

## Trust in Couples Mediates the Relationship between Self-Acceptance and Happiness in Marriage in the Rote Tribe



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**ABSTRACT:** This research aims to examine the relationship between self-acceptance and happiness in married couples in the Rote tribe, as well as the role of trust as a mediator in this relationship. The method used is a quantitative approach. The measuring instruments used include a self-acceptance scale, a happiness scale, and a confidence scale, the validity and reliability of which have been tested. The research sample consisted of 116 married couples selected using techniques quota sampling. The results of the analysis show that there is a significant positive relationship between self-acceptance and happiness ( $p < 0.01$ ), which means that the higher the partner's level of self-acceptance, the higher the level of happiness felt. Additionally, mediation analysis revealed that trust served as a significant mediator in the relationship between self-acceptance and happiness ( $p < 0.05$ ). The implications of this research indicate that self-acceptance is a key factor influencing the happiness of marital partners, and trust serves to strengthen the relationship. These findings provide important insights for psychological interventions aimed at increasing happiness in marriage through developing self-acceptance and trust between partners. It is hoped that this research can become a reference for further research and provide insight for practitioners in the field of family psychology.

**KEYWORDS:** Happiness, Marital Partner Trust, Self-Acceptance, Rote Tribe

### I. INTRODUCTION

East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) is one of 38 provinces in Indonesia located in the southeast. This province consists of four large islands, namely Flores Island, Sumba Island, Timor Island, and Alor Island (known as Flobamora), as well as 562 other islands that are rich in ethnic and cultural diversity. NTT is inhabited by various tribes with unique traditions, cultures, and languages, which are characteristic of the local community (Jovani, 2020). In the lives of the NTT community, customs play an important role, including in marriage procedures. This tradition continues to be maintained even though the modern world is developing rapidly (Nuwa, 2013). Marriage customs in NTT, such as those found in the Rote, Sabu, Flores, and Timor tribes, are not just a formal bond between two individuals, but also the unification of two extended families (Jena et al., 2024). The role of the family in marriage customs is very important, from decision-making to life after marriage (Dafiq, 2018). This tradition emphasizes close family ties and the preservation of ancestral values as the foundation of community life (Ingunau, 2020). In NTT traditional marriages, husband and wife can marry with or without the belis tradition. Research by Lango et al. (2022) shows that couples who marry without belis tend to feel higher subjective well-being than couples who practice the belis tradition.

As part of the custom, belis or dowry has an important meaning as a symbol of respect and a bond between two families. This tradition requires the man to fulfill his obligations to the woman's family as a form of social commitment and respect (Kurnia et al., 2022). However, the patrilineal kinship system adopted in NTT often places women in a lower position, even considered equal to children. In Rote society, women are often not involved in traditional activities, reflecting a strong gender bias. In traditional forms, belis is given in the form of symbolic items such as livestock, woven cloth, or other traditional items that represent local culture (Dade, 2012). However, belis has now experienced a shift in meaning. Dade's (2012) research in Mokdale Village, Lobalain District, Rote Ndao Regency, revealed that belis is often demanded in the form of money with a large nominal value. This shift creates severe financial pressure, especially for families with limited economic conditions, which often triggers internal conflicts and affects household harmony. A study by Tukan and Sawarjuwono (2020) revealed the complexity of the belis negotiation process in Rote Ndao, which often involves high social expectations and opens up opportunities for social inequality. In addition, the gender perspective in the practice of belis is an important concern because it reinforces injustice towards women, who often have a weak position in making marriage decisions (Sari et al., 2022). The legal perspective also shows the inconsistency of the belis tradition with Islamic values that emphasize justice and simplicity (Maghfiroh, 2021). The impact of high belis on marriage is evident. Lestari and Wulandari (2021) explain that the economic burden due to belis can reduce the happiness of couples, trigger conflicts, reduce

## Trust in Couples Mediates the Relationship between Self-Acceptance and Happiness in Marriage in the Rote Tribe

effective communication, and have a negative impact on the quality of husband-wife relationships. In fact, this tradition often encourages elopement behavior to avoid high *belis* demands. Women who marry outside of tradition are often victims of violence, while women who remain within the tradition are vulnerable to arbitrary actions from husbands who feel they "own" their wives after paying the *belis* (Kristiyani, 2020).

Marriage is an important social institution in an individual's life. Happiness in marriage is not only about the absence of conflict but also the ability of couples to manage conflict effectively (Dewi & Basti, 2008). Adjustment between husband and wife is the key to achieving happiness. Happiness is an important construct in psychology that encompasses the balance between positive and negative emotions and overall quality of life. According to Seligman (2002), happiness consists of three main aspects, namely (1) a pleasant life through positive experiences, (2) a meaningful life with a purpose in life, and (3) an engaging life through full involvement in activities. In the context of marriage, happiness becomes a goal that helps couples avoid stress and pressure and strengthens relationships through love and commitment (Muhardeni, 2018). Happiness is influenced by external factors, such as social relationships, economic conditions, physical environment, and pleasant experiences, as well as internal factors, such as optimism, self-acceptance, purpose in life, and self-control. The balance between these external and internal factors is very important for maintaining emotional well-being, both individually and in a marital relationship (Simaremare, et al., 2023).

External factors such as financial conditions and social relationships, as well as internal factors such as self-acceptance and optimism, influence marital happiness (Seligman, 2005). Self-acceptance, as defined by Hurlock (1973), is the foundation for individual happiness. Individuals who accept themselves tend to have higher emotional well-being and are able to face life's challenges with a positive attitude (Szentagotai & David, 2013). Self-acceptance, according to Powell (1987), is an individual's ability to accept and appreciate themselves, including shortcomings and failures, without judging or belittling themselves (Husna & Fatolah, 2020). Self-acceptance includes comfort with personal identity, the ability to accept physical and emotional conditions, and the drive to continue to grow. Aspects of self-acceptance include (1) physical acceptance, (2) emotions, (3) personality, and (4) limitations, which help individuals respond to weaknesses realistically and direct them to positive things (Sari & Nuryoto, 2002). Factors that influence self-acceptance include (1) life experiences, (2) social support, (3) social comparison, (4) personal values, (5) and media and cultural influences. Support from family and the environment can strengthen a positive view of oneself, while societal and media expectations can influence self-image. Healthy self-acceptance contributes to emotional wellbeing, the ability to face challenges, build meaningful relationships, and encourage personal growth (Hjelle, 1992; Sartain et al., 1973).

In addition to self-acceptance, trust is also an important factor in marital relationships (Jasielska, 2020). Decreased trust can lead to conflict, while high trust creates a more harmonious relationship (Rusbult & Agnew, 1999). With good communication, couples can resolve conflicts, build closer relationships, and achieve happiness in marriage. According to Rempel (1985), trust is the belief that others will act in a way that is beneficial or not detrimental, which is an important element in a relationship, especially in maintaining the closeness and happiness of the couple (Morrow, 2010). Trust involves feeling comfortable sharing emotions with the belief that the partner will respect and not misuse the information (Winayanti & Widiasavitri, 2016). In longdistance relationships, trust becomes crucial because higher levels of uncertainty regarding the status and future of the relationship can reduce trust (Kauffman, 2000). Aspects of trust include (1) the ability to predict the behavior of a partner that creates stability, (2) the belief that the partner can be relied on in various situations, and (3) confidence in the relationship despite uncertainty. Factors that influence trust include personality predisposition, reputation and stereotypes, actual experiences, and psychological orientations, which shape individual expectations in trusting others (Deutsch, 2006). Trust is built through the stability of relationship patterns and consistent positive experiences, thus becoming the main foundation of a healthy and meaningful relationship.

Overall, self-acceptance and trust play an important role in building and maintaining happiness. Strong self-acceptance increases an individual's belief in themselves, which in turn increases the ability to trust their partner. Trust strengthens the sense of security in the relationship, which supports the achievement of the desired marital happiness (Morrow, 2010). Through this study, it is hoped that a deeper understanding can be obtained regarding the interaction of the relationship between self-acceptance and happiness which is also bridged by trust, where self-acceptance allows for the creation of trust, which ultimately increases happiness in the couple's relationship.

## II. RESEARCH METHODS

In this study, the main focus is to explore the relationship between self-acceptance, trust, and happiness among married couples in the Rote Tribe. The population studied consisted of 59,258 married couples in the Rote Ndao Regency, with the criteria that they were married according to the *belis* tradition and had a minimum marriage age of five years. The sampling process was carried out using the quota sampling technique, which resulted in a total of 116 respondents. Of these, 62 female respondents (53.4%) and 54 male respondents (46.6%), reflect a fairly balanced gender composition in this study.

The development of the measuring instrument in this study involved three main scales: a happiness scale, a self-acceptance scale, and a trust scale in partners. The happiness scale was designed based on three aspects proposed by Seligman (2002), namely a pleasant life, a meaningful life, and self-involvement. Each aspect includes questions designed to evaluate positive experiences, the meaning of life, and the level of individual involvement in daily activities. The results of the analysis show that the happiness scale

## **Trust in Couples Mediates the Relationship between Self-Acceptance and Happiness in Marriage in the Rote Tribe**

has an adequate validity coefficient, with corrected item-total correlation values ranging from 0.314 to 0.734, and high reliability with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.813.

In addition, the self-acceptance scale was also developed by referring to Powell's definition (1987), which emphasizes an individual's ability to accept and appreciate themselves, including shortcomings and weaknesses. This scale includes questions that measure physical acceptance, emotional acceptance, and acceptance of self-limitations. Validity tests show good validity coefficients, with values ranging from 0.404 to 0.944, and very good reliability with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.968. Trust in a partner is measured through a scale that includes three main aspects, namely predictability, dependability, and faith. The development of this scale aims to understand the extent to which partners can be relied on and trusted by each other in their relationship. Validity tests for this scale also showed satisfactory results, with reliability reaching 0.966 in the second analysis.

Data analysis was conducted using multiple linear regression, which was designed to prove the hypothesis regarding the relationship between independent variables (self-acceptance and confidence) and the dependent variable (happiness). Before the regression analysis, classical assumption tests were conducted, including normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests. The results of the normality test showed that the data followed a normal distribution. In contrast, the multicollinearity analysis showed that there were no significant symptoms of multicollinearity among the independent variables. The heteroscedasticity test indicated consistent variations in the residuals of the regression model, which confirmed the validity of the analysis results.

The results of the hypothesis test show that self-acceptance has a significant positive relationship with happiness, with an estimate of 0.115 and a p value <0.001. This indicates that the higher the self-acceptance, the greater the level of happiness felt by the individual. In addition, the analysis also shows that trust acts as a significant mediator in the relationship between self-acceptance and happiness, with an indirect effect estimate of 0.108 (p <0.001). This indicates that strong trust between partners can strengthen the positive relationship between self-acceptance and happiness. These findings confirm the importance of self-acceptance and trust in building happiness in marital relationships. Good self-acceptance allows individuals to interact positively with their partners, while trust creates a safe and supportive environment. This study also provides insights for psychological interventions aimed at improving relationship quality, with a focus on developing self-acceptance and trust between partners, especially in a specific cultural context such as the Rote Tribe.

The aspects of happiness identified in this study indicate that individuals who have high levels of self-acceptance tend to be happier. When couples accept themselves, it creates a more harmonious atmosphere in the relationship, allowing them to support each other and resolve conflicts more effectively. The trust that is built between couples also contributes to increased happiness, as couples who trust each other feel safer to share feelings and face challenges together. Furthermore, this study shows that cultural context, such as the *belis* tradition in the Rote Tribe, can influence relationship dynamics. Communities that have cultural pressures related to the value of *belies* may experience higher levels of conflict, which can affect levels of trust and self-acceptance. Therefore, it is important for psychological interventions to consider cultural context when designing programs aimed at increasing a couple's happiness. Overall, the results of this study not only provide empirical evidence on the relationship between self-acceptance, trust, and happiness but also provide practical recommendations for married couples to develop these qualities in their daily lives. By understanding and applying the principles of self-acceptance and trust, it is hoped that their relationships can become healthier and happier. This study opens up opportunities for further exploration of other aspects of this relationship, as well as how interventions can be designed to address the challenges faced by couples in different cultural contexts.

### **III. RESEARCH RESULTS**

In this study, the implementation was carried out on November 25, 2024, using a survey method through the distribution of online questionnaires. The questionnaire was carefully designed and distributed through social media and instant messaging to reach married couples in the Rote Tribe. A total of 116 respondents participated in this study and met the established inclusion criteria. The data collection process took place over several weeks, giving respondents the opportunity to answer attentively and according to their conditions. This online approach has proven effective in reaching a wider population, as well as ensuring the confidentiality and comfort of respondents in filling out the questionnaire. The characteristics of the respondents show that this study was dominated by women, with 62 respondents (53.4%) and 54 male respondents (46.6%). In terms of age of marriage, 69 respondents (59.5%) had a marriage age of more than five years, while 47 respondents (40.5%) had a marriage age of less than five years. These data provide a clear picture of the population studied, as well as a relevant background for understanding the dynamics of relationships among married couples in the Rote Tribe.

The results of the hypothesis test showed that there was a significant positive relationship between self-acceptance and happiness, with a direct effect estimate of 0.115 and a p value <0.001. This means that the higher an individual's self-acceptance, the greater the level of happiness they feel. In addition, self-acceptance is also positively related to trust in a partner, with an estimate of 0.487 (p <0.001). This relationship shows that individuals who have good self-acceptance tend to trust their partners more. Trust in a partner was shown to have a significant positive relationship with happiness, with a direct effect estimate of 0.222 (p <0.001). This indicates that trust functions as an important element in a healthy relationship, which creates an emotionally safe environment and supports the happiness of the couple. Mediation analysis showed an indirect effect estimate of 0.108 (p <0.001), indicating that trust

## Trust in Couples Mediates the Relationship between Self-Acceptance and Happiness in Marriage in the Rote Tribe

acts as a significant mediator in the relationship between self-acceptance and happiness. The path coefficients generated from the analysis showed that self-acceptance has a direct effect on trust, and trust itself contributes positively to happiness. These path coefficient values provide important insights into the mechanisms linking self-acceptance and happiness, through trust as a bridge that strengthens this positive relationship.

### A. Indirect: The Relationship between Self-Acceptance and Happiness with Trust in Partner as a Mediator Variable Text Font of Entire Document

**Table 1: Indirect**

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Dimension Happiness (Y)</i>	<i>Effect</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>% Mediation</i>
1	Self-Acceptance → Trust in Partner → Happiness	<i>Indirect</i>	0.108	0.018	6.022	<. 001	73.0

**Source:** Statistical Output Program Jamovi 2.3.21 for Windows

This section reveals the indirect effect of self-acceptance (X) on happiness (Y) through trust in a partner (M). The estimated indirect effect is 0.108 with a p-value < 0.001, indicating that trust acts as a significant mediator. The 95% confidence interval for this effect (0.073 to 0.143) indicates that trust not only strengthens the relationship between self-acceptance and happiness but also shows consistency in its effect. Thus, increasing trust in a relationship can strengthen the positive influence of self-acceptance on individual happiness.

### B. Direct: The Relationship between Self-Acceptance and Happiness with Trust in Partner as a Mediator Variable Text Font of Entire Document

**Table 2 : Direct**

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Dimension Happiness (Y)</i>	<i>Effect</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>% Mediation</i>
1	Self-Acceptance → Happiness	<i>Indirect</i>	0.115	0.020	5.803	<. 001	76.0

**Source:** Statistical Output Program Jamovi 2.3.21 for Windows

This table shows the direct relationship between the variables in the study. From the results of the analysis, the relationship between self-acceptance (X) and happiness (Y) has an estimate of 0.115 with a p-value < 0.001. This shows that there is a significant positive relationship, where the higher the self-acceptance, the greater the level of happiness felt by the individual. The 95% confidence interval (0.076 to 0.154) shows that this relationship is consistent and not affected by data fluctuations. This confirms the importance of self-acceptance in increasing a couple happiness.

### C. Direct: The Relationship between Self-Acceptance and Happiness with Trust in Partner as a Mediator Variable Text Font of Entire Document

**Table 3 : Path Coefficients**

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Dimension Happiness (Y)</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>
1	Trust in Partner → Happiness	0.222	0.034	6.425	<. 001
2	Self-Acceptance → Happiness	0.115	0.020	5.803	<. 001
3	Self-Acceptance → Trust in Partner	0.487	0.028	17.274	<. 001

**Source:** Statistical Output Program Jamovi 2.3.21 for Windows

This table provides path coefficients for each relationship between variables. The coefficient for the relationship between self-acceptance (X) and trust in a partner (M) is 0.487 (p < 0.001), indicating a highly significant relationship. This means that good self-acceptance encourages individuals to trust their partners more. Meanwhile, the coefficient for the relationship between trust in partner (M) and happiness (Y) is 0.222 (p < 0.001), indicating that high trust also contributes positively to partner happiness. Finally, the coefficient for the direct relationship between self-acceptance (X) and happiness (Y) is 0.115 (p < 0.001), confirming that the level of happiness increases with high self-acceptance.



### IV. DISCUSSION

In this study, the main focus is to understand the relationship between self-acceptance, trust, and happiness in married couples in the Rote Tribe. The rationale for this study is rooted in psychological theories that emphasize the importance of self-acceptance and trust as key factors in building harmonious relationships. Self-acceptance, as expressed by Powell (1987), is the ability of individuals to appreciate themselves, including all their shortcomings and weaknesses. This is important in the context of relationships because individuals who are able to accept themselves tend to have a more positive outlook on life, which contributes to better interactions with their partners.

The theory of happiness put forward by Seligman (2002) is one of the main foundations of this study. Seligman defines happiness as an emotional condition that involves a balance between positive and negative experiences, as well as overall quality of life. In the context of marriage, happiness is not only characterized by the absence of conflict but more by how couples can manage the conflict in a constructive way. Therefore, it is important for couples to have skills in communication and problemsolving, which are rooted in self-acceptance and trust in each other.

Aspects of happiness include three main elements: a pleasant, meaningful life, and self-involvement. A pleasurable life is related to the positive experiences that individuals experience, while a meaningful life is related to the contribution of individuals to something greater than themselves. Self-involvement, on the other hand, refers to the condition in which individuals are fully involved in the activities they do. These three aspects are interrelated and contribute to individual happiness in marriage. The results of the study showed that there is a significant relationship between couples' self-acceptance and their level of happiness. Individuals who are able to accept themselves well will be better able to contribute positively to their relationships, thus creating a more harmonious atmosphere. The study also found that trust serves as a mediator that strengthens the relationship between self-acceptance and happiness. Couples who trust each other tend to be better able to overcome conflicts and challenges in marriage, which ultimately has a positive impact on their level of happiness.

Hypothesis testing conducted in this study shows that both self-acceptance and trust play an important role in determining the level of happiness of couples. These results are in line with previous studies showing that trust can increase happiness in relationships. Trust in a partner not only increases commitment but also creates a sense of security that allows individuals to explore themselves without fear of negative judgment.

This study also underlines the importance of cultural context in influencing relationship dynamics. The Rote tribe has traditions and social norms that shape the way individuals interact in relationships. In this context, self-acceptance and trust become more complex, because they are influenced by prevailing cultural values. Therefore, it is important for researchers to consider cultural elements when analyzing the relationship between self-acceptance, trust, and happiness.

The contribution of this study is not only limited to the development of psychological theory but also provides practical insights for couples in the Rote Tribe and other communities with similar socio-cultural dynamics. By understanding the importance of self-acceptance and trust in building marital happiness, couples are expected to be more aware of these values and strive to develop these qualities in their relationships. This can have a positive impact on the psychological well-being of couples, as well as improving the quality of the marital relationship as a whole.

From a practical perspective, the results of this study can be used as a basis for psychological intervention programs aimed at increasing self-acceptance and trust among married couples. These programs could include communication training, group activities, and counseling sessions that focus on developing trust and self-acceptance. In this way, couples in the Rote Tribe can be equipped with the tools and strategies needed to build more harmonious and happier relationships. Finally, this study suggests that the relationship between self-acceptance, trust, and happiness is multidimensional and influenced by a variety of factors, including cultural context. These findings open up opportunities for further research that can explore other aspects of this relationship, as well as how interventions can be designed to address the challenges faced by couples in different cultural contexts. Thus, this study not only provides a comprehensive picture of the dynamics of relationships in the Rote Tribe but also contributes valuable knowledge to the development of psychological science and social practice.

### V. CONCLUSIONS

This study aims to determine the relationship between self-acceptance and happiness in married couples in the Rote tribe, with trust as a mediator. Based on the hypothesis proposed by the researcher, there are significant results indicating a correlation between self-acceptance and happiness. This study uses a quantitative method with 116 respondents. The results of data analysis were carried out using relevant statistical programs, indicating that there is a significant positive relationship between self-acceptance and happiness. In this study, trust was shown to play a significant role as a mediator in the relationship between self-acceptance and happiness. This shows that a high level of trust between couples can strengthen the positive impact of self-acceptance on happiness. The higher the self-acceptance of the couple, the greater the happiness felt, especially when accompanied by strong trust between them. The results of this study prove that good self-acceptance and high trust can have a positive impact on the happiness of married couples. Thus, individuals who have good self-acceptance tend to be happier in their relationships. Conversely, individuals who are low in self-acceptance tend to have difficulty achieving happiness, especially if not accompanied by adequate trust in their

## Trust in Couples Mediates the Relationship between Self-Acceptance and Happiness in Marriage in the Rote Tribe

relationships. These findings indicate the importance of efforts to increase self-acceptance and trust in marital relationships in order to create sustainable happiness.

### VI. SUGGESTIONS

Suggestions for Research Subjects, so that married couples in the Rote tribe are more active in developing self-acceptance and trust in each other. This effort can be done through self-reflection activities, therapy, or workshops that focus on improving the quality of relationships. In addition, couples are also advised to engage in open and supportive communication, so that they can create a positive and harmonious environment in their marriage. Increasing self-acceptance and trust between couples will contribute to increased happiness and emotional well-being.

Suggestions for Further Researchers to explore more deeply about other factors that can affect happiness in marriage, such as social support, communication, and gender role dynamics. Further research can also be conducted by involving a more diverse population, both in terms of culture and geography, to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the relationship between self-acceptance, trust, and happiness. In addition, the use of qualitative research methods can provide deeper insight into the subjective experiences of individuals in their relationships, so that it can enrich the existing literature in the fields of psychology and marriage studies.

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## Trust in Couples Mediates the Relationship between Self-Acceptance and Happiness in Marriage in the Rote Tribe

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