



RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION: THE ROLE OF PARTNER'S EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

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Abstract

The study was undertaken to find out the relationship between couple's romantic relationship satisfaction and their partner's emotional intelligence. In order to understand the relationship between the two constructs, a total of 30 pairs of unmarried heterosexual couples were undertaken for the study through purposive sampling. All the participants were in the age range of 20-25 years and another inclusion criterion for the couples was a minimum of two years of relationship duration. The relationship satisfaction was measured using "Couples Satisfaction Scale" developed by Funk and Rogge (2010). The emotional intelligence level of each individual's partner was measured using a scale named "Emotional Intelligence Scale" developed by Schutte et al. (1998). After collection and scoring of data, appropriate statistical methods were taken for the analysis of data. Pearson product moment correlation was used to find out the association between couples' romantic relationship satisfaction with their respective partners' emotional intelligence. From the analysis, it was found that, the association between the overall couples' satisfaction and their respective partners' emotional intelligence were not significantly linked. It was also tested whether relationship satisfaction in males and females is linked to their respective partners' emotional intelligence. From the result it was found that males' relationship satisfaction was not significantly associated with partners' emotional intelligence. However, the females' relationship satisfaction was linked with their partners' emotional intelligence.

Introduction

Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and express emotions effectively in one and others (Goleman, 1995). It involves skills such as self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills. Emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in personal and professional success, as it influences how individuals navigate social interactions, manage stress, and make decisions. Goleman (1995) did extensive research on emotional intelligence and gave five major components which include, knowing one's emotions, which means recognizing one's own emotions and feelings as they take place; Managing emotions, which means the ability of an individual to deal with anxiety, anger, happiness, and distress; Motivating oneself is when an individual tries to assemble and mobilize his or her own emotions; Recognizing emotions in others (empathy) refers to the ability to recognize and understand feelings of people around you; Handling relationships, which means skills and art to handle relationships and majorly it includes leadership and interpersonal effectiveness.

Mayer and Salovey (1997) identified four major components, namely, perception of emotions, emotional assimilation of thought, understanding emotions and regulation of emotions in self and others. Bar-On (1996) identified five components of emotional intelligence; interpersonal skills, intrapersonal skills, adaptability, stress management and general mood. Emotional intelligence is a key factor that has been proven to be one of the major contributors of personal achievement, success in career, leadership skills and life satisfaction (Nelson and Low, 2003). When faced with conflict or any kind of dilemma, we rely on our emotional resources. All the above discussed models point to the fact that emotional intelligence plays a key role in interpersonal relationships. Romantic relationship is one such realm of interpersonal relationships. We all crave for good relationships in life. When we delve into the understanding of such romantic relationships, by default, emotions are intricate essence of it. Certain aspects of emotional intelligence, such as, empathy help people to have the ability to receive social signals rapidly and understand what others are feeling. Thus, it is established that emotional intelligence and relationship satisfaction are interlinked.

Relationship satisfaction is a subjective construct. A relationship, which meets the individual's subjective criterion about a good relationship and considered by him/her as better than any other relationships, is referred to as relationship satisfaction (Vaughn & Baier, 1999). There are various factors and variables that affect the relationship satisfaction. Besides characteristics such as commitment, love and communication, inter individual differences, there are other factors that influence relationship satisfaction (Hendrick, 1988). The investment model (Rusbult, 1980) and the interdependence model both stand as most influencing models in the field of relationship satisfaction. According to both model, relationships which are high in costs are less satisfying than relationships that are low in costs.

It has been established that various factors are responsible for relationship satisfaction (Berry & Worthington, 2001). More precisely, research suggests that emotional intelligence plays an important role in relationship satisfaction (Bar-On, 1996; Joshi & Thingujam, 2009). Most of the literature has focused on the link between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction. There are very few studies that have focused on the role of emotional intelligence and young couples who are yet to be married. Especially, there are hardly any studies that have studied how relationship satisfaction is linked with partner's emotional intelligence.

Therefore, the present study intends to analyze the association between relationship satisfaction and partners' emotional intelligence among young heterosexual couples.

Review of Related Literature

Relationship satisfaction is a subjective construct. There are various factors and variables that affect the relationship satisfaction. Besides characteristics such as commitment, love and communication, inter individual differences, there are other factors which play an important role in relationship satisfaction (Hendrick, 1988). Gottman and Silver (1999) stated that couples who are emotionally intelligent tend to respect, understand and honor each other more and are more likely to have a peaceful and happy relationship for a relatively longer period.

A study conducted to explore the effects of emotional intelligence on marital adjustment of couples in Nigeria found that there are certain skills; emotional management, social relationship skills and emotional sensitivity skills which had a significant effect on marital adjustment. The study also suggested that couple counseling should focus on emotional intelligence competencies (Ortese & Ton-Anyin, 2008).

Couples who were most satisfied in their marital life scored very high on emotional intelligence and they outscored the unsatisfied group of couples in 14 out of 15 areas of emotional quotient which was assessed by Bar-On EQ-I (Bar-On, 1996).

Many theorists have emphasized the role of emotional intelligence in relationship quality but, the link has not been yet systematically examined due to little empirical research. Schroder-Abe and Schutz (2011) conducted two studies to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and aspects of relationship quality. Relationship aspects included satisfaction, closeness and commitment. They conducted the first study with 191 heterosexual couples via online mode. They found that an individual's impression towards his/her relationship is influenced by his/her own emotional intelligence. They also stated that an individual's impression towards his/her relationship is influenced by his/her partner's emotional intelligence. In their second study, they examined the actor and partner effects of emotional intelligence on relationship satisfaction and closeness taking 80 couples in a laboratory setting. In the controlled laboratory setting the couples were provided with a conflicting situation about which they need to discuss and resolve the conflict. The experimenter who was present in the laboratory was observing and rating the couples in regard to perspective taking of the partners. Actor-Partner Interdependence Mediation Model showed that perspective taking mediated the effects of emotional intelligence on relationship quality. This research confirmed the link between emotional intelligence and relationship quality. It also highlighted the processes through which emotional intelligence affects the quality of a relationship.

Mears (2012) conducted a study to examine the relationship between emotional schemas, emotional intelligence and relationship satisfaction and found that the constructs have a weak connection. Mary and Adhikari (2012) conducted a study in order to find out the association between emotional intelligence and marital quality of married couples. They took a sample of forty four married couples from the city of Bangalore, India. They used the Mangal Emotional Intelligence Inventory (2008) and Marital Quality Scale by Shah (1995) to collect data. The results were obtained through Pearson's correlation coefficient and regression analysis. It was found from the study that emotional intelligence is positively correlated to marital quality

among couples. The study also revealed that wives emotional intelligence and their perceived marital quality was more as compared to husbands. Intrapersonal awareness, one of the sub-domains of emotional intelligence, was found to be the single most predictor of marital quality.

Another study was done by Manjula et al. (2016) in Telangana state of India to investigate whether emotional intelligence acts as a predictor of marital satisfaction. The sample was consisted 165 professional doctors, nurses, engineers and teachers who have had a minimum duration of two years of marriage. The results of their study revealed that couples who were high in their emotional intelligence had high levels of satisfaction in their marital life. When both wife and husband are able to recognize their own emotions and are aware of their partner's emotions and also display their emotions to their spouses, they are more likely to understand each other in a better manner and are more satisfied. They also suggested that premarital and marital counseling programs should include competencies of emotional intelligence, communication skills based on emotional intelligence, emotion management skills and conflict management skills.

Rationale

The present study was undertaken to find out the association between individuals' relationship satisfaction and their partners' emotional intelligence. It is essential to understand the dynamics of young couples' relationships. Since emotionally intelligent people are better able to communicate their feelings, needs and concerns effectively in a relationship, it directly fosters understanding and connection between partners. Various research studies have found a positive relationship between marital satisfaction and emotional intelligence (Gottman and Silver, 1999; Ortese& Ton-Anyin, 2008; Manjula, Ram, and Reddy, 2016). However, much focus has not been given on studying young couples and especially how partners' emotional intelligence is linked with relationship satisfaction. Therefore, the present study delves into understanding the relationship between individuals' romantic relationship satisfaction and their partners' emotional intelligence.

Objectives of the study

- To assess the relationship of the individual's satisfaction in a romantic relationship with her/his partner's emotional intelligence.
- To assess whether the pattern of association among romantic relationship satisfaction and partner's emotional intelligence in males is different from that in females.

Design of the Study

The aim of the study is to understand the relationship between romantic relationship satisfaction and partners' emotional intelligence. For this purpose, a survey based, correlational research design is opted.

Methodology

Sample

For sample selection, purposive sampling method was used. A total of 30 pairs of heterosexual couples were included in the study. Thus, the sample included participants as well as their romantic partners. Every participant was between the ages of 20-25. Minimum two years of relationship duration was another requirement for their selection and inclusion in the sample. With regard to their educational background, all participants were graduates. The sample taken was limited to Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

Instruments

Couple Satisfaction Index (CSI-32):

Romantic relationship satisfaction of all participants was measured using a self-report questionnaire developed by Funk and Rogge (2010), named “Couple Satisfaction Index”. There are various versions of this scale, however, for the present study “CSI-32” was chosen. The scale consists of 32 in total. All the items in the scale are in Likert format, varying from 7 points for item 1 and 6 points for the existing 31 items. For item no. one (1), 0 indicates = extremely unhappy, 1 indicates = fairly happy, 2 indicates = a little happy, 3 indicates = happy, 4 indicates = very happy, 5 indicates = extremely happy and 7 indicates = perfect. For different items, the range is different as well as the scoring is different. The highest score for the scale is 161. High score indicates high satisfaction in relationship and scores falling below 104.5 is indicative of dissatisfaction in relationship.

Assessing Emotion Scale:

A scale developed by Schutte et al. (1998) which is also known as Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) was used to measure the emotional intelligence of participants. The scale is based upon the Salovey and Mayer’s (1990) model of emotional intelligence, which consists of four components such as appraisal of emotion of self and others, expression of emotions, regulation of emotions in self and others and lastly utilization of emotions in solving problems. The assessing emotions scale measures the trait emotional intelligence. There are in total 33 items in the scale. It is made up of 5 point Likert scale, and it ranges from 1 = strongly disagree, to 5 = strongly agree. The items are as such “I am aware of my emotions as I experience them” or “I seek out activities that make me happy”. Those scoring below 111 are indicative of low emotional intelligence and 137 and above are indicative of high emotional intelligence. Item no. 5, 28 and 33 are to be reversely scored. The highest score the scale can obtain is 165.

Procedure

In order to fulfill the purpose of the study, a total of 30 pair (N=60) of heterosexual couples who are in a romantic relationship and are unmarried but had a minimum of two years of relationship duration were taken. Through online Google forms, the data was collected from all participants. They were clearly informed of the study’s objectives and given assurance regarding the privacy of data that they would submit. After the collection of data, the right statistical techniques were applied. The study adhered to all ethical guidelines.

Result and Discussion:

Table 1: Group means and Standard Deviations of Male and Female Romantic Partners in regard to Relationship satisfaction and Emotional Intelligence.

Variables		Males (N=30)	Females (N=30)
Relationship Satisfaction	Mean	141.50	144.06
	SD	9.63	13.64
Emotional Intelligence	Mean	132.13	134.10
	SD	9.72	15.38

We can see that the mean and standard deviation of relationship satisfaction and emotional intelligence among males is 141.50, 9.63 and 132.13, 9.72 respectively. Among females the mean and standard deviation for relationship satisfaction is 144.06 and 13.64 and for emotional intelligence is 134.10 and 15.38 respectively.

Table 2: Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient showing the correlation between relationship satisfaction and partner's emotional intelligence as well as gender-wise analysis between the two variables.

Variables	Partner's Emotional Intelligence
Relationship Satisfaction	.183
Relationship Satisfaction in Males	0.01
Relationship Satisfaction in Females	.432*

NB* $p < .05$

Relationship of Relationship Satisfaction and Partner's Emotional Intelligence

The first objective of the study was to assess the relationship of the individual's satisfaction in a romantic relationship with her/his partner's emotional intelligence. It can be noticed that the correlation coefficient obtained between an individual's level of satisfaction and her/his partners' emotional intelligence is .183 which is not statistically significant. This finding is supported by the findings of Mears (2012) where a weak link was

found among the constructs of emotional schemas, emotional intelligence and relationship satisfaction. However, the finding of the present study is contradictory with the finding of Malouf et al. (2014) as they found a significant link between an individual's relationship satisfaction and her/his partner's emotional intelligence. The results are as such because the relationship norms and values in a marriage are way different from that in unmarried couples. A marriage constitutes more than the two partners, which includes children, other extensive family members, which is not the case among unmarried couples. Thus, the shared goals of married couples are stronger than unmarried couples. Other factors might also play a role. Individuals today are more independent and majorly rely on self. If both individuals take responsibility of their own self and rely only on themselves, they function better at individual level and do not depend on each other a lot.

Table 2 also presents the Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficients between relationship satisfaction and the partner's emotional intelligence for male and female participants. It can be noticed that in males the relationship satisfaction and partner emotional intelligence are not significant ($r = .010, p > .05$), but among the female subjects the relationship is significant ($r = .432, p < .05$).

From the findings it can be noticed that the pattern of relationship satisfaction and partner's emotional intelligence is different in males and females. The findings are contradictory to the findings of Tulika and Anand (2010) where both husbands' and wives' high emotional intelligence was positively correlated with their life satisfaction and marital adjustment.

In our Indian culture males and females have different norms prescribed for dealing with various situations and it is mostly affected by the socialization process. Males are expected to act practically, be mentally strong, tough and stoic (Verma and Mahendra, 2004). Emotion is a virtue men cannot afford in our society as they are not expected to be emotionally vulnerable. They are constantly taught that they need to be independent in every aspect of life including emotional independence. This idea of masculinity turns men in our society devoid from emotional support. They are relatively more emotionally independent than females. On the other hand females are expected to be affectionate, caring, emotional (Verma and Mahendra, 2004). Females are although very expressive of their emotions, they are not expected to displace their negative emotions, frustrations on their male counterparts due to the relationship satisfaction socialization process.

Conclusion

The present study was undertaken to examine the relationship between romantic relationship satisfaction and partners' emotional intelligence among young heterosexual couples.

The results of the study revealed that romantic relationship satisfaction is significantly not correlated to partner's emotional intelligence. But when analyzed separately for males and females, it was found that in females, the relationship satisfaction and partner's emotional intelligence are significantly correlated, whereas the correlation between these two variables is not significant in females.

Limitations and Recommendations

The study was done only with 60 participants in total. Future studies can take a larger sample, so that the results can be generalized. The data was collected by adopting survey method through google forms. Future researchers can opt for qualitative approaches to get a more detailed understanding about participant's relationship satisfaction level and the factors contributing to it. Future researchers can include other factors

such as conflict management, adjustment mechanisms, and particular components of emotional intelligence etc.

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