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EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND MARITAL SATISFACTION AMONG SPOUSES- A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Emotional intelligence (EI) is significant in any relationship because a person with high emotional intelligence understands and regulates his/ her emotional precepts and influences others' feelings. This paper reviews the evidence for the relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction of spouses, giving practical implications and finding gaps in future directions. The result of this study highlights the significant relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction among spouses. According to the findings, EI also has a greater role in communicating with each other, problem-solving, expressing empathy, and conflict resolution.



Research also highlights that high EI in both partners is very much associated with better marital adjustment and satisfaction, whereas differences in the level of EI are related to poor adjustment and marital dissatisfaction. There is also a gender difference in the level of emotional intelligence that affects marital satisfaction. Studies indicate that women show higher EI than men. The study suggests that developing one's emotional intelligence through professional help or personal effort would likely enhance marital satisfaction and stability in marital relationships.

KEYWORDS : *Emotional intelligence (EI) , significant relationship , marital relationships.*

INTRODUCTION

Intelligent use of emotions is considered one of the most vital skills that can make all the differences in self-management and relationship management of an individual. It plays a key, leading role in professional, family, and social success that permits people to relate themselves to others. EI is the ability to understand oneself and others, relate well to people, and adapt to immediate surroundings (Bar-On, 1997). Daniel Goleman (1998) describes EI as the capacity to recognize our feelings and those of others, motivate ourselves, and manage emotions effectively in ourselves and our relationships. Expanding on his earlier definition, Bar-On (2000) defines EI in terms of a range of emotional and social knowledge and abilities that influence our overall capacity to cope with environmental demands. This includes understanding and expressing oneself, being aware of and relating to others, managing strong emotions and impulses, adapting to change, and solving personal or social problems.

Toga and Thompson (2005) describe EI as the tendency to transform negative emotions, thoughts, and behaviors toward others into more positive ones. From the different authors on emotional intelligence, it is clear that EI has a crucial role in understanding self and others and having a healthy relationship.

Marriage is a social union that starts with a public announcement, undertaken with some idea of performance and is expected with an overt marriage contract that spells out mutual obligations of spouses to each other and their children. (Stephens, 1963). Marital satisfaction refers to a subjective state of an individual's feelings of fulfillment in marriage. This encompasses variables such as emotional fulfillment, quality of communication, sexual intimacy, and contentment in the marital relationship. A well-adjusted marriage defined by Burgess, Lock, and Thomas, 1993 is a union in which the attitude and acts of husband and wife are in agreement on chief issues of family like dealing with financial matters, relationship problems with in-laws, where they have agreed upon interests and values. Emotional intelligence is an influential and fundamental factor in enhancing and strengthening the quality of a satisfactory marital relationship (Aliakbari-Dehkordi, M, 2012).

Reviews of literature on emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction

The study by Dale (2005) establishes a strong positive correlation between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction and, in particular, the effect of males' emotional intelligence on marriage outcomes. Besides, it shows that a large difference in emotional intelligence scores between the two spouses may result in higher cases of dissatisfaction. Enhancing emotional intelligence in both spouses, according to Dale, could minimize the cases of conflicts and enhance marital quality.

Brackett, Warner, and Bosco (2005) studied the emotional intelligence of married couples. Their results showed that when one partner possesses higher emotional intelligence, they tend to maintain greater positive relationships.

Bricker (2005) researched the association between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction, finding that overall emotional intelligence is significantly correlated with marital satisfaction. This study also highlighted the importance of interpersonal skills in conflict resolution and fostering intimacy between partners as key determinants of successful marital outcomes.

According to Batool and Khalid (2009), emotional intelligence serves as an indicator of the quality of marital relationships and adjustment.

Joshi and Thingujam (2009) found that emotionally intelligent couples handle their marital life better, understanding both spoken and unspoken words, and effectively managing their own and others' emotions. This ability enables them to manage conflicts and create happiness for their spouse by utilizing emotions.

Schutte, Malouff, et al. (2001) conducted a study on the association of emotional intelligence in married couples with marital satisfaction. The study revealed that married couples with high emotional intelligence reported more marital satisfaction.

Fitness (2001) studied the contribution or influence of emotional intelligence in marriage. It summarized that perceiving emotions, understanding and reasoning about emotions, and regulating or managing emotions are highly valued features of marital success.

Going deeper into the effects of emotional intelligence Mary T.M.J and Adhikari K., 2012 brought out a significant relationship between EI on marital quality, with intrapersonal awareness as the most vital predictor. The result shows that couples who are empathetic towards self and others are effective in the management of emotional control and problem-solving thus they experience better marital satisfaction.

The study by Jalil (2013) emphasizes the role of emotional intelligence in marital adjustment. The study reveals that understanding and utilizing one's emotional intelligence can enhance marital satisfaction. The greater the degree to which a couple learns and shows skills in emotional intelligence, the better they are at overcoming the emotional and psychological problems associated with infertility. The present study has been able to underline the critical role emotional intelligence plays in sustaining a healthy and supportive marital relationship.

The marital adjustment model by Burgess and Cottrell (1980) indicated that satisfaction and extent of agreement or non-agreement of a couple about relevant matters concerning the family, including family finances, recreational activities, religious beliefs and practices, love and affection, relations with friends, sexual relations, parental responsibilities, communication, philosophies of life,

relations from outside of the home, attitude toward wife's job, and household responsibility are essential aspects in marital adjustment.

Johnson et al (2005) worked on "Problem-solving skills and affective expressions as predictors of change in marital satisfaction." Results indicated that problem-solving skills, affective expressions, and their interactions all contributed to changes in marital satisfaction. This means that both how couples solve problems and the feelings expressed within these interactions are very important to the quality of their marriage over time. Johnson's research underlines in detail that marital satisfaction is tied to the multidimensional nature of the problem-solving skills and affective expressions of couples within interactions, which predicts and could be employed toward the improvement of the quality of marriages in the long run.

Effective communication is another important component of emotional intelligence that helps the couple to have a better relationship. It is supported by the studies done by Brackett et al (2005), and Zeidner, Matthews, and Roberts (2013) mentioning that EI helps to have effective communication, better problem-solving capacity, and strong relationship among them.

In the study of Ayub and Iqbal (2012), factors that impact marital satisfaction include in-law relationships, communication, understanding the partner's education, compromise, sexual satisfaction, and dual earning. Other research also finds the same aspects of sustaining marital satisfaction. For example, Silverstein (1990) reported that "increased feelings of social efficacy between spouses may enable one to better cope with in-laws and elicit supportive behaviors from them." It implies that when wives show some empathy towards their in-laws, their relationship becomes good with their spouses. In addition, the higher the combined annual income, the higher the marital success achieved by each spouse.

Henry and Miller (2004) found that the features mostly bringing marital satisfaction at midlife were values, communication, commitment, decision-making, emotional intimacy, and sexual problems.

According to Hendrick, marital satisfaction has various variables such as commitment, love, communication, and individual differences. It was underlined by Gottman and Silver in 1999 that treating each other with more respect, understanding, and appreciation is characteristic of emotionally intelligent couples, which helps to build longer relationships that are happier.

Despite the great expectations of a good marriage, results show that it has a high failure rate nearly one-third of first marriages break up in the first decade of marriage (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002). This shows that marriage, as an institution is at risk. Carl Rogers says that this is because most marriages are founded on concepts or thoughts that are irrelevant, unsophisticated, wrong, and sometimes even egocentric. Many couples believe that love or being committed to one another is adequate to hold a marriage together. However, Rogers says that in this process, couples often miss out on the essential point that for a marriage to work out, it needs to be fair, enriching, and fulfilling for both spouses. Marriage should be such a dynamic process through which both spouses can grow with the eventual result of mutual benefit.

Another key indicator of marital quality is conflict resolution. According to Brackett, Warner, and Bosco, 2005, the terms "conflict resolution" and "dispute resolution" are sometimes used interchangeably. Good conflict resolution involves applying non-violent techniques.

The secret of a good marriage is not having disagreements but how the matter is resolved. The ability to resolve a conflict quite amiably can save marriages. Emotional intelligence can help marital couples resolve issues amicably. Disputes and discrepancies in belief or opinion according to Thomas, 1976 can be resolved by cooperative and assertive means of accommodating the other person. The ability to use one's emotions intelligently brings about the difference in how people manage themselves and their relationships (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002).

Lye's (1993) study investigated the dynamics between gender roles, family attitudes, and marital satisfaction using data from the 1987-88 National Survey of Families. The findings revealed significant correlations: spouses who endorsed nontraditional family attitudes tended to experience lower levels of marital satisfaction. This suggests that divergent views on family roles and expectations can strain marital happiness. Moreover, the study highlighted another critical finding: both husbands

and wives reported decreased satisfaction when their attitudes towards family life differed from those of their spouses. This emphasizes the importance of shared values and mutual understanding in maintaining marital harmony.

There is also a gender difference in the matter of emotional intelligence. For example, Rieff (2001) found females have higher levels of EI compared to males. This finding is confirmed by the finding of Mandell and Pherwani (2003) showing that male and female managers differed significantly in their EI scores: on average, females scored higher than males. These studies indicate that females generally have better control over their emotions and others as compared to males. However, these results contradict Goleman, 1998, who concluded that there is no significant difference in the overall EI scores between males and females.

Another study by Lavenker in 2007 found the "Gender-Wise Comparison of Emotional Intelligence and Marital Satisfaction". The study indicated there were significant differences between genders in three components of emotional intelligence: openness to criticism, self-management, and empathy. Further, it was found that on marital satisfaction, gender differences were found regarding sexual relations and sharing household responsibilities, which were externally linked with socio-cultural factors. The research helps in concluding how gender affects the core emotional characteristics that play a role in marital life.

Brackett and Warner (2005) suggest that, in the traditional sense, the influence of emotional intelligence could not be a function of relationship quality, as this may vary according to the unique dynamics of each couple. This insight emphasizes the distinctions attributed to the role that emotional intelligence plays in shaping the relational course and, in important respects, general satisfaction.

According to Badgujar, 2014, couples who have a love marriage are better at marital adjustment when compared with arranged marriage. Besides, passionate love and marital love, trust along marital adjustment are positively correlated. Health issues such as child-rearing problems, problematic attachments between parents and children, sibling problems, and divorce can be the result of marital problems. Interpersonal communication, empathy, and problem-solving skills significantly affect marital adjustment. It is also documented through literature that situational factors play a very important role in the adjustment to the marriage or dyadic relationship.

Several studies highlight that emotional intelligence performance as a positive contributor necessary to improve marital life. Therefore, those with high levels of emotional intelligence, in terms of emotional awareness, control over emotions, and simple empathy for their spouse, are more likely to have a satisfactory marriage. Important sub-domains of emotional intelligence involve self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, each playing a vital role in a happy marital life.

Gupta and Kumar (2022) note, that enhancement of EI can further bring about a marked improvement in the quality and stability of marital relationships. The development of self-awareness enables individuals to better recognize their emotional states and how these states impact interaction with their spouses. Self-regulation enables an individual to handle impulses and emotions and thus prompt more constructive behaviors during conflicts and disagreements.

Furthermore, with more substantial and increased empathy, deeper emotional understanding is allowed between the two partners. It provides the basis for further mutual support and closeness. Social skills in marriage consist of efficient communication that helps through the process of conflict resolution. Couples who can express themselves openly to one another with respect and accept their differences constructively, often report stronger marital satisfaction.

It takes clear notes that emotional intelligence has much to do with marital adjustment and satisfaction, for it improves empathy, communication, or even solving any form of conflict arising between the couples. According to Goyal, H., & Narayan, S. (2024) couples who develop their emotional intelligence, can make an immense change in their relationship dynamics. According to this study, with emotional intelligence, there is increased empathy, effective communication, and resolution of conflicts among the couple. Emotional intelligence allows the development of a more harmonious and fulfilling marital relationship.

Studies highlight that Emotional intelligence opens up to better empathy, whereby partners understand and sympathize with each other's feelings. It develops deeper emotional links and mutual support within the relationship. Communication is another cornerstone influenced by emotional intelligence, whereby couples can bring out their message clearly, hence reducing the misunderstanding that increases relational clarity.

Moreover, emotional intelligence plays a vital role in conflict resolution. The peoples with high emotional intelligence will then be able to regulate conflict more constructively. They would be able to tenderly and emphatically negotiate the disagreements to save harmony and closeness to the relationship, thereby eliciting profound effects on being a very fundamental skill in marriage.

DISCUSSION

Several factors influence marital satisfaction. Emotional intelligence plays a more important role in keeping and maintaining good relationships between spouses. What is quite clear from the available literature is that it greatly correlates with communication, conflict resolution, and empathy in a marriage where the levels are high. Studies by Goyal, H., & Narayan, S. (2024) support the study done by Mary T. M.J., and Adhikari K., 2012, by summarizing that couples with strong emotional intelligence skills are better equipped to handle stresses and challenges therefore they find greater satisfaction and stability in marriages.

The results from various studies highlight the importance of emotional intelligence, which covers emotional awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills, and enhances marital harmony and satisfaction. Appropriate and effective communication is essential for the development of marital satisfaction, especially when resolving any conflict. It is supported by the study done by Gupta & Kumar in 2022, and earlier studies by Brackett and Warner in 2005.

According to Gottman and Silver (1999) respect, understanding, and appreciation are the characteristics of an emotionally intelligent couple, which helps to have a longer and happier relationship.

The studies done by (Rieff, 2001; Mandell & Pherwani, 2003) found gender differences in emotional intelligence. This study was also supported by Lavenker (2007). According to these studies, women score in EI higher than men.

These studies collectively support the notion that emotional intelligence plays a pivotal role in marital satisfaction.

GAP IN RESEARCH

Despite the enormous body of effective evidence regarding the associations between EI and marital satisfaction, very few studies have been conducted to clarify how the interventions for developing EI impact the quality of marriage in the long term. Most studies specifically focus on immediate outcomes rather than long-term effects. Moreover, whereas differences in EI are noted across genders, how or why such differences occur, and what these differences mean in terms of marital counseling, are not explicitly researched as such. The study also did not give much attention to the cultural differences that influence emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction and very little has been written about how such dynamics play themselves out across different cultures.

FURTHER STUDY

Longitudinal studies should be conducted in the future to determine the long-term effects of EI development intervention on marital satisfaction. Further study of the reasons for gender differences in EI scores and how these differences would impact specifically tailored counseling strategies can go further to improve realizations. Cross-cultural studies will help in understanding how cultural contexts influence the EI-marital satisfaction relationship. Further, investigating the role of EI in different kinds of marriages—such as arranged and love marriages—can help add a more inclusive view of how EI impacts marital dynamics across several marital frameworks.

IMPLICATIONS

The results of these findings are profound for marital counseling and relationship enhancement programs. Developing Emotional Intelligence in persons and couples can head toward a healthier, more satisfying marriage. The following points explain the implications.

Counselling Programs Enhanced with EI Development: Developing EI, can often prove to be of greater efficacy. With an emphasis on developing EI skills such as empathy, emotional regulation, and effective communication, the couple can more effectively navigate the conflicts they are facing. This solves not only short-term problems but also builds long-term resilience in the relationship.

Improved Empathy: Empathy is a very critical component of EI that allows the partners to feel and understand each other's emotions. Improvement in empathy within a marriage can help reduce miscommunication between the two partners and bring them emotionally closer. Exercises and discussions during counseling can improve this ability of empathic listening and understanding.

Better Emotional Regulation: Teaching couples how to manage their feelings and emotions will prevent conflicts from intensifying. Emotional regulation skills will allow an individual to be composed and calm in the face of stressful situations. Counseling can arm one with ways of recognizing and controlling one's emotional triggers, very essential for the harmony of the relationship.

Effective Communication: Communication is the essence of any successful relationship. Courses that teach effective communication skills in marriage, like active listening, clearly articulating one's needs, or how to provide constructive feedback, are very helpful in enriching marital satisfaction. By learning such skills, they will be able to communicate their feelings without blaming or criticizing each other, hence carrying on a more constructive and positive interaction.

Tailored Interventions for Gender Differences: Knowledge of the gender differences in EI could be used in tailoring interventions to fit the specific needs of men and women. Assuming that studies have been done to indicate which areas women are typically strong in, or which types of problem-solving skills men are typically adept at, then the counsellor will know what parts of the program to amplify for husbands and wives to maximize strengths and work on weaknesses. In this way, counselling will be relevant and effective for both spouses.

Prevention: This integration would allow couples to build a strong base before serious issues arise. EI training can, therefore, be taught early on, and bad patterns will not be able to settle while couples are better equipped to handle the problems of the future.

Long-term Relationship Enhancement: It is the continuous development of EI in both partners that would make for long-term satisfaction with the relationship. Growing people experiencing changes would be able to, with enhanced abilities to empathize, regulate feelings, and communicate effectively, adaptively keep alive the emotional bond in a relationship.

Broader Societal Impact: More generally, encouraging EI within marriages can have positive spillover effects within families and communities. Healthier marriages may be correlated with more stable family environments, which are beneficial for the healthy development of children and reduce the social and economic costs associated with marital discord and divorce.

CONCLUSION

Emotional intelligence (EI) is vital for marital satisfaction and relationship quality. Individuals with high EI can better understand and manage their emotions, leading to more harmonious relationships. EI influences key aspects such as communication, problem-solving, and conflict resolution. Enhancing EI through training and counseling can improve marital satisfaction by fostering mutual understanding and effective communication. Addressing gaps in research through longitudinal, gender-specific, and cross-cultural studies will deepen understanding of EI's role in marital relationships and guide more effective interventions. Developing EI is essential for maintaining healthy and fulfilling marriages.

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