



CAN FORGIVENESS MARITAL ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMME (FMEP) REDUCE MARITAL CONFLICT AND AUGMENT SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING OF MARRIED COUPLES?

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effect of the Forgiveness Marital Enhancement Programme (FMEP) on couples with Marital Conflict (MC) in their intimate dyadic relationships via an experimental design. It was hypothesized that conscious, intentional daily awareness and expression of forgiveness would produce a significant decrease in marital conflict and an increase in Subjective Well-being (SWB). Seventy-six participants were randomly assigned to either experimental or control groups. The experimental group alone was asked to complete a 50-day FMEP. All participants answered the Heartland Forgiveness Scale (2005), Marital Conflict Scale (1985) and Subjective Well-Being Inventory (SUBI, 1994) before and after the FMEP, and at a follow-up test after two months. Differences between control and interventional groups were analysed via independent samples t-tests and changes across testing phases within groups were evaluated via Repeated Measures of ANOVA. Between-group and within-group analyses indicated that participation in the FMEP resulted in a reduction in Marital Conflict and enhancement in Subjective Well-being of married couples.

KEYWORDS: *Forgiveness, Marital Conflict, Subjective Well-being, Forgiveness Marital Enhancement Programme (FMEP), Intimate/dyadic Relationships*

1. INTRODUCTION

Marriage is one of the most lasting relationships between a man and a woman, yet it is not exempted from its conflicts (Warsah, 2020). Some of the possible reasons for marital conflicts can be money, sexual affairs, kindred relations, friends, children, drug use, spending of leisure time, religious differences, infidelity, diminishing mutual love, physical abuse, emotional, financial, and communicative problems (Boostanipoor and Zaker, 2016). Any unresolved conflict will potentially have impacts on physical and psychological health (Ross, Boon, & Stackhouse, 2017). The question of how to resolve or minimise the conflict, remains unanswered. Positive psychology which is a branch of the psychological field focuses on how humans should best live (Kim, Keck, Miller, & Gonzalez, 2012), suggests that forgiveness can assist people in overcoming conflicts, to maintain marital satisfaction, marital stability (Karney and Bradbury, 1995) and individuals' wellbeing (Proulx, Helms & Buehler, 2007; Kamp Dush, Taylor & Kroeger, 2008; Margelisch, Schneewind, Violette, & Perrig-Chiello, 2017). Positive psychology and forgiveness scholars opine that constant awareness and exercise of forgiveness would help one to overcome broken relationships (Osei-Tutu, Dzokoto, Oti-Boadi, Belgrave, & Appiah-Danquah, 2019) maintain social bonds, and romantic and family relationships (Gordon, Arnette, & Smith, 2011). Thus, the current study aims to examine whether the conscious, intentional daily awareness and expression of forgiveness would enhance the well-being of dyadic relationships by reducing the marital conflict of married couples. This question is examined using an experimental forgiveness intervention called Forgiveness Marital Enhancement Programme (FMEP).

2. DEFINING STUDY VARIABLES

2.1 Forgiveness

Forgiveness is the ability to let go from the mind and heart of all past pains and bad feelings and eliminate anger and revenge on the wrongdoer (Amanze & Carson, 2020; Miceli & Castelfranchijtsb, 2011; Baharudin, Sumari, & Hamdani, 2019). It is a way to overcome broken relationships on a pro-social basis (McCullough, Kurzban, & Tabak, 2013; McCullough, Pedersen, Tabak, &



Carter, 2014; Osei-Tutu et al., 2019). It is a voluntary (Baskin & Enright, 2004), conscious, intentional process of the person to forgive the transgressor (Fincham, Jackson, & Beach, 2005).

2.2 Marital Conflict (MC)

Marital conflict is defined as a process that couples partake in when they disagree, or have opposing interests, perspectives, or opinions on an emotional, cognitive, or behavioural level (Cahn, 1992; Bell & Blankeny, 1977; Gurman, 2008; Mayer, 2000). It is the state of tension or stress, struggle, clash, disagreement or quarrel between marital partners over opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values, or goals (Abelneh & Koye, 2021).

2.3 Subjective Well-being (SWB)

Subjective well-being is a broad concept that includes the presence of positive affect, absence of negative affect and life satisfaction (Diener, Lucas & Oishi, 2002; Suh & Oishi, 2002; Watson, Pichler & Wallace, 2010).

3. IMPORTANCE OF FORGIVENESS IN MARITAL RELATIONSHIP

Forgiveness is one of the most important positive ways of dealing with marital problems and has been found to be a significant factor in marital satisfaction and happiness (Fincham, 2000; Fincham and Beach, 2002; Fincham, Beach & Davila, 2004; Paleari, Regalia & Fincham, 2005; Orathinkal and Vansteenwegen, 2006; Gordon, Hughes, Tomcik, Dixon, & Litzinger, 2009; Bugay, 2014). In the context of marriage, forgiveness refers to a single act (episodic forgiveness) or general tendency (dispositional forgiveness) to forgive a spouse for a particular offence or multiple wrongdoings (Paleari, Regalia & Fincham, 2009). Specific forgiveness is usually understood as a process of abandoning negative thoughts, emotions, motivation, and behaviour towards the offender (McCullough, Worthington Jr, & Rachal, 1997; Rye and Pargament, 2002). However, some scholars suggest that forgiveness in close relationships can be looked at from two dimensions (Fincham and Beach, 2002; Wade and Worthington, 2003; Fincham, Hall, & Beach, 2006; Gordon et al., 2009): a negative one, that entails the degree to which an individual overcomes nurturing grudges, withdrawing from the relationship, and desire for revenge or punishment against the partner and a positive one, that deals with the readiness of an individual to get closer to the partner and an increase in empathy and compassion. In a long-lasting relationship, like marriage, both components are important to resume closeness (Fincham et al., 2006; Brudek, & Kaleta, 2023).

Researches reveal that in the dyadic relationship, forgiving of a partner positively correlates with happiness or well-being in marriage and fosters intimacy and commitment to the relationship, and promotes a positive impact on the quality of marriage (Paleari et al, 2005, 2009; Tsang, McCullough & Fincham, 2006; Fincham, Beach & Davila, 2007).

4. CONFLICT IN DYADIC RELATIONSHIP AND THE ROLE OF FORGIVENESS INTERVENTION

Interpersonal conflict is defined as a state of disharmony that develops because of natural differences between partners in roles, communication, needs, expectation, etc. (Mackey, Diemer, & O'Brien, 2000). Any persistent interpersonal conflict can obstruct healthy progress in relationships and promote more destructive conflict, chronic defensiveness, dissatisfaction, and estrangement (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; Mackey et al., 2000) and at times leading to the breakdown of communication and even separation (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989).

To resolve this issue although third-party interventions, like psychotherapy, can be an option yet some still view them as intrusive and invasive, which would increase attrition (Geraghty, Wood, & Hyland, 2010). Thus, the researcher, in this current study, intends to use a readily available positive resource, namely, Forgiveness Marital Enhancement Programme (FMEP) which was prepared by the researcher, to effect positive change in marital conflict without the third party's mediation.

5. AIM OF THE STUDY

The study seeks to determine how the independent variable of forgiveness as elicited in Forgiveness Marital Enhancement Programme (FMEP), could increase the dependent variables like Forgiveness and Subjective Well-Being and decrease the Marital Conflict in the dyadic relationship.

6. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

HYP 1. The Forgiveness Marital Enhancement Programme (FMEP) would reduce the level of MC and enhance the Forgiveness and SWB of the experimental group for the Pre, Post and Follow-up test conditions.

HYP 2. The Control Group of Forgiveness, MC and SWB will not show any significant difference in pre-test and post-test conditions.



HYP 3. The Experimental Group and Control Group will not show a significant difference in the Pre-test scores regarding the study variables Forgiveness, MC, and SWB.

HYP 4. There will be a significant difference between the Experimental Group and Control Group in the Post-test scores regarding study variables Forgiveness, MC, and SWB.

HYP 5. The higher the level of Forgiveness the higher will be SWB and the lower will be MC.

7. TOOLS

7.1. Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS)

Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS) is developed by Thompson, Snyder & Hoffman, (2005) to measure one's overall willingness to forgive with 18 items. HFS is a 7-point Likert scale which spans from 'almost always false of me' (1) to 'almost always true of me' (7). HFS has three subscales: Forgiveness of Self (items 1–6), Forgiveness of Others (items 7–12), and Forgiveness of Situations (items 13–18). Total HFS scores vary from 18 to 126 and three HFS subscales have scores ranging from 6 to 42. The higher scores imply a higher level of forgiveness in total as well as in each dimension. Cronbach alpha coefficients for the forgiveness of self, others, situations, and overall HFS are found to be 0.75, 0.78, 0.77 and .86 respectively (Thompson et al., 2005).

7.2. Kansas Marital Conflict Scale (KMCS)

The Kansas Marital Conflict Scale (KMCS) is a 27-item self-report, 5-point Likert scale scores ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Almost always), designed to measure marital interactions and conflict of distressed and non-distressed married couples (Eggeman, Moxley, & Schumm, (1985). The sum of twenty-seven items gives the overall score of marital conflict of an individual. The higher scores represent a lower conflict. For an easy understanding of the score, R. A Fisher's data transformation method (Wicklin, Rick, 2013) is adopted. Thus, the new scoring method is 'the higher the marital conflict score, the higher will be the marital conflict'. The test-retest correlations of the three stages range from 0.64 to 0.96 (Eggeman et al., 1985).

7.3 The Subjective Well-being Inventory (SWBI)

The Subjective Well-Being Inventory developed by Sell and Nagpal (1992) is a self-report questionnaire containing 40 items with 11 dimensions designed to measure an individual's overall feeling about life. For positive items, the score is 3, 2 and 1 respectively and vice versa for the negative items. The total score of all 40 items reveals an overall Subjective Well-being score. The higher score shows better the Subjective Well-being and vice versa. The test-retest reliability of the inventory is 0.79 and its validity is 0.86 (Sell & Nagpal, 1992).

8. INCLUSION & EXCLUSION CRITERIA FOR EXPERIMENTAL RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

1. Should be married and living with the partner under the same roof.
2. Must be within the age group of 19 to 50.
3. The pre-test scores must fall under a high level of marital conflict.
4. They must be free from any mental illness.
5. Widows, separated, divorced, and living together couples are excluded.

9. PARTICIPANTS

Adopting the purposive sampling technique three hundred and ninety-six married couples were chosen from six villages of Dindigul district in Tamil Nadu and administered questionnaires. Seventy-six couples out of three hundred and ninety-six who had high marital conflict mean scores were chosen and assigned equally (N=38) to control and experimental groups randomly. Only the experimental group received FMEP for 50 days of intervention. Soon after the intervention, a post-test was carried out and a follow-up test was conducted after two months. Data were collected and analysed using SPSS version 22 on descriptive and inferential levels. Descriptive statistics included mean and standard deviation and inferential statistics included repeated measures of ANOVA, paired and independent t-tests and correlation.

10. INTERVENTION MODULE

The below module is based on the 3Ps: 1. Preparative Stage, 2. Processing Stage, and 3. Persevering Stage



Table No.1.
Forgiveness Marital Enhancement Programme (FMPEP)

Description of FMPEP	Time
1. PREPARATIVE STAGE	
SESSION - 1: General Orientation In this FMPEP session, the researcher welcomed the participants and explained the nature, purpose, confidentiality, time schedule, and proceedings of the interventions and collected informed consent.	80 Mints
SESSION - 2: Happiness in Marital life and Forgiveness the Positive Path to Happiness Discussed in general the role and benefits of positive emotions in daily life and conducted a brainstorming session on happiness in married life. The positive emotion of forgiveness and its three dimensions 1. Forgiving Oneself; 2. Forgiving Others 3. Forgiving the Situation were discussed.	90Mints
2. PROCESSING STAGE	
SESSION - 3: Recalling Persons and Events Instructed the participants to prepare a forgiveness inventory list which included hurtful events, grudges or grievances, wounds or offences which they were unable to forgive or release and write them down in the order of priority in a special sheet.	60Mints
SESSION - 4: Realising the Need for Forgiveness Explained the meaning of general, emotional, and decisional benefits of forgiveness and the burdens of unforgiveness with examples. Helped to list the advantages of forgiveness in physical, mental, spiritual, and relational. Sharing with the group what they learnt and doing homework on the negative effect of unforgiveness.	75Mints
SESSION - 5: Reliving and Releasing One's Grudge Writing a forgiveness letter choosing any one of the persons, problems, or situations, especially with the partner. Told to pay attention to how emotionally, physically, psychologically, and spiritually affected by the incidents. As homework, asked to take four hurtful or painful incidents and describe them elaborately in forgiveness letters form to their partner.	90Mints
SESSION - 6: Recognising Positive Intention Pay attention to a person's positive intention behind their action or behaviour. Basically, we do things with good intentions and reason. This helps for a loving and peaceful relationship with the person and situation. Taught Empty Chair Technique and Tole Play to realise the motive behind their action.	80Mints
SESSION - 7: Reconstructing One's Hurtful Story Explained the importance of reconstructing a story concerning what happened to them when they are hurt. Most suffering is not caused by what happened to us, but rather by how we tell ourselves about what happened to us due to our selective inclusion and exclusion. Thus, asked to discuss the story objectively by distancing themselves from the story as a third party and create a new story which would be the essence of forgiveness.	75Mints
SESSION - 8: Rewriting a New Story The essence of forgiveness is to create a new story about what happened. It is narrating the events of what actually happened from a different perspective. It is a process of shifting from seeing oneself as a victim to seeing oneself as a hero. In the end, they were asked to write the new story again and again till they are satisfied.	70Mints
SESSION - 9: Reconnect with Self, Others and Your Partner Through Forgiveness Spoke about forgiving oneself, others, and partners. Forgiveness is not complete without self-forgiveness. Self-awareness tells that an individual also played his/her part in creating the bad situation. After forgiving themselves and experiencing forgiveness from others the couples were encouraged to forgive one another and share how they have forgiven each other's offences among themselves.	90Mints
SESSION - 10: Loving-Kindness Meditation Instructed the couples to close their eyes and repeat these: 'May I be safe and protected.... May I be happy.... May I be healthy and strong.... May I live happily, peacefully, joyfully and with ease in this world.... May I be free from all harm, disease, physical pain, and suffering....'. Now consider someone who makes you upset or angry. Think about this person and send loving thoughts to him or her. Say to him or her the above statements. Discussion based on the meditation and are asked to do meditation twice a day in the morning and evening.	90Mints



3. PERSEVERING STAGE	
<p>SESSION - 11: To Hold on to Forgiveness in Daily Life Instructed to thank God for the gift of their partner by holding hands and saying Forgiveness and Peace Prayer and reciting the following statements aloud or silently in their hearts one by one as per the guidance: <i>Step 1.</i> I feel happy for you, I am thankful to you, I am lucky to have you, & you are a great treasure. <i>Step 2.</i> May you --- (partner’s name) experience peace and ease, may you --- be free from pain and suffering, may you ---- be happy and healthy and may you --- be alive and joyful etc. <i>Step 3.</i> Write a pledge and place it on the Forgiveness Notice Board or near the feet of God and read it every day: We forgive each other, we are grateful to each other, we are happy to be together, we are blessings to each other, we feel safe in each other’s company, we are a gift to each other.</p>	90 Mints
<p>SESSION - 12: Evaluation and Termination The main purpose of the last session was to review the intervention held in earlier sessions and to arrive at conclusions about enhancing forgiveness and subjective well-being. Presented the summary of the whole program. The participants briefly shared their experiences with the intervention group and reviewed the sessions' content. After administering the post-test questionnaire to the experimental group, a short evaluation was conducted.</p>	90 Mints

11. ETHICS CONSIDERATIONS

The subject matter and the aim of the study were clarified to the participants in the first session, and the participants' consent who were willing to take part in the study was acquired. They were apprised of the fact that the study would cause them no harm of any kind. The participants were alerted that they could terminate their participation in the study at any given stage of the study without any prior information. Participants were not asked to provide their names or other identifiable information about them.

12. RESULTS

Repeated measures of ANOVA were administered (N=38) to find out whether the Forgiveness Marital Enhancement Programme (FMPEP) was effective in reducing the MC and enhancing the Forgiveness and SWB of couples with marital conflict from pre-test to follow-up tests.

Table No.2.

Descriptive Results of Forgiveness, MC and SWB of Control and Experimental Groups in Pre, Post and Follow-Up Tests

Groups	Forgiveness			Marital Conflict			Subjective Well-being			
		Pre-Test	Post-Test	Follow-Up	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Follow-Up	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Follow-Up
Control	M	37.91	55.40	58.53	66.59	41.44	37.79	42.54	56.68	61.71
	SD	2.906	2.338	2.699	3.799	4.322	3.820	2.350	2.682	3.966
Experiment	M	37.60	38.12	38.25	67.12	67.68	67.03	42.87	43.29	43.06
	SD	2.367	2.428	1.630	4.036	3.607	3.841	2.083	2.697	1.821

Table 2 presents participants' descriptive statistics (Mean and SD) based on the phase of study and group for Forgiveness, MC and SWB variables.

A. Results on repeated measures of ANOVA for Forgiveness, MC and SWB (Exp. Group)

HYP 1. The Forgiveness Marital Enhancement Programme (FMPEP) would reduce the level of MC and enhance the Forgiveness and SWB of the experimental group for the Pre, Post and Follow-up test conditions.



Table No.3.
Within Subject Contrasts from Pre-test to follow-up test on Forgiveness, MC and SWB

Measure	Time	df1	df2	F	Sig.	η_p^2
Forgiveness	Pre-test to Post-test	1	37	962.86	.000	.96
	Post-test to Follow-up	1	37	98.22	.000	.73
MC	Pre-test to Post-test	1	37	1258.98	.000	.97
	Post-test to Follow-up	1	37	67.49	.000	.65
SWB	Pre-test to Post-test	1	37	1267.86	.000	.97
	Post-test to Follow-up	1	37	125.19	.000	.77

It is evident from the above table that the contrasts at each level were statistically significant from the pre-test to the follow-up test. Further Bonferroni corrected pairwise comparison test of mean values at the various stages of testing is presented in the following table:

Table No.4.
Bonferroni Corrected Pair Wise Comparison on Forgiveness, MC and SWB

Measure	(I) time	(J) time	Mean Difference (I-J)	Significance
Forgiveness	Pre-test	Pre-test to Post-test	-25.526*	.000
		Pre-test to Follow-up test	-35.553*	.000
	Post-test	Post-test to Pre-test	25.526*	.000
		Post-test to Follow-up test	-10.026*	.000
	Follow-up test	Follow-up to pre-test	35.553*	.000
		Follow-up to Post-test	10.026*	.000
MC	Pre-test	Pre-test to Post-test	24.737*	.000
		Pre-test to Follow-up test	30.526*	.000
	Post-test	Post-test to Pre-test	-24.737*	.000
		Post-test to Follow-up test	5.789*	.000
	Follow-up test	Follow-up to pre-test	-30.526*	.000
		Follow-up to Post-test	-5.789*	.000
SWB	Pre-test	Pre-test to Post-test	-27.605*	.000
		Pre-test to Follow-up test	-36.776*	.000
	Post-test	Post-test to Pre-test	27.605*	.000
		Post-test to Follow-up test	-9.171*	.000
	Follow-up test	Follow-up to pre-test	36.776*	.000
		Follow-up to Post-test	9.171*	.000

*. *The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.*

There were significant statistical mean differences at each stage while comparing the mean values of other levels. The partial eta squared values showed that there was an overall high effect size for the study variable. In addition, within-subject contrast has underscored the effect sizes at each stage, further showing high effect sizes.

It has been found that sphericity was met as indicated by Mauchly's test for Forgiveness $\chi^2(2) = 2.69, p = > .05$, for MC $\chi^2(2) = 0.15, p = > .05$ and SWB $\chi^2(2) = 4.21, p = > .05$. The univariate test results showed that there was a significant relationship regarding Forgiveness $F(2,74) = 831.19, p = < .01$ and there was a huge effect $\eta_p^2 = 0.96$ and for MC $F(2,74) = 1036.70, p = < .01$, and there was a huge effect $\eta_p^2 = 0.97$ and for SWB $F(2,74) = 1337.90, p = < .01$, and there was a huge effect $\eta_p^2 = 0.97$. The graphs below further explain the results of the three study variables.



Figure: 1
Increase of Forgiveness

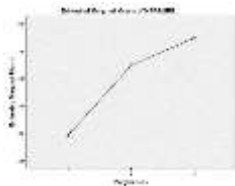


Figure:2
Reduction of MC

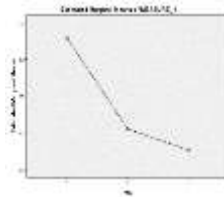
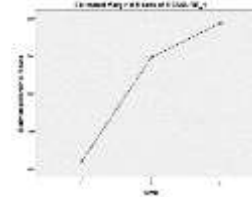


Figure: 3
Increase of SWB



Thus, the hypothesis 1 that the Forgiveness Marital Enhancement Programme (FMEP) would reduce the level of MC and enhance the Forgiveness and SWB of the experimental group from the pre-test to the follow-up test is accepted.

B. Results Comparing the Pre and Post-Test of Control Groups Forgiveness, MC & SWB

HYP 2. The Control Group of Forgiveness, MC and SWB will not show any significant difference in pre-test and post-test conditions.

Table No.5.

S. No.	Variables	Control (N=38)				t (37)	P	Cohen's d
		Pre-test		Post-test				
		M	SD	M	SD			
1.	Forgiveness	38.49	3.27	39.47	3.13	-1.30	0.20 ^{NS}	0.31
2.	MC	66.87	3.93	67.47	3.74	-0.95	0.35 ^{NS}	0.16
3.	SWB	42.79	2.04	43.13	2.61	-0.64	0.53 ^{NS}	0.15

NS – p = >.05

Paired samples t-test was performed to find out if there was a difference between the pre and post-tests of Control Groups on the total score for Forgiveness, MC and SWB. The results revealed that there was no significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores of the total score for Forgiveness, MC and SWB. Thus, hypothesis 2 is accepted.

C. Results Comparing the Control & Experimental Groups at the Pre-test Phase for the Study Variables - Forgiveness, MC, and SWB

HYP 3. The Control Group and Experimental Group will not show a significant difference in the Pre-test scores regarding study variables Forgiveness, MC, and SWB.

Table No.6.

Group	Variables	Pre-test Scores				t (75)	p	Cohen's d
		Control		Experiment				
		M	SD	M	SD			
Forgiveness Marital Enhancement Programme (FMEP)	Forgiveness	38.49	3.27	39.21	2.08	-1.15	0.25 ^{NS}	0.26
	MC	66.87	3.93	65.64	3.45	1.46	0.15 ^{NS}	0.33
	SWB	42.79	2.04	41.96	2.02	1.79	0.08 ^{NS}	0.41

NS – p = >.05

Independent samples t-test was administered to find out the difference between the Control Group and Experimental Group pre-test scores regarding the total score for Forgiveness, MC, and SWB. The results indicated that there was no significant difference between the Control Group and the Experimental Group regarding the pre-test total score for Forgiveness, MC and SWB. Thus, hypothesis 3 is tenable.

D. Results Comparing the Control & Experimental Groups at the Post-test Phase for the Study Variables - Forgiveness, MC, and SWB

HYP 4. There will be a significant difference between the Control Group and Experimental Group in the Post-test scores regarding study variables Forgiveness, MC, and SWB



Table No.7.

Group	Variables	Post-test Scores				t (75)	p	Cohen's d
		Control		Experiment				
		M	SD	M	SD			
Forgiveness Marital Enhancement Programme (FMEP)	Forgiveness	39.47	3.13	64.67	4.47	-28.58	.000	6.53
	MC	67.47	3.74	41.10	3.20	33.27	.000	7.58
	SWB	43.13	2.61	69.50	4.65	-30.54	.000	6.99

*** $p < .001$

Forgiveness Marital Enhancement Programme (FMEP)

Independent samples *t*-test was performed to find out if there was a difference between the Control and Experimental Groups in post-test scores regarding the total score for Forgiveness, MC, and SWB. The results regarding the total score for Forgiveness indicated that there was a significant difference between the Control Group (M = 39.47, SD = 3.13) and Experimental Group (M = 64.67, SD = 4.47) post-test scores $t(75) = -28.58, p < .000$. There was a very large effect ($d = 6.53$) 95% CI (-26.95, -23.44).

The results regarding MC total score indicated that there was a significant difference between the Control Group (M = 67.47, SD = 3.74) and Experimental Group (M = 41.10, SD = 4.47) post-test scores $t(75) = 33.27, p < .000$, and there was a large effect ($d = 7.58$) 95% CI (24.79, 27.95).

The results regarding SWB total score indicated that there was a significant difference between the Control Group (M = 43.13, SD = 2.61) and Experimental Group (M = 69.50, SD = 4.65) post-test scores $t(75) = -30.54, p < .000$, and there was a large effect ($d = 6.99$) 95% CI (-28.09, -24.65).

Thus, the hypothesis 4 that there would be a significant difference between the control group and experimental group at the post-test phase regarding the total score for Forgiveness, MC and SWB is tenable.

E. Correlation Among the Mean Scores of Forgiveness, MC and SWB (Experimental Group)

H.5. The higher the level of Forgiveness, the higher will be SWB and the lower will be MC.

Table No. 8.

Variables	1	2	3
1. Total Forgiveness Score	1		
2. Total MC Score	-0.266**	1	
3. Total SWB Score	0.533**	-0.257**	1

$p^{**} < .01$

A Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was computed to assess the type and degree of relationship between Forgiveness, MC and SWB. Table 8 clearly showed that Forgiveness positively correlated with SWB at a significant level $r(38) = 0.533, p < .01$ and MC negatively correlated with SWB at a significant level $r(38) = -0.257, p < .01$. Thus, hypothesis 5 that there would be significant relationships among the research variables for married couples, namely, Forgiveness, MC and SWB is verified.

13. DISCUSSION

It was hypothesized that conscious, intentional daily awareness and practice of forgiveness would reduce marital conflict and augment the subjective well-being of dyadic relationships. This hypothesis was tested through an experimental model called Forgiveness Marital Enhancement Programme (FMEP).

It is proved from the study that a conscious, intentional and deliberate step would enable one to forgive the transgressor (Fincham et al., 2005) and help one alleviate the bad effect of unresolved conflict on physical and psychological health (Biagini, 2019; Ross et al., 2017) and predict a more healthy and productive relationship (Paleari et al., 2005). The present study result reveals that forgiveness is significantly and positively correlated with marital happiness and well-being. This finding is consistent with previous findings of the research examining the relationship between these two variables (Fincham et al., 2002; Gordon et al., 2009; McNulty, 2008; and Orathinkal & Vansteenwegen, 2006). In addition, individuals are found to be more willing to forgive their partners and their conflict discussions are typically constructive (Hoyt, Fincham, McCullough, Maio, & Davila 2005).

The broaden-and-build framework states that a single positive experience of forgiveness can extend and intensify the positive emotions and positive actions circle and build onto one another, thus creating upward spirals (Fredrickson, Cohn, Coffey, Pek, & Finkel, 2008; Fredrickson, 2001). The study conducted by LouieDoss & SoosaiNathan, (2023) on gratitude intervention found that a mindful practice of positive emotion of gratitude exercises helped the participants not only to remember positive events but also



broaden their views to have positive thoughts amidst a negative situation and learn lesson from it which is true of forgiveness too since forgiveness is also a positive emotion.

Expressing forgiveness to one's couple makes them feel that he or she is understood, accepted, and loved in all odd situations of their relationship. This mechanism influences not only the thought processes but the ability to think positively about their future relationship too. Thus, forgiveness may have the potential to not only work to buffer couples against distress but also as a positive mechanism facilitating an optimistic outlook for the future of the couple (Gordon & Baucom, 2009).

Scientific findings of positive psychology regarding forgiveness highlights that the attitude of forgiveness is important to be well embedded and continuously constructed in married couples' mind and heart which benefits them to maintain positive mental and physical health, advantageous relationships with others, and positive well-being (Warsah, 2020). The current study reveals that FMEP intervention of positive emotions helped persons to develop resources to deal with life challenges that in turn lead to well-being and life satisfaction (Cohn, Fredrickson, Brown, Mikels, & Conway, 2009) and assists the couple in acquiring effective conflict resolution behaviours (Fincham et al, 2007).

14. SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

More research is necessary to investigate forgiveness relationships with other variables within and outside the dyadic relationship. Conducting interventions in the early stages of married life will have a deeper and long-lasting impact on their life. A longitudinal study with larger samples needs to be conducted to observe the change in their forgiveness after the FMEP Intervention. Future research may consider comparing the prevalence of forgiveness and the relationship between MC and SWB among early, mid, and late married couples to find out and define whether different marital stages of couples influence the level of forgiveness or not. The FMEP can be incorporated into the premarital preparation programme.

Some concerns: Though the instructions were comprehensive, reminders were given regularly and communication between the researcher and participants was well maintained, yet it is uncertain how well the participants followed the protocol as it was intended (e.g., writing entries every day), given that they were largely left to complete the exercise at their discretion.

15. CONCLUSION

The current study confirms that participation in a Forgiveness Marital Enhancement Programme (FMEP) can significantly reduce marital conflict and enhance subjective well-being in intimate dyadic relationships. It also reveals that conscious, intentional daily awareness and expression of forgiveness can trigger an upward spiral in well-being by buffering against negative emotions. The study's results demonstrate that enhancing the forgiveness via FMEP can have remarkable effectiveness in counselling and therapeutic interventions. FMEP is a positive, novel, and non-invasive approach to amplifying positivity in a dyadic relationship. Thus, generating a positive attitude of forgiveness among married couples, would certainly develop the ability to adapt, evolve and maintain a positive physical and mental well-being in family and society.

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