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Romantic Relationship and Self Esteem: The Role of Self Esteem in Prediction of Relationship Satisfaction, Romanticism, and Emophilia

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ABSTRACT

Background: The goal was to discover the relationship between the levels of self-esteem and types of romantic relationships (emophilia and romanticism) and its impact on individual's relationship satisfaction.

Methods: More specifically, the study sought to examine whether low self-esteem was related to emotional promiscuity and lower levels of romantic relationship satisfaction. Furthermore, the study also sought to examine if higher levels of self-esteem would corresponded to greater romantic relationship satisfaction and romanticism. The data was collected from 385 committed/ engaged participants.

Results indicated that those with low self-esteem had lower levels of relationship satisfaction. Finding also revealed that individuals with low self-esteem scored high on romanticism than emophilia. No association was found between an increase in age and emophilia. Gender differences were also found on romanticism as females scored high than males. Moreover, the results also depicted no inverse association between emophilia, one and only love, and love can conquer all.

Conclusions: Results signified that endorsement of romantic beliefs did predict relationship satisfaction.

Keywords: *Self-Esteem, Emophilia, Emotional Promiscuity, Relationship Satisfaction, Gender*

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Introduction

Individuals who are happy and content with their relationships are usually healthier psychologically and physically and less affected by stress (Gove et al., 1983; Holt-Lunstad et al., 2008; Kølves et al., 2012). In contrast, people who are less satisfied with their marital life, mainly those who are separated and divorced, probably are more inclined to accept suicidal ideation, hopelessness, and depression and did suicide (Batterham et al., 2014; Till et al., 2016; Wyder et al., 2009). Hawkins (1968) described relationship satisfaction as a subjective measure of an individual's happiness, satisfaction, and pleasure arising from his/her relationship. Relationship satisfaction is how well two people feel about each other (Funk & Rogge, 2007). Leary and Baumeister (2000) discovered that an individual's sense of self-esteem is tied up in the quality of their relationship with others. The strength of self-love and self-satisfaction is inestimable. In order to understand self-esteem, it is crucial to consider one's sense of worth, appreciation, and affection. Finding it outside of oneself provides an unstable framework and can harm one's well-being and romantic relationship interactions (Satir, 1976).

Satir (1976) thought that self-esteem is learned, and in her work, she stressed that there is still hope that life will improve and new things can still be learned by people. Satir (1976) penned down a self-esteem statement, "I am me... I am all right." This statement refers to the importance and significance of maintaining a positive and empathic relationship with oneself. Baumeister et al., (2003) stated that people with high self-esteem felt more relaxed and appealing to others. These individuals said they had more vital impressions and interactions with others than those with low self-esteem. Thus, feeling good about oneself made it possible to connect confidently with others. Erol and Orth (2013) expounded that self-esteem is significant in forming and sustaining a satisfying romantic relationship and marriage. They explored the role of self-esteem predicted the happiness and contentment of a person's relationship and the satisfaction of the relationship between his or her partner. Analysis showed that self-esteem has helped predict improvements in some relationships over time (Orth et al., 2012). In romantic relationships, People highly rely on their partners to satisfy their primary needs (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993).

Romantic relationships are termed a bond between two individuals who share an emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual bond (Schnarch, 2009). Forming human bonds and feeling connected in relationships are innate components of human behavior, and they are the central force of being human (Guerrero et al., 2011). Romance is also a feeling felt and seen by activities in which individuals participate while in love with each other. Love, however, is not characterized easily and has a host of constructs. What loves is for one person might have a completely different meaning.

Another form of interpersonal relationship that involves more than our biological needs is a romantic relationship. Romanticism is the intimate and pleasant feelings that result from the emotional desire of an individual for another person (Fisher, 2004). Hazan and Shaver postulated (1987) that romantic love is a bond between two adults comparable to the connection between early childhood and caregiver. Using the Sprecher and Metts (1999) romanticism scale, they extended their findings that participants who were more romantic about relationships had more romantic relationships in the past and were generally happier and more committed than less romantic participants.

Emophilia is characterized by a tendency to fall in love quickly and easily and is associated with rapid romantic engagement, also known as emotional promiscuity. Emotionally promiscuous people are likely to fall in love with several people at a time and sometimes establish romantic relationships comfortably (Jones, 2011). The basic theory of emophilia research is that people differ in the degree they need to be in love. Romantic feelings and intimacy arise equally (Jones, 2015). It takes a little to announce that one is trapped in a love bond for others.

A considerable corpus of research has been conducted to investigate the link between how people see themselves and how they act in romantic relationships. According to research, individuals with high self-esteem express more positive evaluations of their romantic relationships than people with low self-esteem, consistent with the belief that "people must appreciate themselves before they can love someone else" (Murray, 2006). Since people do not develop in isolation, relationships or interactions with meaningful relationships play a crucial role in influencing one's perceptions of oneself, others, relationships, and the world (Crowell & Feldman, 1991; Fitton, 2012; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Strauss et al., 2012). Baumeister et al., (2003) stated that people with high self-esteem felt more relaxed and appealing to others. These individuals said they had more vital impressions and interactions with others than those with low self-esteem. Thus, feeling good about oneself made it possible to connect confidently with others. Thus, positive emotions within the relationship, such as love, commitment, and satisfaction, tend to be linked to positive beliefs about relationships.

The goal was to discover the relationship between self-esteem and types of romantic relationships and the impact of romantic relationship types (emophilia and romanticism) on individual satisfaction. One explanation why self-esteem in romantic relationships is crucial for understanding behavior is that feelings of self-worth affect how people react to potentially threatening events (Murray et al., 2000). No studies to date have examined the link between self-esteem and romantic relationships, i.e., emophilia and romanticism. A suggestion was given by (Medora et al., 1994).

They proposed a potential categorical relationship between romanticism and self-esteem. This is the first study to date explored possible associations among these variables.

Aim of the Study

The aim for the present study was to investigate whether people with high self-esteem would be more likely than people with low self-esteem to have a lasting relationship than to regularly turn from one relationship to another and have stable behavioral trends in their relationships that are consistent with more happiness and intimacy with their partners. This research aimed at exploring self-esteem and its impact on romantic relationships. This research also examined whether higher levels of self-esteem contribute to better relationship satisfaction and lower self-esteem adversely affects relationship satisfaction. The following hypotheses were formulated based on the literature review:

- (a) Low self-esteem will lead to reduce an individual relationship satisfaction
- (b) Low self-esteem will be correlated positively to emophilia as compared to romanticism.
- (c) Emotional promiscuity will be inversely correlated with one and only love, and love can conquer all, subscales of romantic belief scale.
- (d) Endorsement of romantic beliefs will predict an increase in relationship satisfaction.

Method

Participants

In the present study, a sample of individuals committed with the opposite gender ($N = 385$) with ages from 18 to 30 years ($M = 24.2$, $SD = 3.4$) was collected from the University of Peshawar, Peshawar, Pakistan. Data were collected using the snowball sampling technique.

Muslims who were committed with the opposite gender were included in the sample. Inclusion criteria required participants to be enrolled in the University and at least 18 years of age. This study did not comprise non-Muslims and individuals in any intimate relationship. Demographics such as gender, age, education, and relationship status were included.

Procedure and Measures

Participants who resided in Peshawar and were in a relationship with the opposite gender were approached individually, and they were asked to identify more participants. All participants were given a pack of a questionnaire comprising six sections. The participants were approached individually, and informed consent was taken from them. Rapport was developed with them. The investigator explained its purpose only after their voluntary participation in the study. Participants were promised that their replies would be kept anonymous and only be used for the study. If anyone

did not want to continue, he/she was free to leave. Incomplete questionnaires and missing items were discarded from the final data. The participants were debriefed once the data was collected.

The *Rosenberg-Self-Esteem Scale* (RSES) (Rosenberg, 1965) was used to measure Self-Esteem. The RSES consisted of 10 items measuring positive and negative self-confidence, self-worth and self-acceptance with ranking from 0 (strongly disagree) to 3 (strongly agreed) on a four-point scale. After the negatively worded items are recoded, the ratings on the 10 items were summed up. The overall global self-esteem score ranges from 0 to 30, a high score represents high self-esteem and a score of less than 15 shows a low self-esteem problem. The RSES has a test-retest-correlation between .82 to .88 and a Cronbach's alpha between .77 and .88 (Bagley et al., 1997).

Emotional Promiscuity Scale (EPS) for measuring emophilia, was developed by Nelson (2011) and validated by Jones and Paulhus (Jones, 2011; Jones & Paulhus, 2012). It is made up of 10-items; the items are in a 5-point Likert format, varying from a strong disagreement to strong agreement. These items assess how easily and frequently people experience falling in love. It has an acceptable internal consistency for both males ($\alpha = .84$) and females ($\alpha = .82$).

The *Romantic Beliefs Scale* (RBS) developed by Sprecher and Metts (1989) is a 15-item self-report to measure individual differences in romanticism. The participants rate 15 statements on a Likert scale of 1-7 (with 1 strongly disagreeing and 7 strongly agreeing). Love Finds a Way or love can conquer all, Soulmates (One and Only love), Idealization of Partner, and Love at First Sight are the four romantic values expressed in these claims. The idea that love can resolve many challenges on the road to marriage is known as "love finds a way" Any interruptions or other obstacles that may cause a couple to break up are included in this group. The subtype "Soul mates (One and Only love)" encapsulates the notion that there is only one eternal relationship. There is only one person that a person can truly love. People who idealize believe that their one true love will be great, while those who believe in Love at First Sight believe that love will strike without warning. Instead of a hypothetical individual, the things on the Romantic Belief Scale apply to oneself. In previous studies, the Romantic Belief Scale has shown good reliability. The RBS has a sound internal consistency for males ($\alpha=.83$) and females ($\alpha=.85$).

Relationship Assessment Scale constructed by Hendrick (1988) assess global relationship satisfaction and an individual's subjective estimate of an intimate relationship. This scale consists of 7-items among which two items are reverse-scored (4th & 7th). Each item is graded on a five-point Likert scale, with 1 signifying dissatisfaction and 5 reflecting excellent satisfaction. An increase in score will lead to more satisfaction in a relationship. The internal consistency of the RAS is $\alpha = .89$ (Dinkel & Balck, 2005).

Results

Table 1 shows psychometric properties for the scales used in present study. The Cronbach's α value for ECR-R was .87 ($>.70$) which indicated high internal consistency. Similarly, the Cronbach's α values for the other scales used in this study are greater than .70 showing high internal consistencies.

Scale	M	SD	Range	Cronbach's α
Emotional Promiscuity Scale	30.39	6.8	14-48	.75
The Romantic Beliefs Scale	54.1	8.88	15-72	.79
Relationship Assessment Scale	25.3	4.07	7-35	.80
Rosenberg Self-Esteem	17.66	6.9	10-24	.77

Table 1 -Psychometric Properties for the Scales Used in this Study

The first hypothesis stated that low self-esteem would lower the relationship satisfaction. A regression analysis was carried out to test this prediction. The findings revealed that low self-esteem did lead to decrease in relationship satisfaction. Low self-esteem explained a proportion of variance in overall relationship satisfaction score, $b = -2.183$, 95% CI [-2.989, -1.378] $R^2 = .069$, $F(1, 383) = 28.426$, $p < 0.05$, demonstrating that approximately 7% of the variance in relationship satisfaction is explainable by low self-esteem. The findings revealed that low self-esteem negatively predicted relationship satisfaction ($\beta = -.26$, $p < .001$) as show in table 2.

Variable	B	B	SE
Constant	26.30***		.27
Low Self esteem	-2.18***	-.26	.41
R^2	.07		

Note. CI = Confidence interval - *** $p < .001$

Table 2 - Regression Coefficient of Low Self-esteem on Relationship Satisfaction

In second hypothesis it was described that low self-esteem would be correlated positively to emophilia as compared to romanticism. The findings from the pearson product correlation demonstrated low self-esteem showed a non-significant positive correlation with emophilia ($r = .061$, $p > .05$.) while low self-esteem had a significant negative correlation with romanticism ($r = -.104$, $p < .05$).

Third, as assumed that female participants would significantly score high on the subscale (one and only love) of romantic beliefs scale than male participants. An independent sample t-test was administered to compare mean scores on the subscale (one and only love) of romanticism between

male and female, results revealed there was a statistically significant difference on the scores for female ($M = 11.84$, $SD = 2.67$) and male ($M = 10.93$, $SD = 3.04$) [$t(384) = -3.108$; $p > 0.05$]. The value of Cohen's d was 0.32 (< 0.50) which indicated small effect size (Table 3).

Variables	Female		Male		$t(368)$	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
One and only love	11.84	2.67	10.93	3.04	-3.11	.001	0.32

$p < .05$

Table 3 - Mean Comparison of Female and Male Participants on the subscale (one and only love) of Romantic Beliefs Scale

The fourth hypothesis stated that emotional promiscuity would be negatively correlated with “one and only love” and “love can conquer all”; the subscales of romantic belief scale. The correlation was determined by employing Pearson product correlation. The analysis showed a positive and significant correlation between emotional promiscuity and love can conquer all ($r = .097$; $p < .05$), whereas a non-significant positive correlation was found between emotional promiscuity and one and only love, ($r = .009$; $p > .05$). Hence, no inverse correlation was found among emotional promiscuity, one and only love, and love can conquer all.

The fifth hypothesis stated that romantic beliefs would likely to predict an increase in relationship satisfaction. A linear regression was employed to identify whether romantic beliefs lead to an increase in relationship satisfaction. The results found a significant regression equation [$F(1, 383) = 25.407$; $p > 0.05$], with an R^2 of $.063$ explaining 6.3% variance in relationship satisfaction, where regression coefficient ($b = .112$, 95% CI $[.068, .155]$) indicated that increased in one point on romantic beliefs corresponded to an increase in relationship satisfaction by $.112$ points (Table 4).

Variable	B	B	SE
Constant	19.37		1.20
Low Self esteem	.112**	.25	.02
R^2	.06		

Note. CI = Confidence interval - *** $p < .001$

Table 4 - Regression Coefficient of Romantic Beliefs on Relationship Satisfaction

Finally, the analysis of this study also revealed no significant difference between males and females on romantic relationship (romanticism) [$t(383) = -1.28$; $p < .05$]. The mean score for males on romantic relationship was ($M = 52.83$, $SD = 9.22$) and for females it was ($M = 54.03$, $SD = 9.2$). The findings showed that the mean scores of both gender are not significantly different on romantic relationship implying both males and females are same on romantic relationship or romanticism.

Discussion

A substantial body of research has explored the correlation between how people feel about themselves and how they act in romantic relationships. In line with the notion that people must first love themselves before loving others, and according to research, people with high levels of self-esteem rate their romantic relationships as more positive than people with low levels of self-esteem (Murray, 2006).

After reviewing the literature, five hypotheses have been devised. First, low self-esteem would reduce relationship satisfaction. The results demonstrated that low self-esteem negatively predicted relationship satisfaction. The result is in line with the studies that have repeatedly shown that people with high self-esteem levels have better and happier intimate relationships than those with low self-esteem levels (Fincham and Bradbury, 1993; Hendrick, Hendrick, & Adler, 1988; Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 2000).

The second hypothesis reported that low self-esteem would be correlated positively to emophilia compared to romanticism. The analysis supported this hypothesis partially and demonstrated a positive but non-significant relationship between low self-esteem and emophilia, whereas results determined a negative correlation between low self-esteem and romanticism. Participants with low self-esteem were more likely to fall in love frequently. The relationship between low self-esteem, emophilia, and romanticism has not been investigated together by any studies to date. To our knowledge, this is the first research on this association. Regarding the relationship between low self-esteem and emophilia, this study's results are confirmed by Jones (2017), who found that emophilia have non-significant associations with the Big Five and self-esteem.

Furthermore, the third hypothesis stated that emotional promiscuity would be inversely correlated with the romantic belief scale's subscales (one and only love and love can conquer all). The findings of this study revealed a negative relationship between emotional promiscuity and one and only love. However, emotional promiscuity showed a positive correlation with love can conquer all. The results somehow come under the theory of Jones. According to Jones (2011), emotional promiscuity and romantic idealism seem to be linked in significant ways; people high in either emotional promiscuity or romantic idealism will both be more open to romantic feelings and accept the notion that at first sight, they have fallen in love. Jones (2011) stated that one and only love and love could conquer all should be negatively connected to the emotional promiscuity scale. This negative relationship should derive from people with high emotional promiscuity switching from partner to partner. Contrary to the Jones notion that the inverse connection between emotional promiscuity and love can conquer all, the findings of this study provided a positive relationship between

emotional promiscuity and love can conquer all. This result might suggest that people who fall in love frequently might strongly believe in love.

The fourth hypothesis described that endorsement of romantic beliefs would predict increased relationship satisfaction. This study demonstrated that romantic beliefs are the predictors of relationship satisfaction. The more romantic beliefs the partners possess would lead to high relationship satisfaction. The findings are in line with the study of Sprecher and Metts. Since there is a paucity of information on romantic belief. Research by Sprecher and Metts (1999) examined how the romantic beliefs of the participants were related to their feelings about their partners and the relationship. Romanticism was associated positively with passion/love, satisfaction, and devotion/commitment.

This study also explored gender differences in a romantic relationship. The findings of this study revealed no significant difference among males and females in a romantic relationship. Gender was not significantly related to romanticism. Researchers also found contradictory results regarding gender's impact on romanticism. In some studies, men have been found to be more romantic than women (Sharp & Ganong, 2000; Sprecher & Metts, 1989). No gender differences were noticed by others (Cimbalo & Novell, 1993; Desai et al., 1990). Payne and Vandewiele (1987) have found that women were more romantic and gave romantic relationships greater attention. A study was conducted by Medora et al. (2016), who also found that females recorded significantly higher on the romanticism scale than males in America, Turkish, and Asian-Indian young adults.

Conclusion

Although enormous efforts by scientists, philosophers, & poets who want to find love & be in relationships with each other, there is still an enigma that needs further inquiry. This enigma cannot fully be understood or expressed in terms and words. In the end, it holds various meanings for different people. Almost everyone wants, craves, and experiences love and its intoxicating effects at least once in their lifetime.

The current study is one of the few studies that have attempted to assess the relationships among levels of self-esteem, emotional promiscuity, romanticism (one and only love, love can conquer all), and relationship satisfaction. This study supported the assumption that low self-esteem would reduce relationship satisfaction. The current study explored that individuals with low self-esteem surprisingly scored high on romanticism compared to emophilia. No significant results were found on emophilia concerning an increase in age. Besides, gender differences were found on the subscale, i.e., one and only love. Females scored high than their male counterparts. Furthermore,

results also revealed no inverse correlation among EP, one and only love, and love can conquer all but a positive and significant correlation between EP and love can conquer all, whereas a non-significant correlation was found between EP and one and only. Moreover, results supported that endorsement of romantic beliefs did predict an increase in relationship satisfaction.

This paper contained a few drawbacks. Firstly, it primarily focused on residents in Peshawar city. Therefore, the study sample hampers the generalization of findings. Secondly, only quantitative approaches were used to investigate the relationship. Future researches should focus on qualitative measures as well. Thirdly, the self-report bias was a potential drawback of this research. People taking surveys also tend to represent themselves in a socially acceptable way. Another drawback of this research was that commitment and emophilia was not explained. Individuals were free to interpret the expression themselves without communicating the context with the researcher. It would be better to interview the participants and fill up the questionnaires. Finally, the researchers did not consider how long the relationship has remained between the partners. It may have an impact on the study's result.

Future researchers need to continue to explore these constructs to provide insight into different relationship variables and highlight their possible adverse effects on an individual's life. Being in a relationship with so many people and still craving satisfaction is alarming. Researchers need to uncover the phenomena of whether low self-esteem predisposes an individual to make many romantic relationships or their early attachment style and some insecurity exposed individuals to such conditions or distance from God and His commands leave an individual unsatisfied who look for peace in trying to connect to multiple people romantically.

The current study aimed to unearth the link of self-esteem with individuals' type of romantic relationships. This study further discovered the relationship satisfaction of those who believe in one true love, and love can conquer all and those inclined to indulge in more than one relationship at a time. This relationship is interesting to learn about in a therapeutic context because therapists often encounter clients who are unhappy with their romantic partners. In this situation, the therapist will offer psycho-education and work with their client to reframe their definition of self-worth, self-esteem, and relationship satisfaction, resulting in increased levels of overall well-being in their lives. This knowledge will help clinicians create a comprehensive treatment plan for individuals who have a recurring feeling of falling in love with multiple people and inflated self-esteem. By addressing individuals' romantic attachment styles, counseling techniques may help them boost their self-esteem.

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Authors' contribution: All the authors contributed equally to this study and approved the final manuscript.

Ethical approval: The ethical board of the University of Peshawar approved all the procedures employed in this study regarding human participants. The study strongly adhere to the research committee's ethical standards of national and institution.

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