



Role of Emotional Intelligence in Dyadic Adjustment of Married Couples

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and dyadic adjustment of married individuals. It was hypothesized, that there will be a significant positive relationship of emotional intelligence with dyadic adjustment of married individuals. This study employed a quantitative correlation survey research design. The sample of this study consisted of married individuals (N = 205) that were approached via purposive snowball sampling technique. The demographic shows that 138 (67.3%) participants were females while males were 67 (32.7%) and their years of marriages were from 10-50 (M= 12.97; 56 & SD=10.62). The data was collected through a google form which included informed consent, demographic information form, Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) and Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS). The results revealed a significant weak positive relationship of emotional intelligence with dyadic adjustment of married individuals. Furthermore, the emotional intelligence remained high as years of marriage progressed but dyadic adjustment decreased with the increase in years of marriage. This implies that emotional intelligence and years of marriage play a limited role in the dyadic adjustment of married individuals. The current findings can be utilized in the development of indigenous intervention plans for marital adjustment and conflict resolution.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, Dyadic adjustment, Married couples.

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Contribution of this paper to the literature

The current study extends the literature on emotional intelligence and dyadic adjustment by studying a previously lesser explored population. Hence, the findings of the current study will provide an indigenous perspective on the institution of marriage which holds utmost importance in Asian culture.

1. Introduction

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is defined as the ability of an individual to perceive, understand, regulate and manage one's own and others' emotion. This enables an individual, to differentiate among emotions which results in better understanding of the social environment which in turn promote personal growth. This ability is divided into four categories, which are perceiving emotions, using emotions, understanding emotions and managing emotions which may varies from person to person (Mayer, Salovey, Salovey, & Sluyter, 1997; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Similarly, Goleman (1995) defines emotional intelligence as characteristic of an individual that enables him for the processing of unpleasant emotions, and asserts that everything does not fall into intellectual intelligence. Traditionally emotional intelligence is referred as an ability of an individual to reason about emotions and processing emotional information in order to intensify cognitive processes (Grewal, Brackett, & Salovey, 2006). Bar-On (2006) proposes a model which states that emotional-social intelligence is a cross-section of interconnected social and emotional competencies, skills and faculties which determine our understanding and expression and ability to understand and relate with others, and to cope with daily demands. So emotional-social intelligence is based on five competencies i.e understanding and expressing oneself, understanding of other individuals and how well one's able to relate to them and successfully coping with the daily demand and challenges of the environment. Therefore, it provides foundation to individuals' intrapersonal and interpersonal skills; which ultimately results in realistic, flexible and effective management of environmental and social domain of life (Schutte et al., 1998).

Emotional intelligence does vary from person to person, as emotionally intelligent person is more aware of their own and others' feelings and emotions. Individual may be open to different aspects of internal experiences such as being more open to positive and negative emotions. This allows individual to label and communicate emotions in an appropriate manner. This ability facilitates an effective regulation of affect within the person and others, and so it contributes to wellbeing of an individual (Mayer & Salovey, 1993). Dildar, Bashir, Shoaib, Sultan, and Saeed (2012) proposes that emotional competencies are learned capabilities rather than innate talents, which a person can develop to acquire psychological wellbeing.

Several studies have hypothesized about a potential link between emotional intelligence and relationship quality among married individuals. Noller, Beach, and Osgarby (1997), stated that individuals' report of marital happiness correlates with accuracy in expressing and recognizing emotions. Carton, Kessler, and Pape (1999) found that predictor of happiness in marital relationships can be sensitivity and accuracy in nonverbal communication. It can be argued that greater levels of marital satisfaction are influenced by higher level of emotional intelligence whereas marital conflict is attributed to lower levels of emotional intelligence.

Dildar et al. (2012) stated that marriage is the most significant relationship between two individuals. A marriage is that relationship in an adult's life which along with legal commitment also has an emotional component. Thus, marital instability in couple's life will affect them as well as their children. Fitness (2001) indicates a distinct association between emotional intelligence and marital adjustment. Perception, understanding and reasoning, and regulation or management of emotions is considered important in marital relationships. Hence, emotional intelligence has said to be a primary factor for the adjustment in all aspects of life (Goleman, 1995).

Marital adjustment is described as the condition in which two individuals; husband and wife feels pleasure and are in state of contentment with each other (Hashmi, Khurshid, & Hassan, 2007). Salovey & Mayer's theoretical framework of emotional intelligence includes various positive characteristics that are related to quality of marital relations. Therefore, individuals who are aware of one's own and others' feelings are open to different aspects of internal experiences whether they are positive or negative. These individuals are able to label those experiences and communicate them, when its appropriate. Thus, emotionally intelligent individual is often considered to be pleasure around and makes others feels better. Such individuals have awareness of themselves and other emotion which often leads to effective regulation of emotions within themselves and others, thereby contributing to personal wellbeing. Furthermore, Salovey and assistants stated that, emotional intelligence can be taught to the individual in marital therapy, as a result, the couple enhance their skills to improve their insight as well as their communications (Muhammad, Abbas, & Mahmood, 2015; Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

Fitness (2001) stated that intimate interpersonal relationships like marital or romantic relations are both rich in emotions as well as conflict in a social contexts. The intimacy between two individuals is dependent on the emotional experiences of individuals. Therefore, it is indicated that couple who are emotionally intelligent communicate effectively and handle their conflicts appropriately, and better regulate their emotions which, in the end, facilitates adaptive outcomes and solutions and results in dyadic adjustment.

Prior studies support that emotional intelligence is important in marital relations. Such as, emotional intelligence has been found to be an important contributing factor to the stability and happiness of the relationship (Fitness, 2001). In order to cope successfully with outgoing and emotional problems, it has become critical for partners that they acquire the skills of identification, understanding, and regulation of their own emotions and those of their partners (Zeidner & Kloda, 2013). Therefore, emotional intelligence is an essential part of marital adjustment which can be defined as a state in which there two individuals who are married to each other such as husband and wife have general feeling of happiness and satisfaction with each other (Nema, 2013; Sinha & Mukerjee, 1990).

Pandey and Anand (2010) studied the relationship of emotional intelligence with marital adjustment and health of spouse. Their study found out that high emotional intelligence of a spouse is positively associated with one's own marital adjustment, along with that of their partner. Furthermore, the study showed that wellbeing and health of an individual is positively correlated to adjustment in marriage. Similarly, Dildar et al. (2012) studied the association between marital adjustment and emotional intelligence of married individuals of Gujrat, Pakistan. It

identified a positive relationship between marital adjustment and emotional intelligence. However, the results showed no effect of age and gender on marital adjustment.

Bhalla, Sidhu, and Ali (2019) found that emotional intelligence is a contributing factor in the quality of the relationship between partners. When both of the partners have high emotional intelligence they are found to be more committed and stable in their relationship. This increased level of commitment is the result of increased emotional awareness and availability which results in intimate bonding. It can be said that the quality of the relationship between the partners can be attributed to emotional awareness and availability, consensus and cohesion, satisfaction, closeness and intimacy and trust and commitment.

Emotional intelligence and dyadic adjustment has been studied in various other contexts as well. Jalil and Muazzam (2013) have studied emotional intelligence as the predictor of marital adjustment in couples with infertility. Their study reported that emotional intelligence is a predictor of marital adjustment. Moreover, fertile women had better marital adjustment than infertile women. Stolarsk, Postek, and Smieja (2011) studied the role of emotional intelligence and conflict resolution strategies in romantic heterosexual couples and found that females with high emotional intelligence had superior conflict resolution skills, as compared to males in a romantic relationship.

In the light of increasing rate of marital conflicts and cases of separation or divorce in the country, and insufficient research studies in the domain of dyadic adjustment, it is imperative to examine the role of effective emotional regulation in managing or preventing marital conflicts. The significance of the current study can be lies the fact that it's extends the literature on emotional intelligence and dyadic adjustment by studying a previously lesser explored population. Hence, the findings of the current study may be utilized in marital and family counselling and development of indigenous intervention plans for marital adjustment and conflict resolution. In the light of above mentioned literature the current study aims to explore the role of emotional intelligence in the dyadic adjustment of married individuals.

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

The current study has employed quantitative correlation survey design in which standard questionnaires have been used to gauge the association between the variables.

2.2. Participants

The participants for this study were those individuals who are legally married. A sample size of 205 married individuals was gathered through purposive snowball sampling. The demographic shows 138 (67.3%) participants were females while 67 (32.7%) were male. Demographic also indicated that the years of marriages were from 10-50 ($M=12.97$; $SD=10.62$). In this study, the inclusion criteria for the couples are the couples should be officially and legally married while those individuals who were married for less than 10 years or were in a premarital relationship were excluded from the study.

2.3. Measures

For the current study informed consent was used with following scales and demographic information sheet.

2.3.1 Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT; Schutte et al. (1998))

The Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) is based on conceptual model of Salovey and Mayer (1990). The test consist of self-reporting 33-items, in which it uses Likert scale ranging from 1 as strongly agree to 5 as strongly disagree scale. The internal consistency of the scale indicates the Cronbach's alpha of 0.90, while it has test-re-test reliability of 0.78 (Schutte et al., 1998).

2.3.2. Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS; Busby, Christensen, Crane, and Larson (1995))

The Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS) is a 14- item self-report questionnaire that evaluates seven dimensions of couple relationships. The scale has four subscales which includes Dyadic Consensus, Affectional Expression, Dyadic Satisfaction and Dyadic Cohesion. The items of the scales ask the respondents to rate certain aspects of her/his relationship on a 5-point scale. The RDAS has Cronbach's alpha of 0.90 (Busby et al., 1995).

2.4 Procedure

Firstly the permission to use Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS) was obtained from the respective authorities while SSEIT is freely available for research purposes. Then a google forms was made comprising of an informed consent which contained a brief introduction of the study and all the ethical considerations followed by demographic information sheet, Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) and Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS). A debriefing document was also provided with form to make sure none of the participants was harmed in any way. It took approximately 10-15 minutes for each participant to fill out the survey form. The data was analyzed through SPSS.

3. Results

In order to comprise the results, statistical analysis was conducted utilizing the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 23).

Table 1 shows the values of the Cronbach Alpha which indicates good to excellent reliability of the measures except for the subscale of cohesion which is acceptable. This indicates that the scales used for the study are reliable. The values of skewness and kurtosis are indicating that the data is normally distributed.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and alpha reliability coefficients, Univariate normality of study Variables and dyadic adjustment subscales.

Variables	N of items	Cronbach's Alpha α	Skewness	Kurtosis
Emotional Intelligence	33	0.88	-2.08	10.21
Dyadic Adjustment	14	0.79	-0.50	-0.31
Consensus	6	0.75	-1.12	3.21
Satisfaction	4	0.86	-1.11	0.60
Cohesion	4	0.48	-0.13	-0.62

Table 2. Pearson's moment correlation of emotional intelligence and years of marriage with dyadic adjustment

Variables	Emotional intelligence	Years of Marriage
Emotional intelligence	-	0.03**
Dyadic adjustment	0.33**	-0.14**
Consensus	0.13**	-0.13**
Satisfaction	0.36**	-0.08**
Cohesion	0.26	-0.04**

Note: **p<.01.

Table 2 shows the Pearson's moment correlation of emotional intelligence with Dyadic Adjustment and its subscales. There is a weak positive correlation of emotional intelligence with dyadic adjustment and its subscales of consensus and satisfaction while cohesion has a non-significant relationship with emotional intelligence. It shows that the years of marriage has weak positive correlation with emotional intelligence and a weak negative correlation with dyadic adjustment.

4. Discussion

The current study aimed to explore the role of emotional intelligence in the dyadic adjustment of married individuals. Emotional intelligence and dyadic adjustment are significant but weakly correlated therefore it shows that emotional intelligence plays a minor in dyadic adjustment of married individuals, which can be justified by the fact the relationships in Pakistani society are bounded by hierarchies not by emotions. As Pakistan has patriarchal society where male of the family is considered to be the head of the family and main earning individual, specifically fathers, brothers or husband in the households, therefore every individual of the family has to work according to their appetency, which therefore requires less emotionality resulting in the limited role of consensus in family dynamics. According to Zaloudek (2014) in the hierarchy of gender and in household with family setting, the heads of family is husbands. Which also lines up with Islamic principles i.e. it is the responsibility of a husband to fulfil the duties and obligations of the family (Aman, Abbas, Nurunnabi, & Bano, 2019). Another factor can play a role in it which is hierarchy follow in the household as Sung (2010) states that lower emotional intelligence is related to hierarchal and domineering beliefs while higher emotional intelligence is linked to reciprocal relationships. Similarly, Yeh (2003) reported that authoritarian filial piety is detrimental to emotional development while reciprocal filial piety is beneficial for intergenerational relationships.

Furthermore, there could be other factor which could play role in adjustment of married individuals other than emotional factors such as family dynamics as Pakistanis are family-oriented individuals, therefore it becomes difficult to exit relationships for them. Karim (2011) states that collectivist rely on close and strong ties between individuals, they are dependent on groups and have collective goals, while individualistic cultures give emphasizes on personal goals of an individual and their independence. This also reflects in the negative relation of dyadic adjustment and years of marriage that even the adjustment is not found between the partners they are still living together to maintain the family ties.

Similarly it has been observed that our society tends satisfy their emotional and sexual needs through other channels such as financial gains which can also contribute to the weak relationship of emotional intelligence and dyadic adjustment. Similarly, it has been observed that cohesion is imbedded in family values; it is not acquired from emotional intelligence.

The results highlights the importance of other factors that may contribute to a healthy dyadic adjustment of married individual like type of marriage as Aman et al. (2019) stated that the key individuals in an arranged marriage are not the bride and groom but rather their parents. In Pakistan, marriages are considered to be the union of two families rather than that of two individuals. Hence, the marital adjustment may come from the social support of the family rather than the emotional support of the partner. However, most of the younger generation in Pakistan doesn't want to adhere to traditional marriage ideology any longer and they pursue marital happiness and romantic love with their partner, while their parent's emphasis on commitment or loyalty of a partner. However, essential role is still played by the parents in the family functioning of their children.

The result indicates that the emotional intelligence is increasing with years of marriage because in Pakistan, young married couples are deemed immature and impulsive in managing and regulating their emotions. Young married couples are considered to be imprudent in expressing emotions and kindling a fight between themselves due to unrealistic expectations. Aman et al. (2019) states that in various societies, marriage is associated with religion as the couple getting married has to usually pledge to spend their lives together in the eyes of God, therefore it is regarded as a religious sacrament. The couples who believe in religion have strong marital commitments, strengthening their marital relationship as religion stresses on marriage. Hence it can be inferred that religion can play a better role in the dyadic adjustment of the married individuals than emotional intelligence and years of marriage.

5. Conclusion

This study revealed that there is minor role of emotional intelligence in dyadic adjustment of married couples. Furthermore, the emotional intelligence remained high as years of marriage progressed but dyadic adjustment decreased with the increase in marriage years.

The limitation of the current study was its limited sample size and as the data was gathered through online google form the gender ratio of the participants was not found to be equal. Hence future researches can target a larger sample size and physical data collection approach which will allow them better controls. As limited role of emotional intelligence has been found in the current study; a qualitative study can be conducted to find out the indigenous factors that may contribute to successful dyadic adjustment and happy married life. Moreover, an experimental study can also provide a broader perspective regarding the variables of the current study.

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