



Authentic Happiness in Marriage: How Do Effective Communication and Positive Emotional Support Contribute?

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Abstract

In today's marriages, a common issue is the lack of effective communication and positive emotional support, which can lead to divorce and impact authentic marital happiness. This study aims to explore the relationship between effective communication, positive emotional support, and authentic happiness in marriage. A total of 72 couples participated in this research, selected through purposive sampling. Criteria included a marriage duration of no more than 5 years and an age range of 19-40 years for partners, aligning with early adulthood developmental theory. Data were analyzed descriptively, followed by prerequisite analysis and hypothesis testing using regression analysis. The results indicate a significant relationship between effective communication, positive emotional support, and authentic marital happiness. These findings have practical implications for premarital counseling and guidance programs, offering a reference for counselors to inform couples about the importance of effective communication and positive emotional support.

Keywords: *Effective communication, positive emotional support, authentic happiness.*

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Introduction

Early adulthood is considered a peak period in individual development (Putri, 2022), beginning between the ages of 18 and 40, during which individuals experience many significant changes across various aspects of life (Santrock, 2023). One primary developmental task in early adulthood is establishing a family through marriage (Hurlock, 2024). The Indonesian government regulates the minimum marriage age through Law No. 16 of 2019, Article 7, Paragraph 1, stating that marriage is only permitted if both men and women have reached the age of 19. Based on this regulation, individuals aged 19 and older are considered to be in early adulthood and deemed physically and emotionally mature enough to marry. Previous research supports this perspective, viewing early adulthood as a crucial phase for self-identity formation and adjustment to new life roles, including marriage (Zhu, 2023; Zahara, 2023). Other studies also highlight the importance of emotional stability and maturity in marriages that begin in early adulthood (Haider & von Stumm, 2022).

Marriage is a sacred covenant or contract between a man and a woman, involving sacred vows and ceremonies, with the goal of forming an enduring, happy, and harmonious family based on guidance from God Almighty (Santoso, 2024). Marriage is undertaken with the hope that the married couple shares a mutual purpose in achieving authentic happiness (Soeharso et al., 2023; Ojebiyi, 2023).

According to Seligman (2021), authentic happiness is a state in which one achieves a balance between positive emotions, engagement, and meaning in life. This happiness extends beyond mere short-term pleasure, encompassing a sense of meaning and purpose in daily life (Lutz et al., 2022). Several studies also emphasize the importance of balancing emotional and cognitive aspects to establish authentic happiness in marriage (Sewaybricker & Massola, 2022), and active engagement in meaningful activities has been shown to enhance well-being, life satisfaction, and happiness in marriage (Bagheri et al., 2023). However, individuals may sometimes face challenging issues that ultimately lead to divorce.

Divorce is generally driven by unhappiness within the household. This unhappiness is often triggered by ineffective communication and a lack of positive emotional support, contributing to low levels of

authentic happiness in marriage. This is reinforced by research findings indicating that positive communication and emotional support consistently predict marital satisfaction, while negative communication often leads to marital conflict (Amato & Previti, 2021). Positive communication and emotional support are crucial for building a harmonious family, as they can improve quality and sustain relationships in line with marital expectations (Canary & Stafford, 2022).

Effective Communication and Authentic Happiness

In the context of marriage, effective and positive communication is essential for building a harmonious family and achieving true happiness (Shabila & Puteri, 2023). Recent studies also emphasize the importance of positive communication patterns within marriage to maintain relationship quality and couple happiness (Ragul, 2023). This includes effective communication with oneself and others, as well as a profound discovery of life's purpose. Such happiness involves feelings that support one's mental and emotional well-being, encompassing positive actions that generate a sense of happiness and meaning (Kostiuchenko, 2022). Research by Al-Othman (2021) indicates that effective communication is a highly influential determinant in couple happiness. In line with this, Seligman (2021) emphasizes that communication within a family is crucial as it helps prevent conflicts, strengthens family bonds, and creates a healthy, harmonious family environment.

Effective communication plays a pivotal role in creating authentic happiness within marriage. Studies show that effective communication patterns can enhance marital satisfaction and significantly impact couples' happiness levels. Through good communication, couples can share thoughts and feelings, reinforcing emotional attachment, ultimately supporting marital happiness (Ragul, 2023). Additionally, effective communication helps resolve issues and improve relationship satisfaction, making couples feel happier and more connected (Vangelisti, 1992).

The relationship between communication and authentic happiness is also tied to the quality of daily interactions. Research indicates that everyday communication activities, such as expressing affection

verbally and non-verbally and effective conflict management, are closely linked to marital happiness (du Plooy & De Beer, 2018). Moreover, couples who are satisfied with their communication tend to experience higher levels of marital happiness, as good communication enables them to resolve conflicts more constructively (Lavner et al., 2016). Thus, effective communication forms an essential foundation for true happiness in marriage.

Positive Emotional Support and Authentic Happiness

Positive emotional support involves providing encouragement for positive feelings, such as joyful and happy emotional experiences (Seligman, 2021). This support is a key factor in achieving happiness and satisfaction in marital life. Putri and Kusumaningrum study (2024) shows a positive relationship between couple togetherness and positive emotions toward marital happiness. Similarly, Lailiyah (2012) revealed that positive emotional support is closely correlated with happiness in marriage. However, achieving happiness and harmony in marriage is not easy. Many couples face challenges in maintaining harmony, which ultimately can affect the attainment of true happiness. Such disharmony may even lead to serious issues culminating in divorce, an outcome that is certainly undesirable (Matondang, 2023).

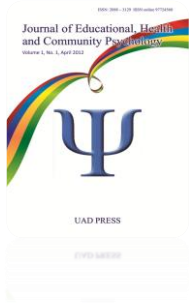
Positive emotional support is closely related to authentic happiness. Studies show that strong social support—whether from friends, family, or colleagues—can strengthen happiness through the enhancement of positive emotions and the ability to cope with stress. For instance, social support has been shown to mediate the effect of emotional intelligence on life satisfaction, ultimately leading to authentic happiness (Kong et al., 2019). Furthermore, other studies indicate that authentic leadership in the workplace positively affects employees' happiness, which then strengthens their emotional commitment to work (Semedo et al., 2019). Even more broadly, positive emotions are associated with increased resilience and overall life satisfaction (Cohn et al., 2009).

In essence, positive emotional support influences happiness not only by increasing feelings of comfort but also by building psychological resources such as resilience, emotional regulation, and life satisfaction. Research on social support among middle-aged women indicates that this support can

enhance happiness, especially through the increase of positive psychological capital (Park et al., [2023](#)). Thus, the relationship between positive emotional support and authentic happiness is mutually reinforcing, with emotional support laying the foundation for achieving deeper and more authentic happiness through various psychological mechanisms.

Novelty in this research can be supported by several studies that underscore the importance of effective communication and emotional support in marriage as key elements in achieving authentic happiness. Research shows that consistent emotional support in partner relationships plays a significant role in enhancing marital happiness and satisfaction (Wright & Aquilino, [1998](#)). Additionally, positive communication that effectively expresses emotions has been proven to increase marital satisfaction and reduce emotional conflicts, which are crucial for maintaining marital happiness (Vazhappilly & Reyes, [2018](#)). Further, studies examining partner interactions show that emotional openness and effective communication greatly influence marital happiness and stability, especially in managing conflict (Priem et al., [2009](#)). This research provides new insights by emphasizing the importance of effective communication and positive emotional support as the foundation for authentic happiness in marital relationships.

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the role of effective communication and positive emotional support in creating authentic happiness within the context of marriage. Unlike previous studies, which focused more on general social interactions and emotional regulation as primary factors of authentic happiness, this study expands the discourse by highlighting the importance of effective communication patterns between partners and the contribution of positive emotional support. The research findings are expected to offer practical guidance for family counselors in developing counseling and guidance programs and informational services to help couples understand how to create and sustain authentic happiness in their marital lives. Thus, this study offers a new perspective, concentrating on communication and emotional support as the keys to achieving authentic marital happiness.



Method

Design

This survey research used a cross-sectional design to examine the relationship between effective communication, positive emotional support, and authentic happiness.

Participants

The study involved a population of 268 married couples, from which a sample was drawn using purposive sampling. Criteria included a maximum marriage duration of 5 years and an age range of 19-40 years, aligning with early adulthood developmental theory and governmental marriage age regulations. This yielded a sample of 72 couples.

Measurement

This study used the Effective Communication Instrument, Positive Emotional Support Instrument, and Authentic Happiness Scale as measurement tools. Validity was assessed using content validity through expert judgment, while reliability was measured using internal consistency via Cronbach's alpha statistics.

The effective communication scale assesses the extent to which married couples communicate openly and share feelings honestly. Sample items include, “My partner and I openly share our feelings with each other” and “I feel listened to by my partner when we discuss things.” These items are rated on a Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). This instrument is grounded in the Communication Theory of Intimacy (Canary & Stafford, [2022](#)), which posits that effective communication in couples involves openness, emotional support, and self-disclosure, all of which enhance relationship quality and understanding.

The positive emotional support scale evaluates the extent to which emotional support from one's partner contributes to marital happiness. Sample items include, "I feel emotionally supported by my partner" and "My partner provides positive encouragement when I face problems." These items are also rated on the same Likert scale, from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). This instrument is based on the theory of Emotional Support in Relationships (Cutrona, 1996), which suggests that positive emotional support strengthens relationships by providing security and emotional stability, ultimately contributing to happiness.

The authentic happiness scale measures married couples' authentic happiness, which reflects feelings of satisfaction and deep meaning in the relationship. Sample items include "I feel that my life with my partner has meaningful purpose" and "I experience genuine happiness in my relationship." This instrument also uses a Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The underlying theory is the Authentic Happiness Theory (Seligman, 2002), which asserts that authentic happiness is derived from a combination of positive emotions, attachment, and the achievement of meaningful goals within the partnership.

Data Analysis

This study used regression analysis to examine the relationships among research variables. Normality, linearity, and multicollinearity tests were conducted prior to hypothesis testing. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 20.

Result

Descriptive Categorization



The first finding presented in this study is the descriptive categorization results from the research sample. Data collected and processed through the effective communication instrument for the entire sample of 72 married respondents were analyzed based on Frequency Distribution and Effective Communication Score Categories.

Table 1
Frequency Distribution and Score Categories of Effective Communication

Category	Interval	f	%
Very Good	≥144	14	19
Good	117-143	45	63
Fairly Good	90-116	9	13
Poor	63-89	3	4
Very Poor	≤62	1	1
Total		72	100%

Based on the table above, it shows that overall, married couples with "Very Good" effective communication total 14 (19%), those in the "Good" category total 45 (63%), couples in the "Fairly Good" category total 9 (13%), those in the "Poor" category total 3 (4%), and couples in the "Very Poor" category total 1 (1%). Meanwhile, the description of the Mean and Percentage (%) of Effective Communication based on Indicators is presented in [Table 2](#) below.

Table 2
Description of Effective Communication Data Based on Its Aspects

Variable	Sub	Score
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Variables		Max	Min	Total	Mean	%
Effective communication (Canary & Stafford, 2022)	Positivity	40	8	2.194	30,47	76
	Openness	20	4	1.109	15,40	77
	Assurances	30	6	1.632	22,67	76
	Social Networking	40	8	2.180	30,28	67
	Sharing Task	40	8	2.199	30,54	76
Total		170	34	9.314	129,36	76

Based on [Table 2](#) above, it can be seen that the average score for the effective communication variable is 129.36, with a percentage of 76%, falling into the "Very Good" category. This is evident across several indicators within the effective communication sub-variables, as follows: (1) *Positivity* has an average score of 30.47 (76%), classified as "Good"; (2) *Openness* has an average score of 15.40 (77%), also in the "Good" category; (3) *Assurances* has an average score of 22.67 (76%), categorized as "Good"; (4) *Social Networking* has an average score of 30.28 (67%), falling into the "Fairly Good" category; and (5) *Sharing Tasks* has an average score of 30.54 (76%), which is in the "Good" category. The results of the data processing for positive emotional support from the entire sample are presented in [Table 3](#) below.

Table 3
Frequency Distribution and Score Categories for Positive Emotional Support

Category	Interval	f	%
Very High	≥177	23	32
High	143-176	41	57
Moderate	109-142	5	7
Low	75-108	2	3
Very Low	≤74	1	1
Total		72	100

[Table 3](#) above shows that overall, married couples with very high positive emotional support total 23 (32%), those in the high category total 41 (57%), couples in the moderate category total 5 (7%), couples in the low category total 2 (3%), and those in the very low category total 1 (1%). Meanwhile, the

description of the Mean and Percentage (%) of Positive Emotional Support based on Indicators is presented in [Table 4](#) below.

Table 4
Mean and Percentage of Positive Emotional Support Based on Its Aspects

Variable	Sub-Variables	Score				
		Max	Min	Total	Mean	%
Positive Emotional Support (Seligman, 2021)	Satisfaction	30	6	1726	23,97	80
	Pride	20	4	1163	16,15	81
	Calmness	20	4	1173	16,29	81
	Enjoyment	20	4	1141	15,85	79
	Gratification	20	4	1151	15,99	80
	Optimism	20	4	1118	15,53	78
	Hope	25	5	1431	19,88	80
	Confidence	20	4	1173	16,29	81
	Trust	15	3	825	11,50	77
	Assurance	20	4	1163	16,15	81
Total		210	42	12067	167,60	80

Based on [Table 4](#) above, it is known that the overall average score for the positive emotional support variable is 167.60. A breakdown based on aspects within the sub-variable of positive emotional support shows: (1) Satisfaction, with an average of 23.97, 80% in the high category; (2) Pride, with an average of 16.15, 81% in the high category; (3) Calmness, with an average of 16.29, 81% in the high category; (4) Enjoyment, with an average of 15.85, 79% in the high category; (5) Gratification, with an average of 15.99, 80% in the high category; (6) Optimism, with an average of 15.53, 78% in the high category; (7) Hope, with an average of 19.88, 80% in the high category; (8) Confidence, with an average of 16.29, 81% in the high category; (9) Trust, with an average of 11.50, 77% in the high category; and (10) Assurance, with an average of 16.15, 81% in the high category. Next, the results of frequency distribution and score categorization through the Authentic Happiness in Marriage instrument from the entire sample are presented in [Table 5](#) below.

Table 5

Frequency Distribution and Score Categories for Authentic Happiness

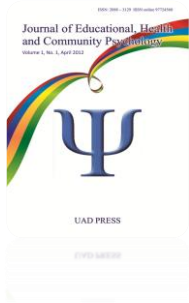
Category	Interval	F	%
Very High	≥98	27	38
High	80-97	40	56
Moderate	62-79	3	4
Low	44-61	1	1
Very Low	≤43	1	1
Total		72	100

Based on [Table 5](#), it shows that, overall, married couples have Authentic Happiness in marriage with 27 couples (38%) in the Very High category, 40 couples (56%) in the High category, 3 couples (4%) in the Moderate category, 1 couple (1%) in the Low category, and 1 couple (1%) in the Very Low category. Next, [Table 6](#) presents the description of the Mean and Percentage of aspects of Authentic Happiness.

Table 6
Description of Mean and Percentage (%) of Authentic Happiness Based on Indicators

Variable	Sub Variables	Skor				
Authentic Happiness (Seligman, 2005)	Ecstasy	Max	Min	Total	Mean	%
	Comfort	40	8	2344	32,56	81
	Absorption	20	4	1182	16,42	82
	Engagement	30	6	1763	24,49	82
	Total	25	5	1503	20,88	84
	Total	115	23	6792	94,33	82

Based on [Table 6](#) above, it is known that overall, the average score for Authentic Happiness in marriage is 94.33, with 82% falling into the Very High category. The breakdown based on aspects of the Authentic Happiness variable is as follows: (1) Ecstasy, with an average of 32.56 (81%), falls in the High category; (2) Comfort, with an average of 16.42 (82%), is in the High category; (3) Absorption, with an



average of 24.49 (82%), also falls in the High category; and (4) Engagement, with an average of 20.88 (84%), is in the High category

Regression Analysis Test

Before processing the data, the researcher ensured that the data met parametric assumptions. The results of the parametric assumption tests indicated that the data were normally distributed, linear, and showed no multicollinearity among the independent variables.

Table 7
Results for R, Adjusted R square, F-value, and significance.

Model	R	R Square	F	df	p
1	.890	0,792	131,054	2	.000

Based on the results shown in [Table 7](#), the correlation coefficient (R) of 0.890 indicates a very strong relationship between the independent and dependent variables in this model. The R Square value of 0.792 suggests that 79.2% of the variation in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variables. In other words, this model has a fairly good ability to explain the variations in the data. Additionally, the F value of 131.054 with a significance level of $p = 0.000$ indicates that the model is overall significant and reliable for explaining the relationships between the variables studied.

Table 8
Results of the Mean, Standard Deviation, and Intercorrelation of Variables

Measure	M	SD	1	2	3
Effective Communication	151,5	5,2	1.000		
Emotional Support	171,9	5,5	.537**	1.000	
Authentic happiness	101,6	3,9	.728**	.855**	1.000

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

The analysis results in [Table 8](#) show the mean (M), standard deviation (SD), and intercorrelations among the variables in this study: effective communication, emotional support, and authentic happiness. Effective communication has an average score of 151.5 with a standard deviation of 5.2. Emotional support has a mean of 171.9 and a standard deviation of 5.5, while authentic happiness has a mean of 101.67 and a standard deviation of 3.9.

From the intercorrelation results, it is evident that effective communication has a significant positive correlation with emotional support ($r = .537, p < .01$) and authentic happiness ($r = .728, p < .01$). Emotional support also shows a stronger positive correlation with authentic happiness ($r = .855, p < .01$). This indicates that both effective communication and emotional support positively correlate with authentic happiness in marriage, with emotional support having a stronger relationship with authentic happiness compared to effective communication. See [table 9](#) below for detail.

Table 9
Results of the regression analysis of spiritual level and self-control with FoMO

Variable	B	SEB	β	t	p
Effective Communication	,209	,047	,316	4.472	,000
Emotional Support	,329	,035	,657	9.295	,000

Discussion

This study aimed to examine the role of effective communication and positive emotional support on authentic happiness in marriage. Based on data analysis results, a highly significant positive relationship was found between effective communication and authentic happiness in marriage. Previous studies have found a significant positive correlation between effective communication and marital satisfaction, which serves as a proxy for authentic happiness. For example, high emotional communication is strongly linked to increased marital happiness ($r = 0.91; P < 0.01$) (Girma, 2024). Another study found that 90.4% of variance in marital satisfaction could be attributed to spousal communication (El Haddadi et al., 2024).

Effective communication skills, such as empathy, active listening, and using “I” statements, are essential. These skills help manage conflicts and create a positive interaction environment, enhancing marital satisfaction (du Plooy & de Beer, 2018). Communication also interacts with sexual satisfaction to impact marital happiness. Effective communication can mitigate the negative impact of low sexual satisfaction on marital happiness and vice versa (Vazhappilly & Reyes, 2016).

Communication plays a moderating role in conflict resolution, which, in turn, affects marital satisfaction. Effective communication helps resolve conflicts more constructively, leading to improved marital satisfaction (Weger, 2005). The perception of being understood by one’s partner (self-verification) is mediated by effective communication. This perception greatly influences marital satisfaction, especially in conflict situations (Litzinger & Gordon, 2005).

This study also found a highly significant positive relationship between positive emotional support and authentic happiness in marriage. This finding aligns with previous research, such as Amelia (2021), which found that higher positive emotional support led to greater marital happiness. This finding is further supported by Lailiyah (2012), who reported a significant positive relationship between positive emotional support and marital happiness. Positive emotional support refers to the support of positive feelings, including joy, pleasure, satisfaction, calmness, and hope, accompanied by encouragement (Seligman, 2021). Positive emotions are a person’s ability to engage in behaviors that have a positive impact. Positive emotions benefit marital relationships, especially between husband and wife, as individuals not only see others as part of their self-concept but also better understand others’ perspectives, enhancing family interaction and effective communication (Pahlevi, 2022).

Previous research also found that emotional support from one’s partner is significantly related to higher marital satisfaction and well-being. Studies show that receiving the desired amount and type of emotional support from a partner results in more positive feelings and higher relationship satisfaction (Rusu et al., 2015; Lorenzo et al., 2018). Emotional support is crucial in reducing depressive symptoms

and enhancing overall happiness in marriage. The perception of receiving emotional support mediates the relationship between giving support and the mental health of the recipient (Lorenzo et al., 2018).

Intimacy, empathy, and validation in marriage are important predictors of happiness. Couples who report higher levels of agreement, empathy, and support tend to experience greater marital happiness (Fahd & Hanif, 2019). Mutual support, where both partners provide support to each other, mediates the relationship between the sanctity of marriage and marital satisfaction, indicating that emotional support is a key factor in achieving authentic happiness (Ko & Lewis, 2011). Positive emotional expressiveness, while having a limited direct impact on marital functioning, contributes to a supportive and positive marital climate. In contrast, negative emotional expressiveness has a strong, negative impact on love and conflict within marriage (Sandhya, 2009; Rauer & Volling, 2005).

This study has several limitations that should be considered. First, limitations in sample size or diversity, such as age variation, cultural background, or length of marriage, may affect the generalizability of findings. Second, the use of a cross-sectional design limits causal conclusions, as the relationship between effective communication and authentic happiness may not indicate causality. Furthermore, this study may not consider other contextual factors relevant to marital happiness, such as economic factors, extended family roles, or social pressures. This study also does not account for long-term dynamics, where communication and emotional support may change over time, potentially impacting authentic happiness. Unexplored cultural and social factors are also limitations, as effective communication may vary depending on cultural norms. Finally, other important variables, such as personality, mental health, or external stressors, may not be controlled, so these findings should be interpreted cautiously. Considering these limitations is essential for providing a more critical context to the findings and for further, more comprehensive research.



Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that there is a highly significant positive relationship between effective communication and emotional support with authentic happiness in marriage. Effective communication, characterized by active listening, empathy, and emotional validation, plays a crucial role in enhancing marital happiness. Positive emotional support also proves to be a key factor in maintaining psychological well-being and satisfaction in relationships. These findings indicate that good communication skills and providing emotional support not only help in managing conflict but also contribute directly to achieving authentic happiness in married life. However, given some limitations, further research is needed to expand and deepen understanding of these dynamics, especially by considering various other factors that influence marital relationships.

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Author Contribution Statement

The author was responsible for proposing the research idea and design, designing the study, creating the module, writing the initial draft of the publication manuscript, coordinating the research implementation, and revising the publication manuscript. The academic advisor assisted in developing the research idea, guided the module creation, guided the drafting of the publication manuscript, and coordinated the research implementation.

Conflict of Interest

The researchers declare that this paper has no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability

Data can be provided upon request to the author.

Declarations Ethical Statement

The study followed the guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki.

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all persons involved in the study.

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