

# The Impact of Self-Regulation on Social Desirability Among Married Individuals

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**Abstract-** Marriage is a complex psychological and social institution requiring continuous emotional adjustment. This study examines the relationship between self-regulation and social desirability among married individuals. A sample of 150 participants aged 21–40 years was selected using purposive sampling. Data were collected using the Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SSRQ) and the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale. Statistical analysis revealed a significant negative correlation ( $r = -0.278, p < .01$ ), indicating that individuals with higher self-regulation demonstrate lower socially desirable responding. The findings suggest that stronger internal regulation promotes authentic emotional expression rather than impression management. The study contributes to understanding emotional functioning within marital relationships and offers implications for counselling and psychological interventions.

**Keywords:** Self-regulation, social desirability, Marriage, Emotional regulation, Impression management

## I. INTRODUCTION

Marriage represents a significant relational context in which individuals must continuously regulate emotions, behaviors, and interpersonal expectations. Within this framework, self-regulation plays a vital role in enabling individuals to manage internal states and respond adaptively to relational demands. In contrast, social desirability reflects a tendency to present oneself in a socially approved manner, often influenced by cultural and societal norms. In collectivist societies such as India, these pressures are particularly strong, as marital roles are closely tied to family reputation and social expectations. While moderate social desirability may promote harmony, excessive reliance on it can suppress genuine emotional expression.

Life together shapes how people feel inside, not just what they do on paper. One moment blends care with duty, another mixes private thoughts and public roles. How someone handles their emotions often sets the tone at home. Presenting a calm face when tensions rise can quietly shift outcomes. Shared tasks matter less than the mood surrounding them. What others expect seeps into quiet moments between partners. Inner reactions color daily exchanges more than rules

ever could. Managing your feelings, thinking clearly, leaving room for pause - these shape how one acts. When two people are married, staying calm during tension makes space for better solutions instead of quick outbursts. Shifting smoothly through life's changes happens more easily when inner balance is steady. Trouble often grows when impulses take charge too fast. Instead of reacting sharply, some find strength in waiting, listening, then speaking. Arguments may lose their edge when one person slows things down on purpose. Without that steadiness, small moments sometimes swell into bigger rifts. How someone handles pressure influences shared moods across time. Quiet patience builds trust just as much as big gestures might. Yet rigid patterns or sudden shifts without warning wear thin over months. Emotional waves come stronger if nothing anchors them early. What stays measured tends to grow respect; what erupts unchecked risks distance.

## Theoretical Framework

Marriage often shapes how people manage their inner world, thanks to certain mental patterns. Because of this, folks might adjust what they think or do when aiming for targets - or just trying to fit in. When peace matters most at home, restraint tends to rise. Those who watch themselves closely usually act in ways others approve. Social rules? They tend to follow them without much fuss.

People often shape their actions to fit what others expect. In marriage, someone might act extra careful about seeming dependable - like they've got it all together. Praise from society can quietly guide how emotions come across, too. Wanting acceptance shifts small gestures, even without noticing. What people think they should do often guides their actions more than what they actually believe. When family and tradition hold strong sway, going along with marriage rules shapes not just choices but also how feelings are shown. Quiet agreement matters most when belonging comes before standing out.

When what you feel inside clashes with what others expect, it feels off. That uneasy feeling? People often respond by hiding emotions or shifting how they show them. Instead of acting on real feelings, they adjust to fit in. Society pushes certain reactions - so people bend. Not because they want to,

but because standing out brings pressure. Changing your expression becomes a quiet habit. The gap between self and role grows without notice. Relief comes not from honesty, but from blending in. What happens next depends on motive - self-control supports well-being, yet seeking others' approval might mute true feelings. Still, balance shapes outcome: managing emotions helps until acceptance becomes the main goal. Hidden costs appear then; coping turns into concealing. The mind adapts, but not always in ways that heal. Motivation shifts things - growth can become performance.

Focusing on marriage, this work explores how emotions are managed alongside the urge for acceptance. It adds value to psychological science while offering real-world relevance. Through careful analysis, insight emerges about daily interactions between partners. The findings fit into broader conversations about mental health and relationships. What results is a clearer picture of inner balance amid shared lives.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Mugny and colleagues (2017) to examine “How different modes of conflict regulation influence social perceptions of conflict”. The study aimed to challenge the common belief that conflict is always perceived negatively by laypeople. The researchers focused on three conflict regulation styles: epistemic (integrative), competitive (self-confirmatory), and protective (submissive). The sample consisted of 119 first-year psychology students. An experimental evaluation design was employed for the study. Participants were presented with description of three fictitious individuals who differed in their conflict regulation style. Each participant evaluated the described individuals based on perceived social desirability and usefulness. A structured evaluation questionnaire was used to assess participants' judgments. The tools measured perceptions of social desirability and social utility. Data were collected under controlled classroom conditions. Statistical analysis included comparative analyses of mean ratings across the three conflict regulation conditions. Results showed that epistemic and. Epistemic and competitive regulation styles were perceived as more socially useful than protective regulation. These findings indicate that perceptions of conflict depend on how conflict is managed rather than on conflict itself. The study concluded that conflict can be positively valued when regulated constructively, highlighting the importance of conflict regulation style in social judgment.

Lerner, Bowers, and Geldhof (2015) “Highlighted self-regulation as a core developmental mechanism influencing a wide range of outcomes across the life span”.

Drawing from the Relational–Developmental–Systems (RDS) perspective, the authors emphasized that self-regulation develops through continuous interactions between individuals and their social contexts and plays a critical role in health and well-being from early life onward. The chapter situated self-regulation within the RDS framework and addressed key conceptual issues guiding research in childhood and adolescence. Self-regulation was defined and linked to important correlates such as academic achievement, motor functioning, intelligence, and developmental risk factors. The authors also discussed cross-cultural variations and person–context relations in the development of self-regulatory skills. The chapter concluded by stressing the need for context-sensitive research, improved interventions, and advances in measurement methods to better understand self-regulation across development.

Marko Pitesa, Stefan Thau and Madan M. Pillutla (2013) to reconcile conflicting findings on “The role of cognitive control in socially desirable behavior”. The study aimed to understand whether socially desirable actions arise from controlled effort or from natural interpersonal impulses. The researchers proposed that dominant behavioral impulses depend on the salience of interpersonal impact. When interpersonal impact is salient, individuals are naturally inclined toward socially desirable behavior. When interpersonal impact is not salient, individuals tend toward self-serving behavior. The research consisted of four experimental studies. Participants included adult volunteers recruited for laboratory-based experiments. An experimental design was used, involving manipulation of cognitive control and interpersonal impact salience. Tasks were designed to either impair or tax participants' cognitive control abilities. Behavioral tasks were used to assess levels of socially desirable versus self-serving actions. Statistical analyses included comparisons across experimental conditions to assess behavioral differences. Studies 1–3 showed that reduced cognitive control led to less socially desirable behavior when interpersonal impact was not salient. However, when interpersonal impact was salient, reduced cognitive control resulted in more socially desirable behavior. Study 4 demonstrated that engaging in self-serving behavior impaired cognitive control when interpersonal impact was salient. Study concluded that socially desirable behavior depends on situational context, highlighting the dynamic interaction between cognitive control and interpersonal awareness.

Soubelet and Salthouse (2011) “Examined whether age-related differences in affect and personality traits reflect genuine emotional maturity or are partly influenced by social desirability bias”. Using self-report measures of affect, personality traits, life satisfaction, and social desirability, the study found that increased age was associated with lower

negative affect and Neuroticism, and higher positive affect, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and life satisfaction. Social desirability scores were positively related to age and desirable self-reported traits, and negatively related to undesirable traits. Importantly, when social desirability was statistically controlled, the strength of positive age-related trends in affect and personality was reduced. The findings suggest that some age-related improvements in emotional regulation and personality may be influenced by socially desirable responding rather than actual psychological change.

Viswesvaran, and Reiss (2010) examined “Socially desirable responding in the context of personality assessment used for pre-employment screening”. Drawing on Paulhus’s model of social desirability, which distinguishes between egoistic and moralistic bias as well as conscious (management) and unconscious (enhancement) components, the study aimed to test the validity of this framework. A convenience sample of 200 students completed the Comprehensive Inventory of Desirable Responding and the International Personality Item Pool questionnaire under three conditions: honest responding, responding as an ideal managerial applicant, and responding as an ideal teacher applicant. The results provided partial support for the existence of egoistic and moralistic bias but failed to support the distinction between conscious and unconscious forms of distortion. The findings suggested that while Paulhus’s model captures some aspects of socially desirable responding, it does not fully explain the complexity of response distortion in applied assessment contexts.

### III. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a quantitative correlational research design. A sample of 150 married individuals aged between 21 and 40 years was selected using purposive sampling. Self-regulation was treated as the independent variable and social desirability as the dependent variable. Data were collected using standardized tools including the Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SSRQ) and the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS, including descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation.

### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings revealed a significant negative correlation ( $r = -0.278$ ,  $p = .001$ ) between self-regulation and social desirability. This indicates that individuals with higher self-regulation are less likely to engage in socially desirable responding. The results suggest that strong self-regulatory abilities enhance emotional awareness and reduce dependency

on external validation. In marital relationships, this promotes authenticity and healthier communication. The findings support theoretical perspectives that view self-regulation as a mechanism that reduces impression management tendencies.

### V. SUMMARY

The current study looked at the relationship between self-regulation and social desirability among people. Self-regulation is about a person’s ability to control their thoughts, emotions and behaviors to achieve their goals and have good relationships with others. Social desirability is when people try to show themselves in a light especially when they are answering questions about themselves. In marriages people often try to control their behavior and emotions to get along avoid fights and meet what society expects of them. At the time people may answer questions in a way that makes them look good which can affect how they report their feelings, actions and personal characteristics. So understanding the relationship between self-regulation and social desirability can help us see how people balance being true to themselves and getting approval from others in their marriages. This study had 150 people between 21 and 40 years old. We used tests to collect data: the Self-Regulation Questionnaire to measure how well people can regulate themselves and the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale to see how much people try to look good. The people in the study agreed to participate. We kept their answers private. The results showed that people scored an average of 227.46 on desirability with some people scoring higher or lower than that. They scored an average of 16.26 on self-regulation. We used a test to see how self-regulation and social desirability are related. What we found out is that people who are better at self-regulation tend to care about looking good to others. This is important because it means that people who can control their thoughts, emotions and behaviors are more likely to be true to themselves. Since the relationship, between self-regulation and social desirability is real we can say that self-regulation and social desirability are connected in people.

### VI. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that self-regulation significantly influences socially desirable responding among married individuals. Higher self-regulation is associated with more genuine behavior and reduced need for social approval. These findings highlight the importance of fostering emotional regulation skills in marital and counselling contexts.

Looking into how people handle their inner world connects with how they want others to see them, focusing on adults in marriage between ages twenty-one and forty.

Managing feelings, ideas, and actions forms part of daily control - this sits beside the urge most feel to appear good in social settings. One thing shapes personal balance; another steers what gets shown outward. What happens inside often shifts when shaped by outside views. Behavior bends under perception, yet regulation tries to hold steady. Inner discipline meets public image somewhere along the way. How someone governs themselves does not always match how they wish to be seen. Appearances matter - even when effort runs quietly beneath.

Turns out, how well people control themselves links closely to whether they try to impress others. Those who manage their actions better usually avoid saying what sounds good just to fit in. Instead of shaping answers to please, they lean toward honesty when expressing feelings. When it comes to marriage, acting without pretense opens clearer conversations. Real talk grows easier when emotion isn't filtered through approval-seeking.

Keeping control over one's emotions helps people handle disagreements, adjust when things get tough, because they stay steady during hard moments in marriage. People who can manage themselves well often skip pretending to be someone impressive, since honesty flows easier between them and their partner. Even if the link found in the research felt slight, it still showed up clearly in numbers, so self-control does shape how much someone tries to please others with answers.

So the results showed the idea of no link didn't hold up - turns out how people manage themselves really does tie into their need to be liked, at least when it comes to those who are married. Marriage seems to lean harder on honest self-control if you want things to feel real and emotionally steady day to day.

## VII. LIMITATIONS

Even though it adds useful insights, the research comes with notable drawbacks. With only 150 people involved, results might not apply well beyond this group. Because answers came from surveys filled out by participants themselves, there's a chance some gave what they thought were proper replies instead of honest ones. While data was collected systematically, personal viewpoints could still skew outcomes due to how questions were interpreted.

Focusing on timing, the research used a snapshot approach - so pinning down cause and effect isn't possible. Does self-control shape how people answer favorably, or does that tendency reshape self-control? The question stays open. Missing from view: things like marriage quality, how couples

talk, emotional awareness, individual character features, and background culture. Each of these could quietly shift both regulation skills and the urge to respond in accepted ways.

## VIII. IMPLICATIONS

One outcome stands out - people who manage themselves well tend to speak plainly instead of performing. Not acting from a script often leads to deeper trust between partners. When honesty replaces image control, bonds seem to hold stronger over time.

Folks who work in mental health - like therapists and counselors - might find this research fits their needs well. Because of what was discovered, sessions with couples could shift toward building better self-control, like noticing feelings more clearly, pausing before reacting, or adjusting how they handle stress. When people grow stronger in those areas, talking together often gets easier, fights happen less, and relationships tend to feel more satisfying.

Folks who study human behavior might see clearer patterns when they account for the urge to give favorable answers. This awareness often leads to tools that ease pressure to fit in, opening space for honesty between people.

## IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

One path ahead could extend what this work started. Including bigger groups, with wider backgrounds, might show if results hold up elsewhere. Different cultures may respond in their own way. Looking at couples over years instead of months could reveal shifts in behavior patterns. Change does not always appear right away. How people manage emotions and impress others may shift slowly through shared experiences.

Looking deeper into things like how happy people are in their marriage might shed light on self-control and acting in ways others approve of. Instead of just observing, researchers could try hands-on methods, testing exercises meant to boost emotional clarity between partners. One thing that stands out is how well individuals understand themselves emotionally - it likely plays a role. Another angle involves watching how couples talk to each other, since dialogue habits often reflect inner discipline. Programs aimed at growth need real tests, not assumptions. What happens when people work directly on recognizing feelings? That kind of study could reveal more than surveys ever do.

Finding out how people manage themselves during everyday marriage moments often shows up clearer through

talking with couples or watching them interact. These ways of gathering information add depth when placed alongside number-based results, building a fuller picture without relying only on statistics. Looking closely at personal exchanges reveals patterns that surveys might miss entirely.

The research sheds light on how people think and act within marriage. What stands out is how managing oneself shapes real connection between partners. Emotional control isn't just background noise - it plays a central role in keeping interactions grounded and true. Moments of pause often lead to deeper understanding instead of conflict. When individuals handle their reactions, space opens up for honesty. This pattern shows again and again across couples who stay close over time. Inner discipline becomes quietly visible in everyday exchanges. Without it, small tensions grow without notice. The way one person responds can shift the entire mood of a conversation. Lasting bonds seem less about grand gestures, more about consistent personal awareness.

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