

Marital functioning is a more comprehensive measure of the quality of a partnership. Trust, dedication, effective communication, intimacy, emotional support, respect for one another, and the ability to resolve conflicts amicably are some of its essential components. Cooperation and a sense of security are fostered by healthy relationships, which aid couples in adjusting to major life transitions and everyday obstacles.

Excellent psychological functioning is a component of psychological well-being, which extends beyond the absence of mental illness. It includes traits like self-acceptance, personal development, independence, life purpose, mastery of the environment, and the capacity to build deep relationships with others. People who are in greater psychological health are more resilient, emotionally balanced, and enjoy life more.

A growing body of empirical evidence shows that gratitude affects married relationships in a variety of ways. Regularly expressing thankfulness to their spouses is associated with

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increased emotional intimacy, increased interpersonal trust, enhanced empathy, and healthier relationships. Additionally, gratitude encourages positive relationship behaviors that enhance long-term commitment and closeness. People gain from gratitude because it fosters positive feelings, resilience, and flexible coping mechanisms for stress and adversity.

There are few studies on gratitude's concurrent relationship with marital satisfaction, relationship quality, and psychological well-being, especially among married couples in the Indian sociocultural context, despite the fact that international research has increasingly shown the benefits of gratitude for marital functioning and mental health.

Given the significance of family relationships in Indian society, a thorough examination of these elements is both required and pertinent. By investigating the role of gratitude in predicting marital happiness, relationship quality, and psychological well-being in married couples, the current study seeks to close a significant gap in Indian psychology research and add to the body of knowledge. Gratitude has received a lot of attention as a fundamental idea in positive psychology due to its importance for interpersonal relationships and personal growth.

There are studies on the concurrent relationship between psychological well-being, relationship quality, and marital satisfaction among married couples in the Indian sociocultural context, even though research from around the world has increasingly shown the benefits of gratitude for marital functioning and mental health.

Given the importance of familial ties in Indian culture, a careful analysis of these components is relevant and crucial. The current study aims to close a large knowledge gap in Indian psychology research by examining the function of gratitude in predicting marital happiness, relationship quality, and psychological well-being in married couples. The significance of gratitude for human development and interpersonal relationships makes it a central concept in positive psychology. Gratitude fosters positive interpretations of life's situations, which enhances social bonds and helps with emotional adjustment.

The Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions by Fredrickson (2001) offers more information about the theoretical significance of gratitude. According to this theory, positive emotions broaden a person's cognitive and

behavioral processes, enabling them to respond to everyday situations with more adaptability, creativity, and transparency. Through the use of these more comprehensive thought-action patterns, individuals can develop long-term social, intellectual, and psychological resources. By emphasizing the good rather than the bad, gratitude, one of the primary positive emotions, promotes optimism, resilience, and adaptive coping. Frequent praising strengthens interpersonal ties and enhances psychological functioning.

The advantages of appreciation have been repeatedly shown by several scientific investigations. Improved interpersonal connections, optimism, happiness, and life satisfaction are often associated with gratitude. Gratitude also promotes collaboration, empathy, prosocial behavior, and forgiveness, all of which improve interpersonal functioning.

These results show that thankfulness is a long-term psychological resource that enhances both personal well-being and the quality of close relationships, rather than only an emotional response to obtaining gains. Because it enables partners to recognize and appreciate each other's everyday efforts, emotional support, and personal sacrifices, gratitude is particularly crucial in partnerships.

Emotional connection, acceptance, and respect are all improved when a partner expresses gratitude. Both sides feel appreciated and mutual trust grows as a result of these discussions. As a result, the proper operation of a family, marital adjustment, and relationship happiness increasingly depend heavily on appreciation.

A person's subjective assessment of the overall efficacy and quality of their marriage is referred to as "wedded satisfaction." It serves as an example of how social, emotional, and psychological goals are effectively achieved in a marriage. Highly contented couples are more emotionally stable, have deeper commitment, and are better communicators. These characteristics not only provide a safe family atmosphere but also enhance the psychological health of both couples.

One of the numerous elements that contribute to a successful marriage is thankfulness, which has been demonstrated to have a major psychological benefit. According to Algoe's (2012) Find-Remind-and-Bind Theory, being grateful enables people to recognize their value, value their relationships, and progressively strengthen their

emotional ties. Lambert et al.'s (2021) discovery that expressing gratitude enhanced romantic partners' appreciation, emotional connection, and relationship happiness lends credence to this viewpoint. Similarly, Park et al. (2021) found that thankfulness increased spouses' feelings of support and responsiveness, which increased marital happiness. Grateful couples reported improved levels of trust, emotional intimacy, and marital adjustment as well as less relationship issues (Gordon et al., 2022). Studies on infertile couples have shown that gratitude can function as a buffer, enabling spouses to preserve more marital happiness amid trying circumstances. In the Indian context, Sidhu (2025) found that by boosting acceptance, appreciation, and better spousal interaction patterns, gratitude, forgiveness, and dyadic adjustment predicted marital happiness.

Objectives

1. To examine the levels of gratitude, marital satisfaction, relationship quality, and psychological well-being among married persons.
2. To examine gender differences in gratitude, marital satisfaction, relationship quality, and psychological well-being among married persons.
3. To examine the relationship between gratitude, marital satisfaction, relationship quality, and psychological well-being among married persons.
4. To examine the role of gratitude, marital satisfaction, relationship quality, age, socioeconomic status, and place of residence in determining the psychological well being in married persons.

Hypotheses

H1. The level of gratitude, marital satisfaction, relationship quality and psychological well-being will be as per normal distribution model among the married persons.

H2. Significant gender differences will exist among husbands and wives with respect to gratitude, marital satisfaction, relationship quality, and psychological well-being.

H3. Gratitude, marital satisfaction, relationship quality will be significantly positively correlated with psychological well-being..

H4. Gratitude, marital satisfaction, relationship quality, age, socioeconomic status, and place of residence will have significant role in determining the psychological well-being among married persons.

Method

Design

A correlational research design was used to achieve the objectives of the study.

Participants

- The study was conducted on 200 married individuals (100 husbands and 100 wives) aged 25–60 years, belonging to both rural and urban backgrounds selected on the basis of purposive sampling procedure basis. Those who deny consent to be the participants in the study and those having any type of acute or chronic mental or physical health problems were excluded.

Tools

- Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ-6; McCullough et al., 2002)
- ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale (Fowers & Olson, 1993)
- Relationship Quality Scale (Pierce et al., 1991)
- Ryff Psychological Well-Being Scale (Ryff, 1989)

Results and Discussion

The data were analyzed using descriptive (Mean, SD), percentage, and inferential statistical techniques like, Chi Square, Pearson coefficient of correlation, stepwise multiple regression and t test. The results are described and discussed below.

Table 1, Mean, SD, frequencies and χ^2 Values

Variable	Low f (%)	Average f (%)	High f (%)	χ^2 Value
Gratitude	30 (15.0)	138 (69.0)	32 (16.0)	0.154
Marital Satisfaction	28 (14.0)	140 (70.0)	32 (16.0)	0.618
Relationship Quality	31 (15.5)	135 (67.5)	34 (17.0)	0.163
Psychological Well-Being	29 (14.5)	137 (68.5)	34 (17.0)	0.413

Note: Categories were formed using the Mean $\pm$ 1 SD criterion. .

Critical χ^2 (0.05) = 5.991, $p > .05$

The first objective was to examine the levels of gratitude, marital satisfaction, relationship variables as on that basis the decision was to be made as to calculate the coefficients of

Table 2- Independent Samples t-test

Variable	Husbands Mean $\pm$ SD	Wives Mean $\pm$ SD	t	p
Gratitude	30.82 $\pm$ 5.74	32.08 $\pm$ 5.43	2.01	.046
Marital Satisfaction	119.84 $\pm$ 18.76	124.78 $\pm$ 17.43	2.36	.019
Relationship Quality	86.73 $\pm$ 11.92	90.11 $\pm$ 11.21	2.51	.013
Psychological Well-Being	173.46 $\pm$ 22.14	179.60 $\pm$ 20.18	2.48	.014

quality, and psychological well-being among married individuals and for this the number of persons falling in low, moderate and high categories (Mean $\pm$ SD) of the criterion variables (Gratitude, Marital satisfaction, relationship quality and psychological well-being) were checked and the results are given in Table 1. Results (Table 1) indicate that the observed frequencies are as per those expected on the basis of normal distribution model as the χ^2 values for all variables are non-significant. Thus the distribution of gratitude, marital satisfaction, relationship quality and psychological well-being are normally distributed and the first hypothesis of the study is retained.

From a psychological perspective, the predominance of participants within the average category indicates that most married individuals demonstrated moderate levels of gratitude, marital satisfaction, relationship quality, and psychological well-being. These findings suggest the presence of satisfactory interpersonal functioning and adaptive psychological adjustment among the participants. The results are also consistent with the assumptions of Positive Psychology, which emphasize that positive relational experiences and individual strengths contribute significantly to overall well-being and healthy marital functioning.

Gender differences

The second objective of the study was to examine the gender differences in gratitude, marital satisfaction, relationship quality and psychological well-being. For this t-test was applied and the means, SDs and t values are given in Table 2. It was also necessary to check the gender differences i.e. the differences in the husband and wives scores on the criterion

correlation and regression on the total scores of husbands and wives or separately.

Significant gender differences were found across all research variables using the independent samples t-test. Compared to husbands (M = 30.82), wives expressed considerably more thankfulness (M = 32.08), $t = 2.01$, $p < .05$. In a similar vein, wives evaluated married life more favorably than husbands (M = 119.84), reporting better marital satisfaction (M = 124.78). There were also notable variations in the quality of the relationships, with spouses reporting higher levels of communication, emotional intimacy, and trust. Wives scored considerably higher (M = 179.60) than husbands (M = 173.46) in terms of psychological well-being. This implies that women in the current sample had comparatively greater levels of positive functioning and emotional adjustment (at least within the sampled group).

These results might be explained in a number of ways. In general, women are trained to be more forthcoming with their feelings and to put more effort into fostering connections with others. As a result, they could be more inclined to see and value their husbands' supporting actions. Higher levels of appreciation and relationship pleasure may result from such emotional awareness and relational involvement. Women also frequently participate more actively in relationship maintenance and emotional communication, which may improve psychological well-being and fortify emotional ties. These results are in line with those of Lavy and Littman-Ovadia (2023), who found a high correlation between marital harmony and relationship satisfaction and thankfulness, empathy, and constructive communication.

Therefore, the second hypothesis that the husbands and wives will differ significantly in

their scores of gratitude, marital satisfaction, relationship quality and psychological well being is accepted.

Relationship of gratitude with marital satisfaction, relationship quality and Psychological well being

The third objective of the study was to examine the relationship of gratitude with marital satisfaction, relationship quality and Psychological well being. For this Pearson coefficients of correlation separately for husbands and wives data (as these differ significantly Table 2) were calculated and the results are given in Table 3 and 4 respectively for husbands and wives.

thankfulness serves as both an individual psychological resource and a relationship strength. These results suggest that thankfulness is a valuable relationship resource for males and supports psychological well-being and marital adjustment.

Among wives, gratitude was found to have positive and significant associations with marital satisfaction ($r=.73$), relationship quality ($r=.76$), and psychological well-being ($r=.63$). The correlations were stronger than those observed among husbands, suggesting that gratitude may play a particularly important role in women's perceptions of relationship functioning and personal well-being. The positive association

Table 3- Correlation Matrix (Husbands; n=100)

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Gratitude	—			
2. Marital Satisfaction	.62**	—		
3. Relationship Quality	.66**	.71**	—	
4. Psychological Well-Being	.54**	.58**	.61**	—

p < .01

Among husbands, gratitude was found to be significantly and positively related with marital satisfaction ($r=.62$), relationship quality ($r=.66$), and psychological well-being ($r=.54$). The strongest association was observed between gratitude and relationship quality, suggesting that husbands who expressed greater appreciation

between gratitude and psychological well-being suggests that gratitude contributes to positive affect, resilience, and personal growth. The interesting part is the strong positive relationship among variables, the relationship quality is strongly associated with marital satisfaction and psychological well being both in case of husbands

Table 4- Correlation Matrix (Wives; n=100)

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Gratitude	—			
2. Marital Satisfaction	.73**	—		
3. Relationship Quality	.76**	.78**	—	
4. Psychological Well-Being	.63**	.66**	.70**	—

p < .01

toward their spouses reported healthier interpersonal functioning and stronger emotional bonds. Thankfulness and marital satisfaction are positively correlated, indicating that favorable assessments of married life are influenced by thankfulness for a partner. Emotional intimacy and commitment may be more common among husbands who acknowledge their spouses' efforts. Additionally, gratitude was positively correlated with psychological well-being, suggesting that men who are appreciative had higher levels of optimism, emotional equilibrium, and life satisfaction. These results imply that

and wives (Table 3 and 4). Overall, the findings support the hypothesis that gratitude is positively associated with marital and psychological functioning among both husbands and wives.

Regression Analysis

The fourth objective of the study was to examine the role of gratitude, marital satisfaction, relationship quality in determining the psychological well being of married couples. As the difference between the scores of husbands and wives in the criterion variables therefore multiple regression was done separately for

husbands and wives data and the results are given in Table 5 and 6.

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to identify the predictors of psychological well-being among husbands. As presented in Table 6,

and constructive communication are essential for women's psychological adjustment. Gratitude also had a big impact, indicating that acknowledging and valuing a spouse's efforts has a big impact on emotional health. Compared to

Table 5 Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Psychological Well-Being among Husbands (n = 100)

Predictors	B	t	p	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F
Relationship Quality	.39	4.87	< .001	.57	.55	20.84***
Gratitude	.28	3.95	< .001			
Marital Satisfaction	.21	2.84	.005			

***p < .001

the overall regression model was statistically significant and explained 57% of the variance in psychological well-being ($R^2 = .57$, Adjusted $R^2 = .55$, $F = 20.84$, $p < .001$). The findings indicate

husbands, the model explained a greater proportion of variance among wives (68%) than among husbands (57%), indicating that relational experiences may exert a comparatively stronger

Table 6 Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Psychological Well-Being among Wives (n = 100)

Predictors	B	t	p	R ²	Adj. R ²	F
Relationship Quality	.34	5.92	< .001	.68	.66	31.47***
Gratitude	.25	4.76	< .001			
Marital Satisfaction	.08	3.51	.001			

***p < .001

that psychological well-being among husbands is primarily influenced by relational factors rather than demographic characteristics. Relationship quality was shown to be the most significant predictor, indicating that mutual support, communication, emotional intimacy, and trust in the marriage are important factors in improving psychological well-being. Additionally, gratitude and marital happiness made a substantial contribution, suggesting that high psychological functioning is supported by gratitude for one's spouse and contentment with one's married life. The determinants of spouses' psychological well-being were identified by multiple regression analysis. According to Table 7, 68% of the variance in psychological well-being was explained by the entire regression model, which was statistically significant ($R^2 = .68$, Adjusted $R^2 = .66$, $F = 31.47$, $p < .001$). The results show that Gratitude, marital happiness, and relationship quality have a significant impact on women's psychological well-being. The strongest predictor was shown to be relationship quality, suggesting that mutual support, trust, emotional closeness,

influence on women's psychological well-being. The findings revealed that relationship quality, gratitude, and marital satisfaction significantly predicted psychological well-being among both husbands and wives, with relationship quality emerging as the strongest predictor. The regression model explained a greater proportion of variance among wives than husbands, indicating a stronger influence of relational experiences on women's psychological well-being. Overall, the results highlight the importance of gratitude and positive marital relationships in promoting psychological adjustment and well-being among married individuals.

Conclusion

The present study conclude that gratitude, marital satisfaction, relationship quality, and psychological well-being were generally at average levels among married individuals. Wives reported significantly higher scores on all study variables than husbands. Gratitude showed significant positive relationships with marital satisfaction, relationship quality, and

psychological well-being among both groups. Furthermore, relationship quality, gratitude, and marital satisfaction emerged as significant predictors of psychological well-being, highlighting the importance of positive marital experiences in promoting psychological adjustment and well-being..

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