

Predicting Stress: The Role of Romantic Relationship Satisfaction, Gratitude, Forgiveness, Emotional Intelligence

A

Thesis submitted

In the partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of

MASTERS OF ARTS
IN PSYCHOLOGY
(Clinical)

Submitted By: Mansimran Kaur

Under Guidance of:

Dr. Sohinee Ganguly

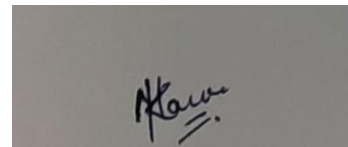


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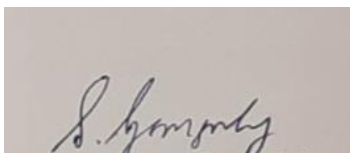
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(Dr. Sohinee Ganguly)

Professor,

School of Humanities and Social Sciences,

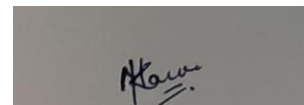
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I Mansimran Kaur, hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis entitled, '**Predicting Stress: The Role of Romantic Relationship Satisfaction, Gratitude, Forgiveness, Emotional Intelligence**' in fulfilment of the requirement for the award of Degree of **Master of Arts in Psychology**, submitted in the **School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology**, Patiala, is an authentic record of my own work carried out under the supervision and guidance of Dr. Sohinee Ganguly, Professor, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology, Patiala and refers other researcher's work which is duly listed in the reference section.

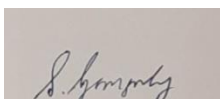
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(Dr. Sohinee Ganguly)

Professor,

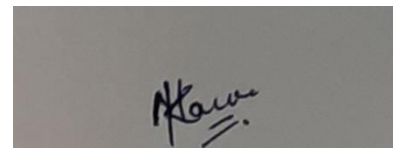
School of Humanities and Social Sciences

Thapar University, Patiala, Punjab

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(Mansimran Kaur)

862002037

M.A. Psychology (2020-2022)

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

Thapar University, Patiala, Punjab

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Word	Abbreviation
Relationship Satisfaction	RS
Emotional intelligence	EI

ABSTRACT

The study focused on role of romantic relationship satisfaction, gratitude, forgiveness and emotional intelligence on perceived stress by using people between the age of 18 to 30 years who were in a romantic relationship. The sample consisted to 201 individuals. To measure stress Cohen perceived stress scale by Cohen (1988) was used. To measure romantic relationship satisfaction relationship assessment scale by Hendrick SS (1988) was used. GQ-6 scale by McCullough et. al (2002) was used to measure gratitude. To measure forgiveness Heartland Forgiveness Scale by Thompson & Snyder (2003) was used. TEIQUÉ-SF scale was used to measure trait emotional intelligence. Correlation and regression analysis were done to predict the effect of romantic relationship satisfaction, gratitude, forgiveness and emotional intelligence on perceived stress. It was found that there was significant negative relationship of relationship satisfaction, forgiveness and emotional intelligence on perceived stress.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Perceived stress-

Humans undergo a variety of emotions and feelings. Out of all of these, stress is one such emotion that a person from all walks of life experiences. No matter what age the person is, what occupation is he into and if he is single or has a better half, no person can escape from stress. It affects a person's mental and physical health. Though, the level of stress is subjective as one person can have more stress than the other one, also a lot of factors such as personality, coping mechanisms etc affect how much stressful a person would be in adverse conditions. Studies have shown that people experience various physical, mental and social factors and that impacts their perception of stress. As these factors increase, so does their level of stress (Gonmei & Devendiran, 2017). It was also found that, when respondents face stress from family, academic, peer and social factors, they experience stress in physical/mental factor as well (Gonmei & Devendiran, 2017). Also, personality is said to be a great contributor in terms of perceived stress. A study done on 406 high school students found that, neuroticism was the strongest determiner of perceived stress and personality traits such as low self efficacy, low self esteem, high extraversion and high psychoticism also determined perceived stress. (Piekarska, J., 2020). People from different domains may have different factors contributing to stress. A study was done on dental students to see what factors contribute to stress, it was found that main source of stress was fear of facing parents after a failure and fear of failing a course (Acharya, S., 2003). Perceived stress is said to play a role in development of depression too. A study (Flores, E. Et. al, 2008) also saw the gender difference for impact of stress on depression and it found that, impact of perceived stress on depression was greater for women than it was for men. It also concluded that higher perceived stress was significantly related to increased depression and worse general health.

1.2 Relationship satisfaction-

Love is a powerful emotion that tends to bring a lot of positive changes and contribute towards pleasant feeling. It is a subjective emotion that can be confused with words such as attachment, care, sexual attraction, loyalty etc. but, all these are terms that come under the umbrella i.e., Love. The satisfaction that partners get out of their relationship plays a very important role in the psychological functioning of both the partners. Just the feeling of being unloved and not liked is sufficient to cause distress to a person. It has been found that attachment styles influence numerous aspects of adult relationship quality, including satisfaction, trust, interdependence, commitment, intimacy, self-disclosure, and others (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). Individual's attachment style is said to be linked to relationship satisfaction. There are also some differences based on gender as Simpson (1990) showed that in dating couples, relationship satisfaction correlated positively with secure attachment and negatively with avoidant attachment for men and women, but anxious/ambivalent attachment was linked to low satisfaction for women only. In addition, it has been found that anxious ambivalence is negatively related to self-reported satisfaction for women and men, and that secure attachment is positively related to men's self-reported satisfaction (Collins Sr Read, 1990; Feeney et al., 1994). The threshold for a person to be called satisfied can differ for different people. Also, intensities vary according to personality and other factors of a person and the partner. It is a very abstract concept to understand and put into words. There can be various types of love such as motherly love, love of a spouse, love of a friend etc. Though usually love brings lots of positive emotions and feelings such as security, intimacy, care etc but, it does not always give all pleasant feelings, it can also have emotions such as jealousy, insecurity and stress attached to it. Morales, et al. (2009) did a study to find the effect of social networks in the corporate world and found that too much love can also have negative effects on firms. Similarly, when love tends to overpower other emotions, freedom and

flexibility it leads to a decrease in satisfaction derived for an individual and they feel dissatisfied and quarrels increase among them. There are also various factors that play a role in relationship satisfaction. One study done on 140 dating couples that saw that partner's communication, competence and effectiveness are positively related to relationship satisfaction. Also, there was an association of satisfaction with self-disclosure and partner's perceived disclosure, perceived partner perspective taking is found to be correlated with relationship satisfaction while avoidant tactics were seen to be negatively correlated to satisfaction (Meeks, Hendrick & Hendrick, 1998). Moreover, effect of various love styles is also seen to impact satisfaction. As in the same study they found that love styles such as passionate love, altruistic love, possessive love and friendship love were positively related to satisfaction (Meeks, Hendrick & Hendrick, 1998).

1.3 Gratitude-

Gratitude is a complex emotion that arises within the transactional dynamics of human relationships (Hlava, Elfers, & Offringa, 2014). The experience of gratitude is subjective and varied on person to person. People have varied views about gratitude. Gratitude is an empathetic emotion that involves voluntary and free action. Some people believe that gratitude is a social etiquette that people follow while some opine that it is related to moral and values of a person (Fletcher, 1995) yet all agree that it involves recognition of benefit or kindness exchanged towards the beneficiary. Researchers after doing a lot of research on the topic have come to a conclusion that gratitude involves three basic elements that are, a benefactor, a benefit and a beneficiary (Roberts, 2004). Gratitude can be related to various other constraints, one such constraint is loyalty. Little (2001) believes that though loyalty and gratitude differ as loyalty not necessarily being reactive, but they are closely related as the beneficiary can show gratitude to benefactor via expression of loyalty (Little, 1994). Some also believe that acts of gratitude are done in order to set free from feelings of guilt,

indebtedness, worthlessness and obligation. Other reasons for being grateful towards a person can simply be to increase the feelings of affiliation or make affiliative connections. Gratitude can be predicted by variety of factors. Two factors predicting gratitude have been identified by Algoe, Haidt, and Gable (2008) they found that feeling that benefactor was being sensitive to the receiver's wishes and needs and the level of enjoyment were two powerful predictors of gratitude. Gratitude and resilience are said to work as a protective mechanism by playing a role in promoting positive outcomes after a trauma, by decreasing post traumatic stress and increasing posttraumatic growth (Vieselmeye, Holguin & Mezulis, 2017).

1.4 Forgiveness-

Forgiveness has been the subject of interest for a lot of researchers in the past. Forgiveness is understood as an opening door for another person to begin again, and if absent builds a lot of resentment in a person that may develop into anger and hostility in future (Tutu, 1998).

Forgiving a person has been valued and seen as morally good and considered indicative of merciful character (North, 1987). Some researchers believe forgiveness to be intrinsic and believe that the tendency to forgive others to be similar to tendency to take revenge when harmed (McCullough & Witvliet, 2002). Forgiveness is also seen as coping skill that helps to overcome from past traumas, feelings of being hurt etc. The process of forgiveness includes series of steps starting from hurt, anger, information seeking and then finally last step that is resolution (Rosenak & Harnden, 1992). Forgiveness may have various types such as emotional forgiveness that involves psycho physiological changes and is also said to have an effect on well being and health (Worthington, et. al., 2007). Though a lot of theories about forgiveness exist in literature, one theory proposes that forgiveness includes a process that involves set of three stages that are similar to those of recovery from trauma, the stages being; an impact of an event that follows a search of meaning that further leads to recovery (Gordon & Baucom, 1998). Most of the researches focus on forgiveness towards another

person. Though, researches have found that failure to forgive oneself is also a concept and inability to forgive oneself is related to higher neuroticism, anxiety and depression (Maltby, Macaskill & Day, 2001). A lot of factors have been found to play a role in forgiveness. A study done by Lawler-Row, Younger, Piferi & Jones (2006) found the role of attachment style in forgiveness. It was found that securely attached individuals were not only more forgiving, but also expressed more positive emotions. Some researchers have also emphasised on role of personality factors in likelihood of bring forgiving towards others and seeing them as valuable and care worthy (McCullough & Witvliet, 2002). Similarly, a study done in 2008 revealed that personality traits such as narcissism, rigidity hinder the forgiveness process while, traits such as maturity, victim's empathy foster forgiveness (Glaeser, 2008). Various findings lay importance to different factors that affect forgiveness. A study was done on adults between the ages of 18 to 90 years found age to be the most crucial determiner of forgiveness (Mulle, Houdbine, Laumonier & Girard, 1998). Also, studies in literature believe that a person's understanding of forgiveness develops with age, age progresses, so does their understanding of forgiveness (Enright, Santos & Al-Mabuk, 1989). People also believe that actual forgiveness can only occur after the offender has been punished for the wrong deed they did (Enright, Santos & Al-Mabuk, 1989).

1.5 Emotional intelligence-

Emotional intelligence is an interest area of a lot of researchers. The concept of emotional intelligence was introduced by Salovey & Mayer, (1990). A human undergoes a series of mixed emotions such as fear, happiness, anger, love, jealousy, disgust etc., some of these are positive while some are negative emotions. Emotions particularly arise due to a person's changing relationships. A change in relationship with friends, family, work would lead to a change in emotions of a person as well (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999). Emotional

intelligence is believed to be a set of skills that enable accurate appraisal and expression of emotion in oneself and in others. It involves the uses of feelings to motivate oneself, to plan and to achieve things in life (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Emotional intelligence refers to an ability to recognize the meaning of emotions and their relationships and to reason problem solving in the basis of it (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999). Emotional intelligence has been studied in relation with constructs such as wellbeing, where no significant association of emotional intelligence on well-being were observed (Bond & Donaldso-feilder, 2004). It has been seen that an increase in emotional intelligence is said to decrease alexithymia (Parker, et. al., 2001). Emotional intelligence is also found to have strong correlations with life satisfaction and work life satisfaction (Landa. et. al., 2006). Mayer & Salovey (1997) identified the four branch model of emotional intelligence, the four branches being; perceiving emotions, using them to facilitate thought, understanding them and lastly, managing emotions. Perceiving emotions basically involves non verbal expression of emotions, and is considered as an important starting point for understanding emotions. Using emotions to facilitate thought is the phase where emotions enter into cognition and promote thinking then understanding of emotions take place, for example, happiness is accompanied by wish to join others, anger is related to giving harm a person etc. Then, the final step of managing the emotions take place where an individual decides on giving importance to emotions valuable and just and ignoring the once that are overwhelming (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Stress and Relationship satisfaction-

A lot of factors are seen to have an impact on stress. One such factor is romantic relationship satisfaction. Romantic partners have strong influence over each other's experiences (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978). Similarly the kind of relationship they share also impacts their well being as individuals. If a couple has a satisfied relationship then he would have better coping and with support of the partner he/she would be able to cope with stressors better than a person who is alone. A study by Røsand, et. al, 2012 found that relationship dissatisfaction is strongly associated with emotional distress in men and women. It concluded that, people who have a good relationship with their partner can strongly moderate adverse effects of various types of emotional strains including stress. Relationship satisfaction can lead to prevention of a lot of disorders that are related to stress. It was found in one study done in 1999 that marital dissatisfaction was related to major depressive disorder and post traumatic stress disorder for women and has a role to play in dysthymia in men (Whisman, 1999).

A study was done in 2006 with aim to examine clinical importance of unsatisfied/ relationship discord. It was found that individuals with discordant relationships reported more psychological distress (Whisman, & Uebelacker, 2006). Another research was done in 2011 on pregnant mothers that found that in pregnancy, dissatisfaction with the partner is a significant predictor of maternal emotional distress (Røsand, et. al, 2011). Relationship satisfaction in this case acted as a protective factor in presence of certain stressful situation. Thus, some amount of stress can be tolerable if one has a close and satisfied relationship with

their partner. Also, another very recent study done on cancer patients tried to identify various factors that contribute towards reducing stress and inflammation and it found satisfied romantic relationships to be a key determinant in reducing stress of such patients. It found that survivors who were more satisfied with their romantic relationship perceived less stress (Shrout, et. al., 2020).

Similarly, another study on cancer patients revealed that a close and supportive partner helps to reduce survivors' stress levels during treatment (Kayser & Scott, 2008) and an avoidant and unsupportive partner can boost survivors' stress and impair can their physical functioning (Manne, et. al, 2005). A study on 56 male coronary artery patients found that, patients who received higher partner support had to use fewer pain medications and had an early discharge from hospital and spent less days in hospital (Kulik, Mahler, 1989). One meta-analysis was done that revealed that marital conflicts that result in unsatisfied relationships lead to an increase in cortisol levels in body that are a sign of stress (Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001).

2.2 Stress and Gratitude-

Gratitude is a positive psychological trait that focuses on positive in the world. Past researches in history have highlighted on the importance of role of positive emotions on mental and physical health outcomes such as combating the effects of stress (Gavian, 2011). But, as any other trait it is also affected by a lot of other constraints that might affect it's subjective experience. Also, it in turn also affects other subjective experiences for example stress. Just like gratitude is affected by a lot of factors, it in turn also effects various constrains. At times of adverse situations of stressful events, such positive orientations can provide one with a different outlook and might help as a protective factor against stressful events.

Wood, Maltby, Gillett, Linley & Joseph (2008) found that gratitude leads to higher level of social support and protect people from stress and depression leading to lower level of stress. Another study was done in 2006 to see the role of being grateful towards god in reducing stress found that for older people, effects of stress on health are reduced if they are more grateful. The results highlighted the importance of gratitude towards god as a buffering medium for reducing stress (Krause, 2006). Various gender differences in terms of mental health effects of gratitude are also found. Kraus et al. (2006) found that in comparison to males, females may be more affected by positive effects of gratitude. Additionally, another survey on 264 therapists revealed that among all client behaviours, absence of gratitude along with crying, negative community stereotype were seen as stressful behaviours while, anger, anxiety, suicidal ideation, premature terminating, and depression were considered to be the most stressful client behaviours (Deutsch, 1984).

Also, a study was done to discover effect of gratitude intervention on 80 young adults. It was found that the intervention increased the psychological well being of subjects and it also led to reduction in anxiety, depressive symptoms and perceived stress (Killen & Macaskill, 2015). Kumar, et, al. (2019) also found a significant relationship between gratitude and stress. They also saw a significant relationship between interaction of gratitude and gender to stress. Moreover, Cheng, Tsui & Lam (2015) did an experiment on 102 health care practitioners. They divided the practitioners into three groups that were gratitude group, hassle and nil-treatment group and found that people in gratitude group who experience gratitude experienced lower depressive symptoms and decreased perceived stress, they also concluded in their study that taking a note of thankful events can lead to lowering stress in life. On contrast, a study was done in 2009 in which subjects were given gratitude intervention after being randomly allotted into groups of hassle and gratitude. It was found that after the manipulation, people in gratitude group though were more grateful but were also experienced

more perceived stress (Ki, 2009). Another similar study was done in 2011 to study the effect of gratitude intervention and relaxation interventions on stress. The study (Gavian, 2011) found that no effect in stress reactivity was reported after the stress intervention was given to the subjects, on the contrary; the group which received progressive muscle relaxation had lower negative effect than the control group even after 30 days of intervention.

Additionally, there are also studies that suggest that well being improvement or stress reduction highly associated with gratitude interventions may be subject to placebo effect (Davis, et al., 2016; Wood, Froh & Geraghty, 2010).

2.3 Stress and Forgiveness-

Forgiveness is found to impact a lot of factors like. A meta-analytical review was done in 2008 to find impact of forgiveness interventions. The meta-analysis was done on the basis of fourteen past published reports that studied the effect of forgiveness intervention. It was revealed that people who took part in intervention were more forgiving and as a result had less negative affect like stress and more positive affect (Lundahl, Taylor, Stevenson & Roberts, 2008). A study was done by Carson, et. al. (2005) to study the relationship of forgiveness with anger, psychological distress and pain. It was found that an increase in forgiveness leads to decrease in anger, pain and psychological distress such as stress (Carson, et. al., 2005).

Harris, et. al. (2006) also found that after giving forgiveness intervention training program to 259 adults, a significant effect of forgiveness was seen on perceived stress. Another longitudinal study was done on 182 women to see if forgiveness at time 1 was able to predict psychological distress at time 2, it was found that an increased forgiveness led to a decrease in psychological distress at both time 1 and at time 2 (Orcutt, 2006). Thus, it forgiveness depicted a negative relationship with psychological distress. A study was done in 2016 on 81

adults to see effect of forgiveness on health. Pathways of forgiveness such as reduction in stress, spirituality, social skills and reduction of negative affect were studied that can lead to lesser physical symptoms and it was found that all the pathways mediated the effect of forgiveness on health reduction is stress being the second important moderator of forgiveness (Lawler, et. al., 2005).

Stress in workplace is also not very uncommon. A study was done on 108 employees to examine the relationship between the level of forgiveness to number of health problems and productivity. It was found that higher levels of forgiveness was related to less mental health problems related to workplace and increased productivity along with decrease in physical health problems. Additionally, a meta-analysis on 26,043 participants revealed that psychological health issues like stress and anxiety are related to forgiveness. Moreover, a stronger association of forgiveness was found with psychological variables like stress than with that of forgiveness with physical health (Toussaint, et. al., 2018). Self forgiveness is also said to play a protective role in depression as it is associated with self compassion by being kind towards oneself and is associated with self acceptance by overcoming self resentment that serve as protective factors against depression (Liao, et. al., 2015).

2.4 Stress and Emotional intelligence-

Emotional intelligence is involved in the capacity to perceive emotions, assimilate emotion related feelings, and understand the information of the emotion and to manage them (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Stress is also a main theme in research from past two decades. Stress is a destructive mental, physical and emotional reaction that arises due to variety of reasons, one being job demands and employees incompetencies (Rahim, 2010).

Importance of emotional intelligence and managing emotions in understanding link between stress and mental health has been highlighted in study on 302 university students that found

that stress was associated with higher depression, hopelessness, and suicidal ideation especially for those who were higher in emotional perception also; higher suicidal thoughts were reported by those who reported a lower score on managing other's emotions (Ciarrochi, et. al., 2002). Emotional intelligence is linked to stress in past researches. People high on emotional intelligence through emotional intelligence competencies develop skills to deal effectively with stress without collapsing (Slaski & Cartwright, 2002). A study on 238 students was done to see the association of personality factors, emotional intelligence and coping styles, and it was found that, emotional regulation that is related to emotional intelligence is a mediator in stress and life satisfaction (Saklofske, et. al., 2012).

A study was done with the aim of finding relationship between emotional intelligence and stress management. The results of the study not only show that stress management is a component of emotional intelligence, but also shows that stress can arise as an input or outflow of emotional intelligence and might also be due to lack of the same indicating that less emotional intelligence could lead to higher stress (Ramesar, et. al. 2009). It is seen that people with higher emotional intelligence react carefully as, they are able to stand through the worst circumstances, avoid to surrender, and don't panic often (Goleman, 1998).

Another study was done by Rahim (2010) on Pakistani employees to see impact of emotional intelligence competencies in stress management; the results showed a positive relation between emotional intelligence competencies and stress. People who are able to focus on their emotions and develop emotional intelligence can enhance their well being that leads to lesser perceive stress (Spector & Goh, 2001). Stress is also not uncommon in students. A study was done on undergraduates too predict validity of emotional intelligence over optimism and alexithymia in resistance to examination stress. It found that people high on emotional intelligence consider the examination situation as less threatening thus, emotional intelligence moderated the relationship between examination stress and health (Mikolajcza,

Luminet & Menil, 2006). It was also found that emotional intelligence was a predictor of both mental and somatic symptoms of stress more than alexithymia and optimism (Mikolajcza, Luminet & Menil, 2006).

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH GAP, OBJECTIVES, THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK, RATIONALE AND HYPOTHESES

3.1 Research Gap

Most of the studies done on trait stress measures impact of variables like coping, attachment styles, financial status, workload etc. There are very few studies that are done to see impact of romantic relationship satisfaction, emotional intelligence and forgiveness. Moreover, there aren't many studies that see collective relationship satisfaction, gratitude, forgiveness and emotional intelligence on stress.

3.2 Objectives

To study relationship between

- relationship satisfaction and stress
- gratitude and stress
- forgiveness and stress
- emotional intelligence and stress

3.3 Theoretical framework

Stress being a common emotion has fetched interest of lots of theorists. It affects a person's day to day life. A lot of theories are made about stress. One such theory is that of Lazarus and Folkman (1984). They formulated the theory of stress and coping. They defined stress as a result of imbalance between perceived external or internal demands and the imbalance between perceived personal and social resources to deal with them. They also reported two different cognitive appraisal processes; primary appraisal and secondary appraisal. Primary appraisal involves the first step of analysing if the event is personally relevant or not. Thus, events that are evaluated as personally relevant are appraised as positive or stressful, and then

resources to deal with it are figured out that comes under secondary appraisal. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) defined coping as cognitive and behavioural efforts to deal with situations appraised as stressful.

3.4 Rationale and Hypotheses

The existing literature shows that stress is affected by a variety of factors. Current study is focussed on finding the role of romantic relationship satisfaction, gratitude, forgiveness, emotional intelligence on stress.

H₁- Relationship satisfaction will be negatively related to stress

H₂- Gratitude will be negatively related to stress

H₃- Forgiveness will be negatively related to stress

H₄- Emotional intelligence will be negatively related to stress

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

4.1 Sample-

A total of 201 college going students who were in a romantic relationship of age group ranging from 18-25 years participated in the study, out of which, 111 were females and 90 were males.

4.2 Design-

Independent variable: Relationship satisfaction, Forgiveness, Emotional intelligence and Gratitude

Dependent variable: Stress

Correlational design was used.

4.3 Statistical analyses-

Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation), correlation and stepwise regression were computed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS version 20).

4.4 Instruments

- Perceived Stress Scale- The ten item scale by Cohen (1988) is used to measure an individual's perception of stress. The subject has to respond on a scale of 0-4 about how strong he has felt about the same in past one month for each question, where 0 means never and 4 is very often. Possible scores in this instrument range from 0 to 40 where higher score indicates higher perceived stress.

- Relationship Assessment Scale- The seven item relationship satisfaction scale by Hendrick, S. S. (1988) was used to measure romantic relationship satisfaction. It had 5 positively scored and 2 negatively scored items. Possible scores range from 7 to 35 with higher scores indicating higher relationship satisfaction.
- GQ-6- It is a six item self report questionnaire to measure individual differences in proneness to gratitude in daily life. It was developed by McCullough et. al. (2002). Gratitude score is found by adding the score from all items and then taking out an average. It can range from 1 to 7.
- Heartland Forgiveness Scale- It is an eighteen item scale developed by Thompson, L. Y., & Synder, C. R. (2003) that is used to measure trait forgiveness. The scale has three sub scales that measure Forgiveness of self, forgiveness of others and forgiveness of situations, adding these all gives a total forgiveness score. Total forgiveness score in the scale can range from 18 to 126.
- TEIQue-SF- It is a thirty item scale by Petrides (2009). It was used to measure Emotional Intelligence. It is the shorter version of the original scale that has 153 items. Possible scores in shorter versions range from 30 to 350.

4.5 Procedure

These measures were presented to participants in the form of a booklet with a brief general introduction about the research, a consent form and instructions. College going students of age group 18-25 years who were in a romantic relationship were contacted and booklets were given to them. They were made to sit comfortably. They were given half an hour to answer the booklet and then it was collected back.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Emotional intelligence, Romantic Relationship Satisfaction, Forgiveness, Gratitude and Stress

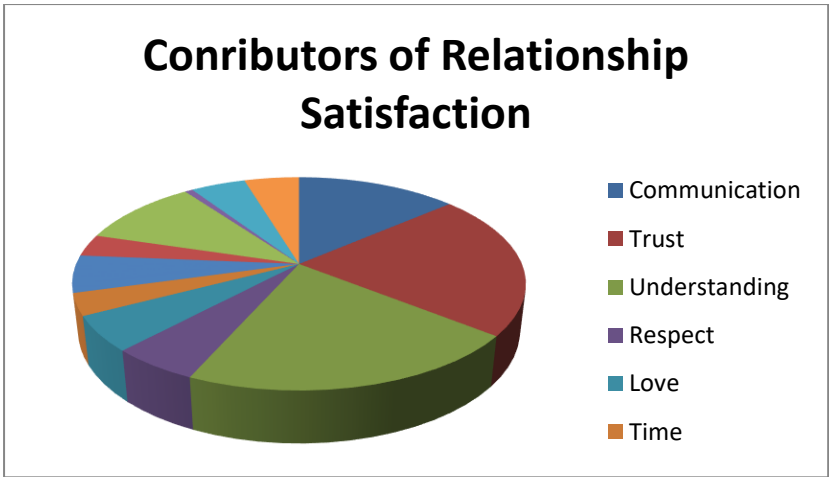
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Stress	20.75	7.765	201
Relationship satisfaction	28.89	5.435	201
Gratitude	5.25	1.082	201
Forgiveness	81.16	14.528	201
Emotional intelligence	134.85	20.752	201

It can be seen in Table 1 that for stress the mean score is 20.75 and standard deviation is 7.765. The mean and SD for relationship satisfaction is 28.89 and 5.435 respectively. For gratitude, mean and standard deviation is 5.25 and 1.082 respectively. Mean scores and SD for forgiveness were 81.16 and 14.52 respectively. Forgiveness had a mean score of 134.85 and SD of 20.752.

Table 2

Contributors of Relationship Satisfaction

Reason	Frequency of people agreeing	Percentage
Communication	41	13.66
Trust	66	22
Understanding	63	21
Respect	16	5
Love	16	5
Time	10	3
Care	17	5
Sex	10	3
Loyalty	31	10
Forgiveness	2	0.6
Commitment	14	4.6
Transparency	14	4.6

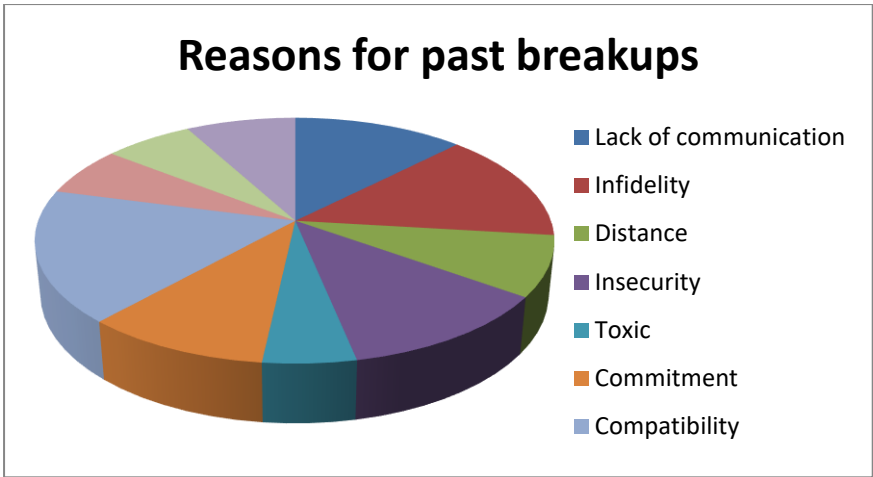


People were asked about what according to them leads to satisfaction in a relationship. 22% and 21% of the people believe that trust and understanding respectively are the reason for satisfied relationship. While, 13% believed communication to be vital for the same. For 10% of the people loyalty was important. Love, respect and care were reported by 5% each. Commitment was reported by 4% people and proportion was for transparency. Time and sex were also reported by 6% of people, having an equal contribution. Least importance was given to forgiveness by 0.6% of people.

Table 3

Reasons for past breakups

Reason	No. of people agreeing	Percentage
Lack of communication	25	12.43
Infidelity	29	14.43
Distance	16	7.96
Insecurity	24	11.94
Toxic	10	4.97
Commitment	20	9.95
Compatibility	35	17.41
Time	13	6.47
Family	13	6.47
Immaturity	16	7.96



The above pie chart represents reasons of past breakups of subjects in the study. It was found that for 17% of the people i.e. highest proportion, compatibility was the reason for breakup. Second most common reason was found to be infidelity as reported by 14% of people. Also, lack of communication was a reason reported by 12% people and insecurity by 11%. Around 10% people had a breakup due to commitment issues and 8% each due to immaturity and distance. Time and family was equally reported by people shaving a share of 6% each.

Table 4

Correlation between Perceived stress, Relationship satisfaction, Gratitude, Forgiveness and Emotional intelligence

VARIABLES	PERCEIVED STRESS	RS	GRATITUDE	FORGIVENESS	EI
PERCEIVED STRESS	1.000				
RS	-.297**	1.000			
GRATITUDE	-.212**	.107	1.000		
FORGIVENESS	-.424**	.121	.182	1.000	
EI	-.279**	.147	.204	.263	1.000

**P<0.01, *p<0.05

Pearson correlation was computed to understand the relationship between Stress, relationship satisfaction, gratitude, forgiveness and emotional intelligence.

The relation between stress and relationship satisfaction was found to be negative and significant at 0.01 level ($r=-0.297$, $p<0.01$). Stress was found to have a significant negative relationship with Gratitude too at 0.01 level ($r=-0.212$, $p<0.01$). Additionally, stress was found to be negatively correlated with forgiveness at 0.01 significance level ($r=-0.424$, $p<0.01$). Finally, relationship between stress and emotional intelligence was found to be negative and statistically significant at 0.01 level ($r= -0.279$, $p<0.01$).

Table 5

Linear regression analysis of Stress, Relationship Satisfaction, Gratitude, Forgiveness and Emotional Intelligence

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Adjusted R Square	F
		B	Std. Error	Beta				
1	(Constant)	33.007	2.842		11.614	.000		
	RS	-.424	.097	-.297	-4.390	.000	.084	19.268
2	(Constant)	48.117	3.535		13.611	.000		
	RS	-.357	.089	-.250	-4.003	.000		
	FORGIVENESS	-.210	.033	-.393	-6.308	.000	.233	39.792
3	(Constant)	51.272	3.892		13.174	.000		
	RS	-.342	.089	-.239	-3.849	.000		
	FORGIVENESS	-.199	.034	-.373	-5.931	.000		
	GRATITUDE	-.849	.451	-.118	-1.882	.061	.243	6.756
4	(Constant)	55.458	4.339		12.782	.000		
	RS	-.322	.089	-.225	-3.633	.000		
	FORGIVENESS	-.183	.034	-.343	-5.356	.000		
	GRATITUDE	-.700	.452	-.098	-1.547	.124		
	EI	-.051	.024	-.136	-2.110	.036	.256	6.698

- a. Dependent variable: Stress
- b. Predictors in the model: (Constant), Forgiveness
- c. Predictors in the model: (Constant), Forgiveness, Relationship satisfaction

d. Predictors in the model: (Constant), Forgiveness, Relationship satisfaction, Emotional intelligence

To study cause and effect relationship, step wise regression analysis was carried out. The variables forgiveness, relationship satisfaction, gratitude and emotional intelligence were entered into regression equation. Forgiveness, relationship satisfaction, gratitude and emotional intelligence were independent variables and stress was dependent variable.

In 1st step, stress was predicted from relationship satisfaction (B= -.424, SE= 2.842, β = -.297, t= -4.390, F (1,199) = 19.268) Adjusted R^2 = .084

In 2nd step, stress was predicted by relationship satisfaction (B= -.424, SE= 2.842, β = -.297, t= -4.390, F (1,199) = 19.268) Adjusted R^2 = .084 and forgiveness (B= -.210, SE= .033, β = -.393, t= -6.308, F (1,198) = 39.792) Adjusted R^2 = .233

In 3rd step, stress was predicted by relationship satisfaction (B= -.424, SE= 2.842, β = -.297, t= -4.390, F (1,199) = 19.268) Adjusted R^2 = .084, forgiveness (B= -.210, SE= .033, β = -.393, t= -6.308, F (1,198) = 39.792) Adjusted R^2 = .233 and Gratitude (B= -.849, SE= .451, β = -.118, t= -1.882, F (1,197) = 6.756) Adjusted R^2 = .243

In 4th step, stress was predicted by relationship satisfaction (B= -.424, SE= 2.842, β = -.297, t= -4.390, F (1,199) = 19.268) Adjusted R^2 = .084, forgiveness (B= -.210, SE= .033, β = -.393, t= -6.308, F (1,198) = 39.792) Adjusted R^2 = .233, Gratitude (B= -.849, SE= .451, β = -.118, t= -1.882, F (1,197) = 6.756) Adjusted R^2 = .243 and Emotional intelligence (B= -.051, SE= .024, β = -.136, t= -2.110, F (1,196) = 6.698) Adjusted R^2 = .256

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

The study focused on role of relationship satisfaction, gratitude, forgiveness and emotional intelligence in predicting stress. Most of the studies in literature focused on other factors such as attachment styles, coping mechanisms etc, but in this study, we tried to evaluate the effects of relationship satisfaction, gratitude, forgiveness and emotional intelligence on stress.

6.1 Relationship satisfaction and stress

Hypothesis 1 stated that relationship satisfaction will have a negative relationship with stress.

Our results revealed that increase in relationship satisfaction would lead to decrease in stress thus, this hypothesis was accepted.

There are findings parallel to our findings in literature. One such study was done by Røsand, et. al, 2012 on 62,956 couples to assess contribution of risk factors for emotional distress among men and women. It was found that relationship dissatisfaction was the strongest predictor for both men and women that lead to increase in emotional distress and stress as a whole (Røsand, et. al, 2012).

One study was done to see association between stress related psychiatric disorders and marital satisfaction and it concluded that relationship dissatisfaction leads to development of stress related disorders such as post traumatic stress disorder and depressive disorder in women and dysthemia in males (Whisman, 1999).

Another study that supported our findings was done in 2011, it found that pregnant ladies who had dissatisfied relationship had to undergo more stress. Thus having a satisfied relationship with partner can lead to tolerating some amount of stress (Røsand, et. al, 2011).

One meta-analysis using evidence from 64 articles revealed that hostile marital conflicts lead to unsatisfied relationships was linked with relevant elevation of cortisol levels that is a result of increasing stress (Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001).

6.2 Forgiveness and stress

Hypothesis 3 states that forgiveness will have a negative relationship with stress. Our results supported this. Thus, it was accepted, this means that increase in forgiveness would lead to decrease in stress.

There are researches in literature that have found similar results to ours. A study was done on 61 chronic lower back pain patients to see relationship between forgiveness to pain, anger and psychological well being and it was found that patients with a high forgiveness score had less anger, pain and psychological distress such as stress (Carson, et. al., 2005).

A longitudinal study was done on 182 women to see if forgiveness at time 1 was able to predict psychological distress at time 2, it was found that an increased forgiveness led to a decrease in psychological distress at both time 1 and at time 2 (Orcutt, 2006). Thus, it forgiveness depicted a negative relationship with psychological distress.

Also, a mediating role of anger was found in the association between forgiveness and distress (Carson, et. al., 2005). A study was done on 259 adults to see impact of increased forgiveness on health related psychosocial variables like stress, anger, and it found after getting forgiveness based training program, there was significant impact of forgiveness on perceived stress (Harris, et. al., 2006).

Lundahl, et. al. (2008) in their meta-analysis of past fourteen papers also found that after taking the forgiveness training, people were more forgiving and showed less negative effect like perceived stress.

In a study done on 234 undergraduate students it was found that for both men and women, failure to forgive others was accompanied by higher depression scores depicting higher stress (Maltby, Macaskill & Day, 2001). Moreover, it was found that failure to forgive oneself was related to higher anxiety, depression and neuroticism indicating individual pathology (Maltby, Macaskill & Day, 2001).

In a recent study done on 403 undergraduate students of the Midwest, it was found that there increase in self forgiveness leads to decrease in perceived stress and depressive stress (Liao, - H & Wei., 2015).

6.3 Emotional intelligence and stress

Hypothesis 4 was that, there will be a negative relation of emotional intelligence with stress. Our results were consistent with our hypothesis, thus the hypothesis was accepted.

There are certain studies in the literature that support our results. A study was done on 105 people of South Africa to see association of emotional intelligence and stress management, it was found that ability to cope with stress was a component of emotional intelligence, also stress was found to be a response to either an input or output of emotional intelligence. Thus, depicting that lack of emotional intelligence can lead to stress.

Moreover, a study was done on 630 Pakistani employees to see impact of emotional intelligence competencies on stress in job, the results indicated a positive relationship between the two and it was found that there is a strong impact of emotional intelligence

competencies leading to higher emotional intelligence was seen to reduce stress on job (Rahim, 2010).

Another study was done on 224 managers to measure the relationship between emotional intelligence, subjective stress, distress, general health, morale, quality of working life and management performance. It was found that managers who were high on emotional intelligence had less subjective stress and they also had better health, well being and demonstrated better performances (Slaski & Cartwright, 2002).

A study was done on 180 nurses in Spain examine the interrelation among emotional intelligence, work stress and general health. The findings report that nurses who were higher on clarity and emotional repair reported less stress and emotional intelligence is seen as a protective factor against stress and as a factor that facilitates health (Landa, et. al., 2008).

6.4 Gratitude and stress

Hypothesis 2 states that gratitude would have a negative impact on stress. Our results did not support our hypothesis thus, this hypothesis was not accepted.

There are some studies that saw findings similar to our findings. A study was done in 2009 on 161 healthcare professionals where each participant was randomly assigned to one of the two conditions which were, hassle or gratitude. Towards the end of the study it was found that practitioners after gratitude manipulation were more grateful, more satisfied with life but also had higher perceived stress as compared to hassle group (Ki, 2009).

Another study that supports our result was done in 2011 on 247 college going students. The main aim of the study was to see effects of relaxation and gratitude interventions on stress outcomes. The results did see a relationship between relaxation interventions leading to lower negative effect, while gratitude interventions were seen to have no effects on any outcome,

also, in terms of stress no group difference was found between control and experimental group (Gavian, 2011).

There are studies that show an impact of gratitude interventions on improving psychological well being (Seligman et al.) As the amount of stress also influences well being of an individual, thus studies that suggest that well being improvement or stress reduction highly associated with gratitude interventions may be subject to placebo effect (Davis, et al., 2016; Wood, Froh & Geraghty, 2010).

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

7.1 Conclusion

The findings of the study indicate that relationship satisfaction, forgiveness and emotional intelligence can have severe impact on perceived stress. It is seen that having a high relationship satisfaction, forgiveness and emotional intelligence can reduce stress. While, having a higher gratitude is not a cause for less stress.

7.2 Implications

Stress is an inevitable emotional experience that everyone has to go through no matter what. A person tries to reduce the distress by focusing on positives and adapting effective coping. There is a lot of misconception about what actually impacts the stress. Thus, findings of the study help to better explain which factors can affect stress and also to what extent. Also, introducing more forgiveness and gratitude interventions for patients can be helpful for clinicians to reduce stress by making them learn affecting coping through such interventions.

7.3 Limitations

In the study there were participants having different durations of involvement in a romantic relationship. Thus, there would be a difference in satisfaction and impact of various other factors.

7.4 Scope for future research

Future work could look into a greater sample and study other variables such as mindfulness, coping, attachment styles and see its impact on stress. Also, gender differences can be looked into. Moreover, age differences can be analysed to draw a contrast between factors affecting stress of young adults and older adults.

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Appendix A
CONSENT FORM

Greetings,

I am Mansimran Kaur, a post graduate student of Thapar University. I'm doing this survey as a part of my dissertation to access various factors that affect stress. I request you to kindly fill this survey if you are currently in any romantic relationship (with your husband/wife, girlfriend/ boyfriend, or dating) in best of your honestly. It would take 10 minutes of your precious time. Your information and responses would be kept confidential.

For any further queries, please feel free to reach me via my e-mail: mkaur_ma20@thapar.edu

Thanks

Appendix B

Perceived Stress Scale

For each question choose from the following alternatives:

0 - never 1 - almost never 2 - sometimes 3 - fairly often 4 - very often

_____ 1. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?

_____ 2. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?

_____ 3. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and stressed?

_____ 4. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?

_____ 5. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?

_____ 6. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?

_____ 7. In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?

_____ 8. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?

_____ 9. In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that happened that were outside of your control?

_____ 10. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?

Appendix C

Relationship Assessment scale

Please mark on the answer sheet the letter for each item which best answers that item for you.

1. How well does your partner meet your needs?

A	B	C	D	E
Poorly		Average		Extremely well

2. In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?

A	B	C	D	E
Unsatisfied		Average		Extremely satisfied

3. How good is your relationship compared to most?

A	B	C	D	E
Poor		Average		Excellent

4. How often do you wish you hadn't gotten in this relationship?

A	B	C	D	E
Never		Average		Very often

5. To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations:

A	B	C	D	E
Hardly at all		Average		Completely

6. How much do you love your partner?

A	B	C	D	E
Not much		Average		Very much

7. How many problems are there in your relationship?

A	B	C	D	E
Very few		Average		Very much

Appendix D

Heartland Forgiveness Scale

Directions:

In the course of our lives negative things may occur because of our own actions, the actions of others, or circumstances beyond our control. For some time after these events, we may have negative thoughts or feelings about ourselves, others, or the situation. Think about how you typically respond to such negative events. Next to each of the following items write the number (from the 7-point scale below) that best describes how you typically respond to the type of negative situation described. There are no right or wrong answers. Please be as open as possible in your answers.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Almost Always More Often More Often Almost Always

False of Me False of Me True of Me True of Me

___ 1. Although I feel badly at first when I mess up, over time I can give myself some slack.

___ 2. I hold grudges against myself for negative things I've done.

___ 3. Learning from bad things that I've done helps me get over them.

___ 4. It is really hard for me to accept myself once I've messed up.

___ 5. With time I am understanding of myself for mistakes I've made.

___ 6. I don't stop criticizing myself for negative things I've felt, thought, said, or done.

___ 7. I continue to punish a person who has done something that I think is wrong.

- ___ 8. With time I am understanding of others for the mistakes they've made.
- ___ 9. I continue to be hard on others who have hurt me
- ___ 10. Although others have hurt me in the past, I have eventually been able to see them as good people.
- ___ 11. If others mistreat me, I continue to think badly of them.
- ___ 12. When someone disappoints me, I can eventually move past it.
- ___ 13. When things go wrong for reasons that can't be controlled, I get stuck in negative thoughts about it.
- ___ 14. With time I can be understanding of bad circumstances in my life.
- ___ 15. If I am disappointed by uncontrollable circumstances in my life, I continue to think negatively about them.
- ___ 16. I eventually make peace with bad situations in my life.
- ___ 17. It's really hard for me to accept negative situations that aren't anybody's fault.
- ___ 18. Eventually I let go of negative thoughts about bad circumstances that are beyond anyone's control.

Appendix E

TEIQue-SF

Instructions: Please answer each statement below by putting a circle around the number that best reflects your degree of agreement or disagreement with that statement. Do not think too long about the exact meaning of the statements. Work quickly and try to answer as accurately as possible. There are no right or wrong answers. There are seven possible responses to each statement ranging from ‘Completely Disagree’ (number 1) to ‘Completely Agree’ (number 7).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Completely Completely Disagree Agree

1. Expressing my emotions with words is not a problem for me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. I often find it difficult to see things from another person’s viewpoint.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. On the whole, I’m a highly motivated person.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I usually find it difficult to regulate my emotions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I generally don’t find life enjoyable.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. I can deal effectively with people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I tend to change my mind frequently.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Many times, I can’t figure out what emotion I’m feeling.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. I often find it difficult to stand up for my rights.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. I’m usually able to influence the way other people feel.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

12. On the whole, I have a gloomy perspective on most things.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Those close to me often complain that I don't treat them right.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. I often find it difficult to adjust my life according to the circumstances.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. On the whole, I'm able to deal with stress.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. I often find it difficult to show my affection to those close to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. I'm normally able to "get into someone's shoes" and experience their emotions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. I normally find it difficult to keep myself motivated.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. I'm usually able to find ways to control my emotions when I want to.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. On the whole, I'm pleased with my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. I would describe myself as a good negotiator.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. I tend to get involved in things I later wish I could get out of.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. I often pause and think about my feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. I believe I'm full of personal strengths.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. I tend to "back down" even if I know I'm right.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

26. I don't seem to have any power at all over other people's feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27. I generally believe that things will work out fine in my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. I find it difficult to bond well even with those close to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29. Generally, I'm able to adapt to new environments.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30. Others admire me for being relaxed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix F

GQ-6

Instructions: Using the scale below as a guide, write a number beside each statement to indicate

how much you agree with it.

1 = strongly disagree

2 = disagree

3 = slightly disagree

4 = neutral

5 = slightly agree

6 = agree

7 = strongly agree

___1. I have so much in life to be thankful for.

___2. If I had to list everything that I felt grateful for, it would be a very long list.

___3. When I look at the world, I don't see much to be grateful for.

___4. I am grateful to a wide variety of people.

___5. As I get older I find myself more able to appreciate the people, events, and situations that

have been part of my life history.

___6. Long amounts of time can go by before I feel grateful to something or someone.