

Moderated Mediation Roles of Happiness and Family Type on Self-Acceptance and Relationship Satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

Self-acceptance has been established to enhance romantic relationship experiences among college students. However, the mechanism for the established link is missing. Therefore, this study examined the link between self-acceptance and relationship satisfaction as well as the mediating role of happiness in the association between self-acceptance and relationship satisfaction among college students. It also investigated the moderated mediated role of family type in the relationship. Participants consisted of 275 (Female = 42.9%; Mean age = 21.11, SD = 1.64) who responded to the Relationship Satisfaction Scale, Self-Acceptance and Oxford Happiness Questionnaire. Data were analysed with the Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Hayes PROCESS Macro statistical tools. A positive association was found between self-acceptance, happiness and relationship satisfaction. Further, happiness had a mediating effect on the association between self-acceptance and relationship satisfaction among university undergraduate students. Results of the moderated mediation analysis showed that the indirect effect of happiness in the self-acceptance – relationship satisfaction link was greater among those with monogamous family type than those with polygamous family type. Early exposure of children to social and recreational activities by parents and relevant stakeholders could enhance their self-acceptance, happiness and consequently better relationship experiences.

KEYWORDS: happiness, family type, relationship satisfaction, self-acceptance, university students.

I. Introduction

University life presents adolescents with an environment for transition into young adulthood. This stage is often characterised by a number of developmental changes that include the need for identity, and intimacy (Erikson, 1968). The nature of their intimate relationship may take different forms, ranging from a short to a long

time romantic relationship (Boisvert & Poulin 2016). Satisfaction with intimately romantic relationship may determine the duration of such engagement. Romantic relationship satisfaction refers to an individual's subjective evaluation of positive or negative feelings regarding their relationships (Fletcher, 2015). A satisfactory romantic relationship experience at this stage has

been proved to be beneficial to future romantic or family relationships and better adjustment later in life (Christopher et al., 2016; Laghi et al., 2017; Gonzalez Avilés, 2021), increases self-esteem (Orth et al., 2018) as well as promotes wellbeing (Cao et al., 2020; Gonzalez Avilés, 2021; Londero-Santos et al., 2021). Conversely, dissatisfaction with romantic relationship at college poses some negative implications like mood fluctuations (Rogers et al., 2018), deteriorated life satisfaction and feelings of guilt (Wu et al., 2015), greater psychological pressure and detrimental effects on academic performances (Honghao et al., 2021) as a result of break ups. These unfavourable consequences need to be checked. Therefore, the current study focusses on the roles of self-acceptance and happiness in romantic relationship satisfaction among university undergraduate students, particularly as their romantic experiences are moderated by their family type.

Self-acceptance and romantic relationship satisfaction

Self-acceptance refers to individual belief in their strengths and values as well as “their actual self fully and unconditionally, regardless of whether other people approve, respect, or love them” (Chamberlain & Haaga 2001). In other words, it is a personality attribute that enables people to be tolerant and recognize and accept both their positive and negative traits throughout negative circumstances (Cho et al., 2014). Previous scholars have found that self-acceptance relates to subjective wellbeing (Su et al., 2019), and happiness (Szentagotai et al., 2013). Similarly, self-esteem has been conceived to be a generalized self-acceptance (Lyubomirsky et al., 2006) and has a positive relationship with happiness (Li & Zheng 2014; Lyubomirsky et al. 2006). When compared with other life domains as academic achievements, social relationship, self-esteem was found to be the strongest predictor of

happiness among undergraduate students (Flynn & MacLeod, 2015). Although, studies on the connection between self-acceptance and relationship satisfaction is scanty, it has been linked to other behavioural outcomes. For instance, individuals with high level of self-acceptance have been found to find meaning in life and possess behavioural strategies for problem-solving (Cho et al., 2014). Additionally, the mediating effect of self-acceptance had been documented. The association between perceived parenting behaviour and fear of compassion (Wan et al., 2022), self-worth and subjective wellbeing (Su et al., 2019) were reported to be mediated by self-acceptance. Since self-acceptance may have implications for interpersonal functioning among university undergraduate students, we proposed that self-acceptance will associate with relationship satisfaction and happiness among university undergraduates. We therefore hypothesized that:

Hi: self-acceptance will significantly predict relationship satisfaction among university undergraduates

Hii: Self-acceptance will predict happiness

Happiness as a mediator

Happiness, which is defined as the extent to which an individual appraises their life positively (Veenhoven, 2009), has been linked to personal and collective wellbeing (Uchida & Oishi, 2016). It is an expression of individual’s subjective wellbeing that reflects a mixture of both the positive and negative affect with the former taking higher percentage (Diener et al., 1999). In essence, happier people most often do experience greater positive affect (Rauthmann et al., 2015) across many life domains and have been reported to be more resilient in the face of obstacles (Short et al., 2018). They tend to be more sincere in evaluating their experiences by accepting their

faults and acknowledging their weaknesses (Gardiner et al., 2022). It has also been established that gratitude is associated with happiness among college students (Kausar, 2018). Studies have established that self-acceptance positively relates to relationship satisfaction (Cho et al., 2014; Su et al., 2019) and that it is a predictor of happiness and subjective wellbeing (Szentagotai et al., 2013; Su et al., 2019). Also, happiness has been reported to be associated with subjective wellbeing as well as positive affect (Rauthmann et al., 2015). Indeed, happiness has been reported to play a mediating role in the association between personal growth initiative and life satisfaction (Sood & Gupta, 2014). It is rational to assume that happiness will play a mediating role in the link between self-acceptance and relationship satisfaction. We therefore hypothesized that

Hiii: Happiness will predict relationship satisfaction

Hiv: Happiness will mediate the relationship between self-acceptance and relationship satisfaction

Family Type as a moderator

Family type, in this study, is delimited to individuals who are from either monogamous or

polygamous family backgrounds. Monogamy family type represents a marriage arrangement of one man to a woman who consensually raise their children. Monogamy has been rated higher in improved children mental health and wellbeing, and lower at child neglect and abuse (Henrich et al., 2012). On the other hand, polygamy is a “marital relationship that involves a man who is married to two or more wives” (Al-Krenawi, 2001; Sinai & Peleg, 2021) and has been reported to be characterised with jealousy between co-wives and adversely affect child’s health outcomes, with physical and emotional abuse (Hassouneh-Phillips, 2001; Chen, 2021) from siblings and co-wives. Moreso, individuals from polygamous family background have been found to report more difficulties in academic subjects than their counterparts from monogamous homes (Bamigbade & Salovlita, 2014). In fact, the psychological effect of polygamous family background was higher than those from monogamous family type (Bahari, 2021). Since, extant literature have supported the deferring impacts of family type, we hypothesized that:

Hv: The relationship between self-acceptance and relationship satisfaction through happiness will be better among college students from monogamous family type than their counterparts from polygamous family type.

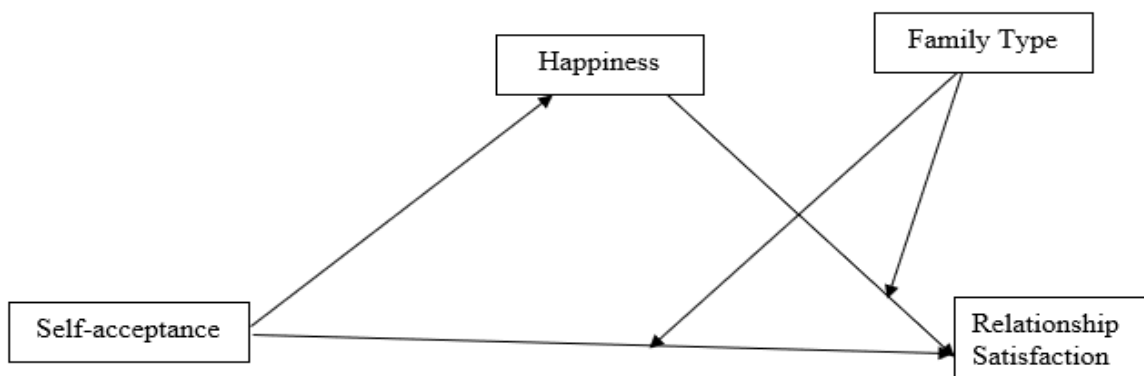


Figure 1: Statistical model of the conditional indirect effect of family type in the self-acceptance-relationship satisfaction link through happiness

2. Methods

The current study utilized the regression based Hayes(2022) PROCESS Macro for both the direct and indirect effects of the independent, mediating and moderating variables on the dependent variable, which is relationship satisfaction.

Participants and Procedure

The Academic and Research Committee of the Obafemi Awolowo approved the conduct of the study. Participants consisted of undergraduate students of the Obafemi Awolowo university, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, who have indicated that they are involved in a romantic relationship. Data collection was conducted among year three undergraduate students across five departments in Faculty of Social Sciences of the university. The proportional sampling technique was utilized to select participants. Out of the 300 copies of questionnaire that were distributed, the final sample included 275 (91.7% response rate) respondents after the preliminary data screening to remove cases of participants who did not indicate that they are in any romantic relationship. Distribution by gender showed that 118 (42.9%) were female while 157 (57.1%) were male. The median age was 22 years. According the respondents' family type, majority (78.5%) were polygamous while only 59 (21.5%) were from monogamous homes.

Measures

The research instrument for the study consisted of four sections. The first contains the demographic information such as sex, age and family type (monogamous or polygamous). The other sections are discussed as follows:

Relationship Satisfaction: The Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) developed by Hendrick et al., (1988) was utilized to assess participants' relationship satisfaction. It consists of 7 items

designed to measure general relationship satisfaction (e.g., "In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?"). Responses were rated using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (low satisfaction) to 5 (high satisfaction). The scoring of the scale is kept continuous. The higher the score, the more satisfied the respondents is their relationship. Cronbach Alpha Reliability statistics for this study was 0.89.

Happiness: The short version of the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire developed by Hills and Argyle (2002) was used to measure happiness among the study participants. It contains of 8 items (e.g., "I am well satisfied about everything in my life") having a response range from 1 to 6 with 1 (strongly disagree) and 6 (strongly agree). The authors reported an internal consistency for the scale at .62 while a Cronbach alpha reliability of .58 was established for the current study.

Self-Acceptance: The self-acceptance subscale of the Scale of Psychological was used to measure participants' self-acceptance. It consisted of three (3) items (e.g., "When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out so far"). Respondents rated statements on a scale of 1 to 7 with 1 indicating strongly disagree and 7 indicating strongly agree. The Cronbach alpha internal consistency of .65 was found for this study.

Statistical Analyses

We employed the both the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and Hayes (2022) statistical tools of the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) for the statistical analyses. Prior to the analyses, the normality test was conducted via the skewness and kurtosis of the data. Reports on Table 1 shows that the observed indicators were below the acceptable range for skewness (± 2) and ± 7 for kurtosis as recommended by Hair, et al (2010). The PPMC

was employed for the intercorrelation and to test for multicollinearity among the independent variables in the study. Hayes (2022) PROCESS Macro model 8 was used to test the hypotheses on the both the direct, indirect and conditional effects of the independent, mediating and moderating variables on the dependent variable.

3. Results

The descriptive and test of relationship among the study variables are presented in Table 1. The Zero-order correlation revealed that a significantly positive association was found among self-acceptance and relationship satisfaction ($r = .45$, $p < .05$), self-acceptance and happiness ($r = .54$, $p < .05$) as well as happiness and relationship satisfaction ($r = .35$, $p < .05$). These results indicated that the happier the university undergraduate students are the more satisfied they are in their romantic relationship.

Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation and correlational matrix of the study variables

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1.Age	21.11	1.64	1			
2.self-acceptance	16.43	3.97	.01	1		
3 Happiness	36.09	5.78	.07	.54**	1	
4 Relationship Satisfaction	24.97	6.83	.07	.45**	.35**	1
Kurtosis	-	-	-	.27	.06	.09
Skewness	-	-	-	-.82	-.22	-.70

N=275; ** $p < .01$

Mediating effect of happiness

The PROCESS Macro by Hayes (2022) version 4.4 was used with a bootstrap estimate of 5,000 to

generate 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals for the observed mediating effects as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Testing the mediating effect of happiness in the link between self-acceptance and relationship satisfaction

Predictors	Mediator Model			Consequent Factors									
				Dependent Variable Model							Mediating effect		
	β	SE	p	Total effect			Direct effect				I.E (95% Boot C.I)		
Variables	β	SE	p	β	SE	P	β	SE	P	β	SE	LL	UL
Constant	23.23	1.25	0.001	12.35	1.56	0.001	8.04	2.34	.001	-	-	-	-
Self-accept.	.78	.07	0.001	.77	.09	0.001	.62	.11	.001	-	-	-	-
Happiness	-	-	-	-	-	-	.19	.08	.014	.15	.07	.013	.274

F(1,273)=10.72, $p<.001$
R=.54, R²=.29

F(1,242)=52.18, $p<.001$
R=.45, R²=.20

F(2,272)=37.55, $p<.005$
R=.47, R²=.22

Note: I.E = Indirect effect, C.I= Confidence Interval, Boot= Bootstrapping, Self-accept= Self-acceptance

As presented on the table 2, self-acceptance predicts relationship satisfaction of undergraduate students in romantic relationship ($\beta = .77$, $p<.05$). The results support the first hypothesis that self-acceptance will predict relationship satisfaction. Also, self-acceptance was found to predict happiness among university students ($\beta = .78$, $p<.05$). It supports the hypothesis that self-acceptance will predict undergraduates' happiness. Furthermore, happiness was found to predict relationship satisfaction among university students ($\beta = .19$, $p<.05$). Thus, the proposed hypothesis that happiness will predict relationship satisfaction was supported.

The results of the mediation analysis on table 2 shows that happiness mediated the relationship between self-acceptance and relationship satisfaction ($\beta = .15$, $p<.05$, C.I (.013, .274)). This result supports the fourth hypothesis that

happiness will have an indirect effect in the association between self-acceptance and relationship satisfaction. The observed mediating effects was found to be partial as the independent variable, which is self-acceptance, still has effect on the dependent variable of relationship satisfaction even after the mediator was included in the model.

Moderated mediation of family type

The moderated mediation analysis was conducted to test hypothesis five. The hypothesis was to determine the condition under which the mediator would stand in terms of conditional indirect effect. Specifically, it is to examine whether or not the mediator will apply similarly to monogamous and polygamous family type among the participants. The Hayes Process macro model 8 was adopted to conduct the analysis. The result is on table 3.

Table 4: Moderated mediation model of relationship satisfaction among university students

Models	β	SE	t	P	(C.I)LL	(C.I)UL
MV model						
Constant	-10.527	4.949	2.127	.034	.783	20.271
Self-acceptance	1.416	.297	4.761	.001	.831	2.001
Family Type	7.386	2.778	2.658	.008	1.916	12.856
Self-accp* FamTyp	-.370	.166	- 2.226	.027	- .697	- .043
	F(3,271)=40.80,	R=.56,	R ² =.31			
DV Model						
Constant	5.709	6.301	.906	.365	- 6.697	18.115
Self-acceptance	.790	.391	2.022	.044	.021	1.560
Happiness	.182	.077	2.377	.018	.031	.333
Family Type	1.390	3.554	.391	.696	-5.606	8.387
Self-accp* FamTyp	-.095	.212	-.448	.665	-.512	.322
	F(4,270)=18.71	R=.47	R ² =.22			
Conditional direct effect (Gender)						
Monogamy	.696	.197	3.534	0.001	.308	1.083
Polygamy	.601	.120	4.997	0.001	.364	.837

Conditional indirect effect (Gender)	β	Boot(SE)	Boot(LL)	Boot(UL)
Monogamy	.190	.096	.016	.391
Polygamy	.123	.058	.012	.239
Index of moderated mediation	-.068	.050	-.185	-.066

Note: I.E = Indirect effect, C.I= Confidence Interval, Boot= Bootstrapping

Self-accp = Self-acceptance, FamTyp = Family Type

Table 3 indicates that the conditional indirect effect of happiness was significant for both monogamous $\{\beta = .190, p < .05, C.I (.016, .391)\}$ and polygamous $\{\beta = .123, p < .05, C.I (.012, .239)\}$. This result implies that the mediating effect of happiness in the association between self-acceptance and relationship satisfaction was higher among undergraduates with monogamous family type than those with polygamous family type. The index of moderated mediation analysis is $\{\beta = -.068, p < .05, C.I (-.185, -.066)\}$. The result supports the fifth hypothesis.

4. Discussion

A distinctive characteristic of this current research was to investigate the role of family type in the association between self-acceptance and relationship satisfaction through happiness among college students. In a bid to achieve the goals of the study, five hypotheses were formulated and tested through a model that was prosed to connect all the study variables.

In agreement with the first postulation, self-acceptance predicted relationship satisfaction among university students. This supports earlier studies that self-acceptance relates to subjective wellbeing (Cho et al., 2014; Su et al., 2019). Individual who believes in their strengths and values as well as “their actual self fully and unconditionally, regardless of whether other people approve, respect, or love them” or not (Chamberlain & Haaga 2001) would be able to find satisfaction in specific life domains such as

engaging in romantic relationship. Self-acceptance enhances self-worth (Su et al., 2019) and determines what people looks for in relational engagements. Individuals with high level of self-acceptance are adjudged to find meaning in life and possess behavioural strategies for problem-solving (Cho et al., 2014). Undergraduate students with high self-acceptance may be able to handle challenges in romantic relationship more than those with low self-acceptance and consequently find satisfaction in their relationships with partner. Similarly, self-acceptance was found to predict happiness. Thus, the second hypothesis was also confirmed. Past studies have also reported that self-acceptance positively relates to happiness (Lyubomirsky et al. 2006; Szentagotai et al., 2013; Li & Zheng 2014). When people accept their worth and love themselves, they tend to be happy.

Our findings also confirmed the third hypothesis that happiness would predict relationship satisfaction among undergraduate students. Individual who are happy most often do experience greater positive affect (Rauthmann et al., 2015) across many life domains and have been reported to be more resilient in the face of obstacles (Short et al., 2018). They tend to be more sincere in evaluating their experiences by accepting their faults and acknowledging their weaknesses (Gardiner et al., 2022). This may be considered a strength which can improve interpersonal relationships, particularly among university students. Hence, individual who possesses this attribute would appraise their life

positively (Veenhoven, 2009) and enjoys both personal and collective wellbeing (Uchida & Oishi, 2016).

In our fourth hypothesis, we proposed that happiness would mediate the association between self-acceptance and relationship satisfaction among undergraduate students. The value of happiness in mediating the relationship between self-acceptance and relationship satisfaction was confirmed. This finding is in line with similar literature that happiness enhances already existing positive association between personal growth initiative and life satisfaction (Sood & Gupta, 2014). Happiness represents the degree to which and individual appraises their life positively (Veenhoven, 2009) and this may strengthen the link between self-acceptance relates to subjective wellbeing (Cho et al., 2014; Su et al., 2019). In other words, self-acceptance leads to positive evaluation of an individual self-worth and value without recuse to other peoples' opinions. This evaluation invariably impacts relationship satisfaction among undergraduate students.

In agreement with the fifth hypothesis, we confirmed that the relationship between self-acceptance and relationship satisfaction through happiness will be better among college students from monogamous family type than their counterparts from polygamous family type. Previous studies have rated monogamy higher in improving children mental health and wellbeing, lowering child neglect and abuse (Henrich et al., 2012) as well as better academic performance (Bamigbade & Salovlita, 2014). On the contrary, polygamy is characterized with jealousy between co-wives and adversely affect child's health outcomes, with physical and emotional abuse (Hassouneh-Phillips, 2001; Chen, 2021) from siblings and co-wives. The psychological effect of polygamous family background was higher than those from monogamous family type

(Bahari, 2021). Experiences of undergraduate students from monogamous family type, where there are less of jealousy and neglects prepare them for future interpersonal relationship that is satisfying.

From our findings, the study recommends early exposure of children to social and recreational activities by parents and other relevant stakeholders in other to develop their self-acceptance level early in life. Also, the family as the first unit of socialization has significant roles to play in preparing their children for future romantic relationship engagements. Furthermore, school management may also consider introduction and encouragement of relevant extra-curricular activities that facilitates positive affect and constant interactions. Similarly, the counselling units of each university, may on a regular basis, organise Programmes for students to create smooth transition from adolescence to young adulthood smoothly and help them belief in themselves even though family background may differ.

The current study has some limitations. The first is that no causality was determined since it was a non-experimental study. This implies that we only examined the linear relationship between self-acceptance and relationship satisfaction and not vice versa. Further study may want to explore the bi-directional association among the study variables. The second limitation relates to the possibility of common method bias due to the fact that self-reported measures were used for data collection. Adoption of multi-information approach, although may be costly, could cater for this shortcoming in any future research on relationship satisfaction. Lastly, undergraduate students from only one faculty were sampled. Possible study in the future may consider the inclusion of lager sample from many other faculties to enhance generalizability of the findings.

Conflict of interest

No conflict of interests between the authors

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