RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FORGIVENESS AND MARTIAL CONTENTMENT AMONG WORKING AND NON WORKING WOMEN

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Abstract

Using a cross-sectional research approach, the current study attempts to investigate the association between forgiving and marital happiness in working and nonworking women. The 243 population size was selected by considering power (80%), significance (0.95), and range of confidence (95%).As a consequence, a sample of 300 women was gathered, of which 150 were employed in a variety of capacities and the remaining 150 were native to the KPK Hazara division in the appropriate age range (20–60 years) and educational attainment (16 years and above) were selected using the Non-Probability (Convenience) sampling approach. The selection of the participants was based on their voluntary engagement, 16 years of schooling, and service with various groups. The Heartland Forgiveness Scale has been utilized to ascertain psychological forgiveness. An SWML was the tool used to gauge marital satisfaction. Positive relationship was found between Forgiveness and Marital satisfaction. Multiple linear regression revealed forgiveness to be significant predictor of marital contentment. Results also showed that forgiveness is higher among non-working women. This study may effectively be used in psychotherapy and substantially integrated in general counselling for young adults. Also it has high significance for marital counselling and couple conflict resolution.

Keywords: Forgiveness, martial contentment, non-working women.

INTRODUCTION;

Forgiveness plays a crucial role in improving the quality of interpersonal relationships, especially in marriage. Defined as replacing negative feelings toward an offender with positive ones, forgiveness is essential for marital well-being (Najibzadegan, Bahrainian, & Shahabizadeh, 2024). It helps couples move past resentment and rebuild trust, which is vital for restoring emotional intimacy after a transgression (Josephs, Hall, Binik, & therapy, 2020). The absence of bitterness and the presence of empathy are key indicators of forgiveness in close relationships, allowing partners to resolve conflicts more effectively (Pillai, 2021). Research has demonstrated that forgiveness enhances emotional intimacy and reduces conflict, significantly contributing to marital satisfaction (Mohammadi, Ghahari, & Pirmoradi, 2022; Najibzadegan, Bahrainian, Shahabizadeh, & Studies, 2024).

Marital contentment is a complex concept influenced by factors such as emotional support, communication, and shared values (Yue, Men, & Ferguson, 2021). Despite a wealth of research linking forgiveness to marital satisfaction, there is a limited understanding of how this relationship differs between working and non-working women. Forgiveness in marriage can be challenging, particularly after significant betrayals, yet it remains essential for relationship repair. Studies indicate that forgiveness can replace feelings of anger and revenge with empathy and compassion, thereby promoting emotional healing (Reza, Sudirman, & Mubarak, 2021)(Wohl, DeShea, & Wahkinney, 2008) argue that forgiveness results in a transformation of both thoughts and behaviors toward the offender, leading to improved relational well-being.

In addition to being an emotional process, forgiveness is also seen as a personality trait that affects how individuals manage transgressions in close relationships (Epitropaki, Radulovic, Ete, Thomas, & Martin, 2020). Studies have found that individuals who are more inclined to forgive experience greater marital satisfaction and reduced emotional distress (Brudek, Kaleta, & Society, 2023). Forgiveness alleviates psychological stress and the emotional burden of resentment, lowering cortisol levels and promoting overall well-being (Kim, Hulett, & Heiney, 2021). This emotional release strengthens the connection between partners, fostering greater marital harmony (Vazhappilly & Reyes, 2018). Cross-sectional studies support the finding that forgiving partners report more satisfying relationships, with fewer conflicts and greater emotional closeness (Wu et al., 2022). However, the dynamics of

forgiveness and contentment may differ based on work-life balance. Working women, for example, may experience additional stress from balancing professional and marital responsibilities, which could affect their marital satisfaction (Park, MacDonald, Impett, & Psychology, 2023). Conversely, non-working women might face different pressures, such as financial dependency and societal expectations, which could shape their approach to forgiveness and marital fulfillment (Apte, Bhatt, & Review, 2023). To better understand forgiveness and marital contentment across different groups, these nuances must be explored.

Working women often face additional stressors, including the challenge of balancing professional and domestic responsibilities, which may influence their ability to forgive and, in turn, their marital satisfaction. On the other hand, non-working women may experience different stressors, such as financial dependency and societal pressures, which could similarly affect their capacity for forgiveness and ability to maintain marital harmony. Exploring these differences is crucial to understanding how varying life circumstances impact the psychological processes within marital relationships. Previous studies have investigated the link between forgiveness and marital satisfaction, emphasizing the role of emotional intimacy and conflict resolution(Çelik, Çelik, Yavaş, Süler, & Studies, 2022). However, research on how this connection varies between working and non-working women remains limited. Differences in roles and stressors—such as work-life balance for working women and financial dependency for non-working women—have not been adequately explored.

This research seeks to contribute to the growing body of literature on forgiveness and marital satisfaction by examining how employment status affects this relationship. The findings will provide valuable insights for mental health professionals, marriage counselors, and researchers, offering a better understanding of how different life roles influence the dynamics of forgiveness and marital satisfaction. This study may also inform practical interventions tailored to the distinct needs of working and non-working women in marital counseling.

This study aims to investigate the relationship between forgiveness and marital satisfaction in both working and non-working women. Specifically, it will explore whether the ability to forgive and the subsequent effects on marital contentment vary according to employment status, taking into account the unique stressors and challenges faced by each group.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

This study utilized a cross-sectional research design to explore the association between forgiveness, gratitude, and marital satisfaction among working and non-working women in the Hazara region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. A total sample of 300 women was included, with 150 participants being employed in various occupations and 150 non-employed homemakers. Participants were selected through a non-probability convenience sampling method, ensuring the inclusion of those who were available and willing to participate.

The primary measure for forgiveness was the Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS), developed by (Gallo-Giunzioni, Prieto-Ursúa, Fernández-Belinchón, Luque-Reca, & health, 2021), which consists of 18 self-report items designed to assess dispositional forgiveness across three domains: forgiveness of self, forgiveness of others, and forgiveness of situations. Responses were recorded using a 7-point Likert scale, and the scale demonstrated good internal reliability in this study, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.78.

Marital satisfaction was evaluated using the newly developed Contentment with Married Life Scale (SWML), which measures overall satisfaction within marriage, including factors such as emotional support, communication, and shared values. This scale also exhibited strong internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.84, providing reliable insights into participants' marital well-being.

Participants were approached through various community networks, including local organizations, community centers, and personal contacts. Data collection was carried out in both urban and rural settings of the Hazara region. Each participant was provided with a consent form outlining the study's purpose and their voluntary participation. Once informed consent was obtained, participants completed a demographic questionnaire, the HFS, the SWML, and a gratitude scale. Both Urdu and English versions of the questionnaires were made available to ensure comprehension.

The collected data were analyzed using the IBM SPSS Version 26 software. Descriptive statistics were first calculated to summarize demographic details and the key study variables, including forgiveness, gratitude, and marital satisfaction. Inferential statistical methods, such as Pearson's correlation, were employed to investigate the relationships among these

variables. Additionally, independent sample t-tests were conducted to compare the levels of forgiveness, gratitude, and marital satisfaction between working and non-working women. Finally, regression analysis was used to examine the predictive effects of forgiveness and gratitude on marital satisfaction. All statistical analyses were performed with a significance level set at $p < 0.05$.

RESULTS

Table 1; *Demographic Characteristics of Study variables (n= 300).*

Characteristics	F	%
Age		
20_30 Years	129	43.0
31-40 years	151	50.5
41-50 years	17	5.5
Above 50	03	1.0
Years of marriage		
0-5	151	50.5
6-10	43	14.5
11-15	42	14.0
15 and above	66	22.0
Birth order		
First Born	57	19.0
Middle Born	150	50.0

Last Born	75	25.0
Single Born	18	6.0
Family System		
Nuclear	136	45.5
Joint	164	54.5
Socio economic status		
Low	09	3.0
Middle	219	73.5
High	05	2.0
Residence		
Rural	72	24.0
Urban	222	74.0

Table 1 shows the demographics of the research participants. The sample consisted of 300 females. The participants' ages varied from 20 to 60. The sample comprised both mixed and nuclear families. The vast majority of participants (74%) resided in cities, with only 24% living in rural regions. The majority of participants (50%) were born in the middle and had a median socioeconomic status (73.5%). According to the frequency table, the research participants are between the ages of 31 and 40 (50%), have been married for 0 to 5 years (50.5%), live in a joint family system (54.5%), are from a moderate socioeconomic level (73.5%), and dwell in urban residential areas (74%).

Table 2; *Pearson Correlation among Study Variables (n= 300).*

Variables		1	2	3	4	5	6
1	**HFS**	-					
2	FOS	.65**	-				
3	FOO	.71**	.16**	-			
4	FOSI	.75**	.28**	.32	-		
6	**MC**	.38**	.23**	.19**	.39**	.29**	-

Note. HFS = Heartland Forgiveness Scale; FOS = Forgiveness of Self; FOO = Forgiveness of Others; FOSI = Forgiveness of Situation;; MC = Marital Contentment, $^*p < .05.$ $^{**}p < .01.$

Table 2 demonstrates a substantial positive relationship between the Heartland Forgiveness Scale and marital contentment. Forgiveness has a substantial positive relationship with marital happiness (r=.38, p<.01). The findings also indicate a substantial positive correlation between forgiveness and marital satisfaction.

Table 3; *Multiple Linear Regression Analysis for Effect of Study variables on Marital contentment (n = 300).*

Variables	Model 1		
	B	*B*	*SE*
Constant	6.11**		3.34
FOS	.37**	.08	.09
FOO	.24*	.04	.08
FOSI	.20*	.30	.09

Note. FOS = Forgiveness of Self; FOO = Forgiveness of Others; FOSI = Forgiveness of Situation;

Table 3 demonstrates that numerous linear regression models were significant (p<.05). The variation accounted for by the numerous factors, namely forgiveness in marital happiness, is 38%. Multiple regression study found that forgiving of self, others, situations, and thankfulness positively predict marital satisfaction in both working and nonworking women (p<.05).

Table 4; Mean Comparison of working and non-working women on Study Variables (n = 300).

Variables	Working Women (n = 100)		Non-working Women (n = 100)		t(298)	p	Cohen's d
	M	**SD**	**M**	**SD**			
HFS	83.32	10.81	80.78	10.48			3.18
FOS	27.55	4.94	26.43	4.38			1.18
FOO	29.00	5.15	28.73	5.31			1.94
FOSI	26.75	5.30	26.61	4.76			1.32
GQ	33.23	5.54	30.02	5.33			3.24
MC	25.40	6.63	27.98	5.94			2.93

Note. HFS = Heartland Forgiveness Scale; FOS = Forgiveness of Self; FOO = Forgiveness of Others; FOSI = Forgiveness of Situation; GQ = Gratitude Questionnaire; MC = Marital Contentment

Table 6 reveals that working women are more forgiving than nonworking women (t=3.18). Furthermore, employed women express greater thankfulness than nonworking women (t=3.24). The results suggest that nonworking women had marginally higher marital happiness than working women (t=2.93).

DISCUSSION

The present study explored the relationship between forgiveness, gratitude, and marital satisfaction in both working and non-working women. Forgiveness plays a crucial role in enhancing marital happiness, as it involves not only letting go of resentment but also experiencing positive emotions when reflecting on the offender's wrongdoing. Gratitude, often defined as being appreciative of what one has, complements forgiveness by fostering emotional well-being within relationships. The findings of this study are consistent with prior research that highlights the significant association between forgiveness and marital satisfaction.

The data demonstrated a positive correlation between forgiveness and marital happiness, aligning with the work of (Allsop et al., 2021) who found that trait forgiveness was significantly linked to higher levels of marital satisfaction. Forgiveness, particularly the ability to let go of grudges and replace negative feelings with compassion, appears to play a pivotal role in sustaining marital harmony. This aligns with previous findings that suggest individuals who are more forgiving tend to experience more fulfilling marriages.

Further analysis revealed that marital satisfaction increases with age. These findings are consistent with research by(Bühler, Krauss, & Orth, 2021), which reported that older adults tend to be more forgiving compared to younger individuals. As people age, they become more understanding and better equipped to forgive both themselves and others, which in turn contributes to their overall marital satisfaction. This supports the notion that the capacity for forgiveness evolves with maturity, positively impacting long-term marital happiness.

Forgiveness also emerged as a significant predictor of marital contentment in the current study. This finding resonates with the work of (Fahimdanesh, Noferesti, & Tavakol, 2020) who established that self-compassion and forgiveness are both strong predictors of marital satisfaction. Interestingly, their study highlighted that while self-compassion was a key factor

for women, forgiveness was more critical for men in determining marital happiness. These results indicate that forgiveness contributes to marital satisfaction across both genders, although the mechanisms may differ slightly.

A notable finding from this research was that working women demonstrated a higher propensity for forgiveness compared to their non-working counterparts. This could be attributed to the greater emotional and practical support working women often receive from their families, which may help them navigate marital challenges with a more forgiving attitude. While this finding is supported by the data, there is a dearth of existing literature specifically examining the link between employment status and forgiveness in marriage, indicating a potential area for future research.

Contrary to expectations, the study did not find that working women experienced higher levels of marital satisfaction compared to non-working women. This is consistent with research by (Renanita & Lukito Setiawan, 2018) who reported that the factors influencing marital happiness differ between working and non-working women. For working women, communication, physical proximity, and financial ties were significant contributors to marital satisfaction, whereas for non-working women, financial relationships and communication were the primary influences. This suggests that while employment status may affect certain aspects of the marital relationship, it does not necessarily translate into higher overall marital happiness.

CONCLUSION

This study sought to evaluate the relationship between forgiveness and marital contentment in working and nonworking women. The statistical analysis of the inquiry shows a positive relationship between the study variables, namely marital contentment and forgiveness. Marriage happiness among married women is positively correlated with forgiveness. According to the study, people's marital satisfaction increases with age. The study also investigated how much more frequently working women show forgiveness than non-working women. The study also finds that women who do not work had higher marital happiness than those who do.

Limitations and recommendations

The study includes the following limitations, although recommendations for further research are provided to address these difficulties.

1. The study focused solely on the Hazara division and excluded other regions of Pakistan. It is recommended that scholars do study on larger areas in order to accomplish future research.

2. The present study has a 300-person sample size. It is recommended that future studies use large samples to confirm their findings and guarantee that they can be used broadly.

3. The study's reliance on self-reported scales may lead to bias. Unstructured approaches, such as interviewing, surveys, and observational research, are recommended for further investigation. Using a tried-and-true questionnaire, this study assessed three critical areas: marital contentment, appreciation, and forgiveness.

4. The study's sample size of 300 married women limited the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, for future investigations, a bigger sample size should be employed.

5. This survey only covered working and jobless women from KPK Pakistan. The study of these issues in males is also important.

Implications

Marriage's health and happiness are inextricably linked to each other's unique experiences of marital pleasure. It has been shown that forgiveness boost married couples' feelings of fulfilment and satisfaction. These findings have significant implications for counselling, namely marital, couple, marriage, and family counselling. The study's findings are critical for marital counsellors as they assess how to employ forgiveness to resolve marital conflict and promote satisfaction. This study provides new research perspectives by providing empirical data to support the positive psychology notions of forgiveness's popularity in Pakistani culture.

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