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Graphical Analysis of Gravitational Time Dilation near a Schwarzschild Black Hole

A Study of Time Variation as a Function of Radial Distance from the Event Horizon

Abheek Panigrahi

Student

Student Of Class XII
Father Agnel School, Sector-62, Noida, Delhi, India
abheek.panigrahi@gmail.com

***Abstract*— Time poses an interesting behavior near blackholes. The heavy mass and great density of the black holes slow down even time itself.**

Gravitational time dilation, a direct prediction of Einstein's general theory of relativity, quantifies how clocks tick slower in stronger gravitational fields.

In this paper, the behavior of time near a non-rotating (Schwarzschild) black hole is analyzed using a graphical approach. The time dilation factor is modeled as a function of radial distance from the black hole, with particular emphasis on its behavior near the Schwarzschild radius.

By expressing the relation in a generalized, scale-independent form, the dependence of time dilation on radial position alone is examined. A graphical analysis shows that the time dilation factor approaches zero as the radial distance approaches the Schwarzschild radius, indicating extreme slowing of time relative to a distant observer, while approaching unity far from the black hole. The results highlight the non-linear nature of gravitational time dilation and clarify the distinction between proper time experienced near the event horizon and time measured by a distant observer.

I. INTRODUCTION

Time dilation is a fundamental consequence of relativity, describing how the passage of time depends on the relative motion of observers and the presence of gravitational fields. While special relativity accounts for time dilation due to velocity, general relativity predicts that gravity itself can influence the flow of time. This effect, known as gravitational time dilation, becomes especially significant in regions of extremely strong gravitational fields, such as those surrounding black holes.

A black hole, described in its simplest form by the Schwarzschild solution to Einstein's field equations, represents a spacetime region where gravity is so intense that not even light can escape beyond a critical boundary known as the event horizon. The radius of this boundary, called the Schwarzschild radius R_s, plays a central role in determining the behavior of physical processes near the black hole. As an object approaches this radius, relativistic effects become increasingly pronounced, leading to substantial deviations from classical expectations.

One of the most intriguing consequences of this framework is the behaviour of time near the event horizon. From the perspective of a distant observer, clocks located closer to the black hole appear to run progressively slower. This phenomenon can be described mathematically using the gravitational time dilation factor, which depends on the radial distance from the center of the black hole. As the radial distance approaches the Schwarzschild radius, the effect intensifies dramatically.

In this paper, gravitational time dilation is analyzed using a simplified analytical model based on the Schwarzschild geometry. The relationship between time dilation and radial distance is expressed in a generalized form, allowing the behaviour to be studied independently of specific black hole parameters. A graphical approach is used to illustrate how the time dilation factor varies with distance, with particular emphasis on the region near the event horizon. This analysis provides insight into the non-linear nature of gravitational time dilation and highlights the extreme conditions that arise in the vicinity of black holes.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Einstein, in his theory of relativity, described time, length, and simultaneity as quantities that are relative rather than absolute. While special relativity addressed these effects in the absence of gravity, the development of general relativity extended these ideas to include the influence of gravitational fields.

Shortly after, the Schwarzschild metric was derived as a solution to Einstein's field equations, providing a description of spacetime around a non-rotating massive object. This solution led to the derivation of the gravitational time dilation formula, which has proven to be of great importance in understanding the behaviour of time in strong gravitational fields.

It offers deeper insight into the nature of time as a relative phenomenon on a cosmic scale.

III. THEORY

Gravitational time dilation arises as a consequence of the curvature of spacetime described by general relativity. In the presence of a massive object, spacetime is distorted, leading to a difference in the rate at which time passes for observers located at different gravitational potentials.

For a static, spherically symmetric, non-rotating mass, spacetime is described by the Schwarzschild solution to Einstein's field equations. From this solution, the relationship between proper time t', experienced by an observer at a radial distance r, and coordinate time t, measured by a distant observer, is given by:

$$\frac{t'}{t} = \sqrt{1 - \frac{2GM}{c^2 r}}$$

where G is the gravitational constant, M is the mass of the object, and c is the speed of light.

This theoretical framework forms the basis for analysing the variation of time dilation with radial distance and provides the foundation for the graphical representation used in this study.

IV. IMPORTANT FORMULAS

The gravitational time dilation goes as follows:

$$\frac{t'}{t} = \sqrt{}(1 - \frac{2GM}{rc^2})$$

- t' = time near the massive object as observed by a distant observer
- t = time experienced in space; unaffected by mass
- G = Universal Gravitational Constant
- R = Radial distance
- M = Mass of the object
- c = Speed of Light

The Schwarzschild radius formula is: -

$$\boldsymbol{r_s} = \frac{2GM}{c^2}$$

- G = Universal Gravitational Constant
- M = Mass of the object
- c = Speed of Light
- $\boldsymbol{r_s}$ = Schwarzschild Radius

At this radius occurs the Event horizon, beyond which, not even light can escape.

V. METHODOLOGY

This study is based on a theoretical and analytical approach. It relies on established literature, standard equations from general relativity, and mathematical modelling rather than direct experimental data collection. The gravitational time dilation relation was analyzed in a generalized form and represented graphically to study its behaviour with respect to radial distance.

To support the validity of the model, the results were compared with known astrophysical data, specifically parameters associated with Sagittarius A*. This comparative approach serves as a consistency check between theoretical predictions and real-world observations.

VI. Graphical Interpretation

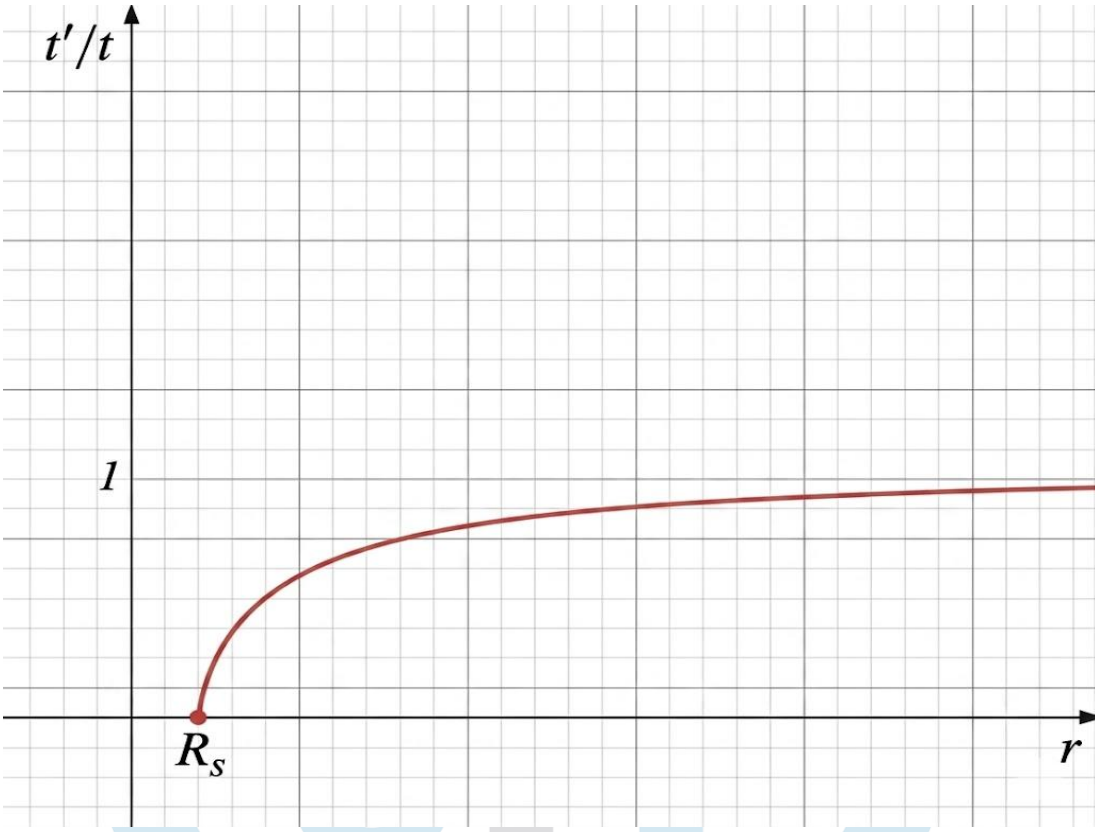

Figure 1: Time dilation factor as a function of the radial distance from the central mass.

The following is a direct plot obtained from the gravitational time dilation formula and provides us with an easy-to-use method to operate between x and y values to find out variables in the equation without having to solve any sort of calculations.

(A side note: If you input the known formula of Schwarzschild radius into the radial distance variable of the equation, the time dilation factor comes out to be 0. Our graph stands to verify this fact as the curve intersects x-axis at the r_s intercept.)

Now, in order to prove the credibility of our graph, we'll use the known and verified values of the supermassive black hole of our galaxy, Sagittarius A*.

VII. Verification Via Pre-Confirmed Data

Aim:

To validate the theoretical model, parameters corresponding to Sagittarius A* were used.

Procedure:

- Standard values of physical constants were considered.
- The mass of Sagittarius A* was substituted into the expression.
- The theoretical value of r_s for Sagittarius A* was compared with the behaviour of the plotted graph.

Graph:

Plotted a graph according to the gravitational time dilation formula and input the required values: -

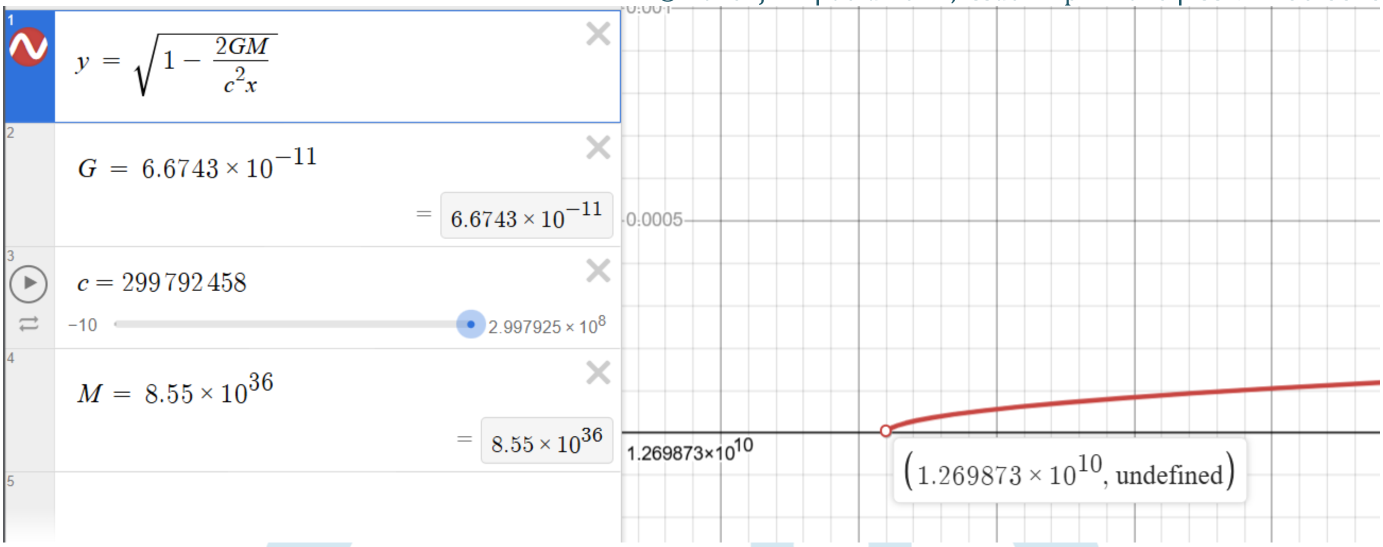

*Figure 2: Graph for mass value of Sagittarius A**

Observation:

The calculated Schwarzschild radius for Sagittarius A* is approximately 1.269873×10^{10} (i.e. 12.7 billion metres). The graph shows that as r approaches this value, the time dilation factor $\frac{t'}{t}$ approaches zero, consistent with theoretical predictions.

Verification Result:

The agreement between the calculated Schwarzschild radius and the behaviour of the graph near $r = r_s$ supports the validity of the model. This demonstrates that the generalized relation accurately describes gravitational time dilation for real astrophysical objects.

VIII. Physical Interpretation

(i) Near-horizon regime (r ≈ r_s) The factor drops steeply toward zero. From the distant observer's perspective, any process (light emission, clock ticks, or an astronaut's heartbeat) appears infinitely slowed. Photons are infinitely redshifted; the infalling object visually "freezes" at the horizon.

(ii) Intermediate region (r > r_s): Dilation remains appreciable (tens of percent), relevant for accretion disks and orbiting matter around stellar-mass or supermassive black holes.

(iii) Far-field regime (r >> r_s): The curve flattens toward 1, consistent with everyday gravitational time dilation on Earth or around the Sun, which is orders of magnitude weaker.

The highly non-linear nature of the curve indicates that significant time dilation effects are confined to regions very close to the event horizon, with negligible effects at larger distances.

Apart from that, a significant point to be observed is that the curve always remains below the y = 1(and tends to 1 at r = infinity). This shows that time runs SLOWER in stronger gravitational fields compared to regions farther away.

It is important to note that this interpretation is made from the perspective of a distant observer. For an observer falling into the black hole, time progresses normally and does not appear to stop at the event horizon.

IX. Result

The variation of the gravitational time dilation factor $\frac{t'}{t}$ with radial distance r from the central mass is illustrated in Figure 1. The graph shows that the time dilation factor increases monotonically with increasing radial distance.

As $r \to r_s$, the time dilation factor approaches zero, indicating extreme gravitational time dilation near the Schwarzschild radius. Conversely, as $r \to \infty$, the factor approaches unity, implying that the effects of gravitational time dilation become negligible at large distances.

The curve remains strictly below $\frac{t'}{t}$ for all $r > r_s$, demonstrating that time measured closer to a massive object always runs slower compared to that measured by a distant observer.

The results are consistent with the theoretical predictions and mathematical calculations.

X. Conclusion

In this paper, gravitational time dilation in the vicinity of a non-rotating massive object was analyzed using a generalized form of the Schwarzschild solution. The relationship between the time dilation factor $\frac{t'}{t}$ and radial distance r was examined both analytically and graphically.

The results demonstrate that gravitational time dilation is highly non-linear, becoming significantly pronounced only in regions close to the Schwarzschild radius. As r approaches r_s, the time dilation factor decreases sharply, while at large distances it asymptotically approaches unity, indicating negligible relativistic effects. This behavior highlights the extreme nature of spacetime near black holes and the relatively weak influence of gravity on time in everyday conditions.

Furthermore, the analysis reinforces the concept that time is not absolute but depends on the gravitational environment of the observer. The distinction between proper time and the time measured by a distant observer plays a crucial role in understanding the apparent slowing of processes near the event horizon.

Overall, this study provides a clear visualization and interpretation of gravitational time dilation, emphasizing its significance in astrophysical contexts and its role in shaping our understanding of spacetime in strong gravitational fields.

There is still great scope for us to understand the actual physics behind time. However, the insights we obtain from the relativity of time and its variance near blackholes are definitely a huge step forward.

This model assumes a non-rotating (Schwarzschild) black hole and does not account for rotation (Kerr metric).

XI. Acknowledgment

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I am also thankful for the availability of high-quality academic resources and literature that enabled me to independently explore gravitational time dilation and black hole physics in a structured and rigorous manner.

Finally, I acknowledge my own dedication and perseverance in carrying out this study, including conceptual understanding, mathematical analysis, and graphical interpretation within a limited timeframe.

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