

## The Effect of Romantic Relationship Satisfaction on Happiness and Emotional Intelligence in Millennials

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### ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to explore the effect of happiness on happiness and emotional intelligence in millennials. For this purpose, a sample of 150 (75 males and 75 females) millennials born in between 1980 and 1996 were selected using random sampling technique. Relationship Assessment Scale (1998), Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale (1998) and - Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (2002) were used to collect data from the participants. An Independent t-test was computed to determine whether there is a significant mean difference between males and females among all the variables. The findings of the study revealed that there were significant gender differences in romantic relationship satisfaction and happiness and there is significant impact of romantic relationship satisfaction on emotional intelligence and happiness of millennials.

**Keywords:** Millennials, Romantic Relationship Satisfaction, Happiness, Emotional Intelligence

Millennials, typically defined as individuals born between 1981 and 1996 (Dimock, 2019), have been the subject of extensive psychological research due to their unique developmental experiences and characteristics. This generation has come of age during a period of rapid technological advancement, economic uncertainty and shifting social norms, all of which have influenced their psychological development and behavior. One key psychological characteristic of millennials is their relationship with technology. As digital natives, millennials have integrated technology into nearly every aspect of their lives, affecting their cognitive processes, social interactions and identity formation (Immordino-Yang et al., 2012). This constant connectivity has been associated with both positive outcomes, such as increased access to information and social support and negative consequences, including heightened anxiety and decreased attention span (Twenge, 2017).

Humans have a deep-seated desire to belong (Baumeister, 2011). Finding a romantic partner takes a significant amount of time and effort (Fletcher et al., 2015) and once one is established, it promotes greater physical and mental health (Robles et. al, 2014). Individual differences greatly influence how happy a relationship is (Dyrenforth et al., 2010, Malouff et. al., 2010). Similarly, it was discovered that communication, closeness, commitment, trust, attribution and confidence all contribute to relationship satisfaction. Relationship

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satisfaction has been connected to a variety of individual and group outcomes, including overall life satisfaction, productivity at work, treatment of physical and mental health issues and health (Fincham & Beach, 2010).

Millennials' approach to relationships and family formation has also been a focus of psychological research. Studies have shown that millennials are more likely to delay marriage and parenthood compared to previous generations (Arnett, 2014). This extended period of emerging adulthood has implications for identity development and life satisfaction (Arnett, 2000). Despite these delays, research suggests that millennials still value committed relationships and marital satisfaction (Willoughby et al., 2015).

Emotional intelligence (EI) plays a crucial role in relationship satisfaction and overall happiness. Baron and Misra (2015) defined emotions as “reactions consisting of subjective cognitive states, physiological reactions and expressive behaviors”. This means that, in contrast, emotions are triggered by different stimuli. They're responses. We are aware of these reactions, both internal and external, and we are conscious of them, though different people have various levels of consciousness. Defined as the ability to perceive, understand, and manage emotions in oneself and others (Mayer et al., 2008), emotional intelligence has been positively correlated with relationship quality among millennials (Malouff et al., 2014). People with higher emotional intelligence are happier in all aspects of their lives, including romantic relationships. People that are emotionally intelligent have a strong understanding of emotions, thus they only choose partners who are more compatible with them (Malouff et al., 2014).

Millennials with higher emotional intelligence tend to communicate more effectively, manage conflicts better and show greater empathy in their romantic relationships (Brackett et al., 2005).

Millennials report lower levels of happiness compared to previous generations at the same age (Twenge et al., 2017). Factors contributing to this trend may include increased stress from social media use, economic pressures and changing social expectations (Bhattacharya et al., 2020). However, other research indicates that millennials prioritize experiences and personal growth over material possessions, which can lead to greater long-term life satisfaction (Lee et al., 2018). Because happiness aids in better emotion regulation and distress management, happier people have higher emotional intelligence than unhappy people (Khosla & Dokania, 2010). Those with higher emotional intelligence tend to report greater relationship satisfaction, which in turn contributes to overall happiness and well-being (Andrei et al., 2016). Additionally, millennials who cultivate strong, satisfying romantic relationships often report higher levels of life satisfaction and psychological well-being (Adamczyk, 2017).

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Emotional competence plays a more significant role in romantic relationships than in non-romantic relationships. The moderator variables considered for age, relationship length, the method of measuring emotional competence and the type of relationship quality measurement proved to be significant in this association (Lovis-Schmidt et al., 2024). Higher emotional intelligence is associated with happier relationships. In contrast, a possible inverse association is suggested by the minor negative correlation between self-esteem and relationship satisfaction. Furthermore, a correlation between emotional intelligence and self-

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esteem is shown by the moderately negative association between the two (Tyagi & Khanam, 2024). Positive correlation was found between Attitude towards intimacy and emotional intelligence; commitment and managing own's emotions subscale of emotional intelligence; attitude towards intimacy and managing other's emotions subscale of emotional intelligence. Thus, emotionally intelligent individuals have a greater desire towards intimacy and commitment in their relationships. Emotional Intelligence helps enhance intimacy by open expression of emotions and empathetic response to the partner's self-disclosure (Kaur & Junnarkar. (2017).

Relationship satisfaction was one of the main predictors of subjective well-being. The results highlight the importance of romantic relationships over subjective well-being, suggesting that cultivating satisfying romantic relationships contributes to a happier life (Londero-Santos et al., 2021). Theoretical accounts and empirical findings show that relationships *can* be a source of positive emotions and well-being, and are an integral part of what makes people *very happy* (Brauer & Proyer, 2023).

Relationship quality was also found to be a predictor of well-being and the sense of happiness. Higher satisfaction with the relationship is accompanied by higher levels of the following dimensions of well-being: purpose in life, relations with others, and environmental mastery. The subjects who evaluate their relationship more positively are more capable of finding meaning in life and constantly setting themselves new tasks; they evaluate their ability to maintain good relations with others and to experience positive emotions in the relationship as higher, and they believe they cope well with the surrounding reality (Czyżowska et al., 2020).

**Kawamichi et al. (2016)** studied whether being in a romantic relationship was associated with reduced gray matter density in striatum and increased subjective happiness. These findings implied that being in a romantic relationship boosts subjective happiness by providing positive experiences. Furthermore, the decrease in grey matter density in the right dorsal striatum indicated an increase in the importance of social reward in a romantic relationship.

### ***Objectives***

The primary aim of this investigation is to assess the effect of romantic relationship satisfaction on emotional intelligence and happiness of millennials.

The main objectives of the present study are

1. To explore the gender difference among millennials in romantic relationship satisfaction, emotional intelligence and happiness.
2. To determine the relationship between romantic relationship satisfaction, emotional intelligence and happiness in millennials.

### ***Hypotheses***

- There will be gender differences in romantic relationship satisfaction, emotional intelligence and happiness in millennials.
- There will be relationship between romantic relationship satisfaction, emotional intelligence and happiness in millennials.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Sample*

The subjects for this study included the millennials of Chandigarh- Tricity. The total sample of the present study consists of 150 millennials, 75 of whom were males and 75 of whom were females. The research only includes millennials who were in romantic relationship from past one year. The researcher used a simple random sampling technique for this study.

### *Measures*

- **Relationship Satisfaction - Relationship Assessment Scale (1998):** Relationship satisfaction will be measured by Relationship Assessment Scale given by Hendrick which is a measure to assess global relationship satisfaction. It consists of 7 items each rated on 5 point likert scale. It is suitable for use with individuals who are in intimate relationships such as dating couples, married couples, cohabiting couples or engaged couple.
- **Emotional Intelligence – Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale (1998):** Emotional intelligence was measured by Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test. This scale is based on Solovay & Mayer (1990) model of emotional intelligence and measures appraisal, regulation and utilization of emotion. This scale includes a 33 item self report and uses 1 (Strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) scale for responses. Each sub test score is graded and then added together to give the total score for the participant.
- **Happiness- Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (2002):** Happiness was measured by Oxford Happiness Questionnaire which was developed by psychologists Michael Argyle and Peter Hills at Oxford University. The questionnaire has 29 statements about happiness and these statements can be answered by writing numbers 1 to 6 after each statement. 1 denotes strongly disagree, 2 denotes moderately disagree, 3 denotes slightly disagree, 4 denotes slightly agree, 5 denotes moderately agree and 6 denotes strongly agree.

### *Inclusion Criteria*

Following were the inclusion criteria for the sample.

- Subjects born between 1980 and 1996 were taken.
- Subjects were in romantic relationships from at least past 1 year.
- Subjects who agree to voluntarily participate in the study were chosen.

### *Exclusion Criteria*

Following were the exclusion criteria for the sample.

- Individuals suffering from psychopathology or deteriorated mental and physical health were excluded from the sample
- Those suffering from any other chronic illness were excluded

### *Ethical Considerations*

1. All participants provided their informed consent prior to taking part in the study.
2. Stringent measures were implemented to safeguard the confidentiality of all data provided by the subjects.
3. The researchers ensured that the collected information was utilized exclusively for the stated research objectives.

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### *Statistical Analysis*

To address the study's objectives, a comprehensive statistical analysis was conducted, encompassing both descriptive and inferential methods. The researchers employed independent t-tests to assess potential gender-based differences across all variables under investigation. Additionally, Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to elucidate the relationships among the study variables.

### *Procedure*

The study focused on millennials residing in the Chandigarh-Tri city area. Initial screening ensured participants were in romantic relationships lasting at least one year. Researchers emphasized the confidentiality of data and its exclusive use for academic purposes. Participants completed a comprehensive questionnaire, which included a socio-demographic profile and validated scales measuring the variables of interest. Clear instructions were provided, encouraging respondents to carefully consider each item and select answers that best reflected their self-perceptions and life experiences. The research team manually scored the responses and subsequently analyzed the data using SPSS version 23, ensuring a thorough and methodical approach to data processing and statistical analysis.

## RESULTS

*Table 1.1 reflects the gender differences in terms of romantic relationship satisfaction.*

Gender		Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	p-value
<b>Romantic Relationship Satisfaction</b>	<b>Male</b>	26.33	4.52	2.188	.029*
	<b>Female</b>	27.51	4.77		

As evident from table 1.1, the mean score of females is higher in romantic relationship satisfaction (M= 27.51, SD= 4.77) as compared to males (M= 26.33, SD= 4.52). An independent t-test was used to evaluate the gender difference in romantic relationship satisfaction. The t-test's findings indicated a considerable difference among gender  $t(150) = 2.188, p < .05$ . The results suggest that there was a statistically significant difference in romantic relationship satisfaction between males and females, with females reporting higher satisfaction.

*Table 1.2 reflects the gender differences in terms of emotional intelligence (N=150).*

Gender		Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	p-value
<b>Emotional Intelligence</b>	<b>Male</b>	124.86	14.53	.550	.582
	<b>Female</b>	125.86	16.85		

Table 1.2 shows that the mean score of females is higher in emotional intelligence (M= 125.86, SD= 16.85) as compared to males (M= 124.86, SD= 14.53). An independent t-test was used to evaluate the gender difference in emotional intelligence. Results showed that females (M = 125.86, SD = 16.85) had higher scores on emotional intelligence compared to males (M = 124.86, SD = 14.53). However, this difference was not statistically significant ( $t = 0.550, p = .582$ ).

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*Table 1.3 reflects the gender differences in terms of happiness (N=150).*

Gender		Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	p-value
Happiness	Male	118.52	18.76	3.785	.0001**
	Female	126.67	18.51		

Table 1.3 shows that females reported higher levels of happiness (M = 126.67, SD = 18.51) compared to males (M = 118.52, SD = 18.76). This difference was found to be statistically significant (t = 3.785, p = .0001).

*Table 2 reflects correlations between romantic relationship satisfaction, emotional intelligence and happiness (combined for both the genders, males and females)*

Correlations			
Romantic Relationship Satisfaction	Gender	Emotional Intelligence	Happiness
	Combined	0.463**	0.530**
	Males	0.433**	0.511**
	Females	0.488**	0.527**

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results in Table 2 showed that for combined sample romantic relationship satisfaction shows positive correlation with emotional intelligence (r = 0.463, p < 0.01). There was also found to be positive correlation between romantic relationship satisfaction and happiness (r = 0.530, p < 0.01). The results also showed that for male participants, romantic relationship satisfaction was significantly correlated with emotional intelligence (r = 0.433, p < 0.01) and the correlation between romantic relationship satisfaction and happiness was also statistically significant (r = 0.511, p < 0.01). For female participants, romantic relationship satisfaction showed significantly positive correlation with emotional intelligence (r = 0.488, p < 0.01) and the correlation between romantic relationship satisfaction and happiness was also statistically significant (r = 0.527, p < 0.01).

## DISCUSSION

The present research aimed to investigate the intricate interplay between romantic relationship satisfaction, emotional intelligence and happiness among millennials. Specifically, the study sought to elucidate the impact of relationship satisfaction on emotional intelligence and overall happiness within this demographic. Additionally, it aimed to explore potential gender disparities in these key variables and to delineate the relationships among them.

As evidenced in Table 1.1, the findings revealed a nuanced picture, with female participants reporting marginally higher levels of romantic relationship satisfaction compared to their male counterparts. This observation aligns with a body of existing literature, lending credence to the study's results and situating them within the broader context of relationship research. Sexual fulfillment emerged as a primary indicator of relationship contentment for both men and women. However, for women, the depth of interpersonal connection held additional significance. Notably, among cohabiting women, this sense of emotional intimacy surpassed even sexual satisfaction in importance. Individuals sharing a living space generally reported higher levels of relationship satisfaction. For men cohabiting with their

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partners, relationship satisfaction peaked in the early stages and gradually diminished over time (Józefacka et al., 2023).

As shown in table 1.2, females had higher scores on emotional intelligence compared to males. Other studies have also found that females have higher emotional intelligence as compared to males (Fida et al., 2018, Venkatappa et al., 2012). Dhillon et al., 2018 found that in dimensions of Emotional Intelligence viz emotional self-awareness, interpersonal relationship, self-regard, and empathy, females scored higher than males. But males were higher on Self-regard component of emotional intelligence. In assessments of trait emotional intelligence (EI), notable gender disparities emerged. Females demonstrated superior overall proficiency in interpersonal emotional aptitudes, with a particular strength in the "Perception of others' emotions" domain. Conversely, males exhibited greater prowess in intrapersonal emotion-related competencies. Specifically, men outperformed in two key areas: "Regulation of one's own emotions" and "Control over the expression of one's own emotions" (Sojer et al., 2024).

In table 1.3, Results showed that females reported higher levels of happiness compared to males. Analysis revealed notable gender disparities in happiness levels among students, while general health metrics remained consistent across sexes. Interestingly, female students reported higher overall levels of both health and happiness compared to their male counterparts (Namazi, 2022). Research suggests a gender-based divergence in sources of contentment and life fulfillment. Women tend to extract greater joy and satisfaction from experiences rich in meaning and purpose. In contrast, men appear to derive more happiness and life satisfaction from experiences characterized by pleasure and hedonic enjoyment (Brakus et al., 2022). Women consistently reported elevated levels of both happiness and depression compared to their male counterparts. This paradoxical result aligns with the broader observation that women tend to exhibit a greater propensity for expressing emotional states, including positive feelings such as gratitude and happiness. Furthermore, the research uncovered significant mediating factors in women's emotional experiences. Specifically, extraversion emerged as a mediator for both subjective happiness and depression in women, while neuroticism specifically mediated their experience of depression (Yue et al., 2017).

As shown in table 2, the results showed that for combined sample romantic relationship satisfaction shows positive correlation with emotional intelligence. There was also found to be positive correlation between romantic relationship satisfaction and happiness. The results also showed that for male participants, romantic relationship satisfaction was significantly correlated with emotional intelligence and the correlation between romantic relationship satisfaction and happiness was also statistically significant ( $r = 0.511$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). For female participants, romantic relationship satisfaction showed significantly positive correlation with emotional intelligence and the correlation between romantic relationship satisfaction and happiness was also statistically significant. In a research it was found that males' relationship satisfaction was not significantly associated with partners' emotional intelligence. However, the females' relationship satisfaction was linked with their partners' emotional intelligence (Dass, 2024).

Higher emotional intelligence is associated with happier relationships (Tyagi & Khanam, 2024). Higher levels of EI were also associated and lower levels of conflict and greater relationship satisfaction among couples and are better equipped to deal with emotional

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issues that arise in their relationship (Jardine et al., 2022). Humour and receptive listening showed significant positive correlations with relationship satisfaction as they are used to regulate their partners' emotions (Walker, 2024). Age is also found to moderate the relationship between difficulties in emotion regulation and relationship satisfaction (Antoniatic et al., 2024).

Several studies have shown that quality of romantic relationships is a significant source of happiness (Khaleque & Rohner, 2004). More specifically, studies suggested that satisfaction with romantic relationships is associated with subjective well-being (Myers, 2003) and that quality of a relationship and satisfaction with that relationship are related to happiness across the life span (Dush & Amato, 2005)

**Londero et al. (2021)** studied whether romantic relationships promoted happiness. The findings emphasized the importance of romantic connections in determining subjective well-being, implying that fostering happy romantic relationships lead to a happier life.

Satisfaction with intimacy is the main predictor of common happiness and stability in romantic relationships. Having an active, satisfying sexual relationship is closely related to a deep emotional and romantic relationship in couples (Rukhadze, 2024).

### CONCLUSION

The study's results yielded compelling insights into the dynamics of millennial relationships and their psychological implications. The data analysis revealed a significant influence of romantic relationship satisfaction on both emotional intelligence and happiness among the millennial cohort. Notably, fulfilling romantic partnerships emerged as a protective buffer against negative emotional states. This finding underscores the pivotal role that satisfying intimate relationships play in fostering emotional competencies and enhancing overall well-being for individuals within this demographic. Females tend to experience higher romantic relationship satisfaction and happiness compared to males. Women generally exhibit superior emotional intelligence, particularly in interpersonal skills and perceiving others' emotions. This enhanced emotional acuity allows them to navigate relationship dynamics more effectively, fostering deeper emotional connections and better communication with their partners. Additionally, women often place greater emphasis on emotional intimacy and closeness in relationships, which can lead to more fulfilling interactions. Their ability to express emotions more openly and seek emotional support may contribute to better stress management within the relationship. Furthermore, societal expectations and cultural norms often encourage women to invest more in the emotional aspects of relationships, potentially leading to greater satisfaction when these needs are met.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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