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Marital Hardiness as a Predictor of Marital Wellbeing in Professionals with Working Spouse

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KEYWORDS

Marital hardiness;
marital adjustment;
marital satisfaction;
marital harmony;
marital wellbeing

A B S T R A C T

With more questioning of traditional gender roles and greater emphasis on gender equality, tensions are beginning to emerge in marital relationships. There is a need to identify positive personality factors that would pave the way for enhanced marital wellbeing which is the foundation for a successful marriage. The study aims to investigate whether marital hardiness predicts marital wellbeing in professionals in the fields of Medicine, Information Technology and Education with a working spouse. An ex-post-facto survey research with a sample size of 345 of which 116 were males and 229 were females was adopted. Purposive sampling method was used for the selection of sample. The Marital Hardiness Scale (Sangeetha, 2009) and the ABC Scale of Marital Relationship (Nappinnai, 2006) were the tools used for the study. The independent sample t-test, Pearson's product-moment correlation and multiple regressions were the statistical techniques used for data analysis. The results show that there is a significant gender difference in marital satisfaction and marital wellbeing. Males show more marital satisfaction and wellbeing than females in their marital relationship. Marital hardiness is related to and predicts marital adjustment, satisfaction, harmony and overall marital wellbeing. The Quality of relationship, a dimension of marital hardiness has emerged as significant predictor of marital adjustment, satisfaction, harmony and overall marital wellbeing. The proposition of the study is that individuals can be trained on improving their marital hardiness so that they experience marital wellbeing.

Introduction

With more questioning of traditional gender roles and greater emphasis on gender equality, tensions are beginning to emerge in marital relationships. Unless these tensions are appraised carefully it will definitely disturb the marital relationship. Hence, there is a need to identify positive personality factors that would pave the way for

enhanced marital wellbeing which is the foundation for a successful marriage.

Problem

The problem for the present research is to investigate whether marital hardiness predicts marital wellbeing in professionals in the fields of Medicine, Information

Technology and Education with a working spouse.

Objectives

In professionals in the fields of Medicine, Information Technology and Education with a working spouse

To find if there is a gender difference marital hardiness and marital wellbeing

To examine the relationship of marital hardiness and marital wellbeing

To ascertain whether marital hardiness predicts marital wellbeing

Hypotheses

In professionals in the fields of Medicine, Information Technology and Education with a working spouse

There will be no significant difference in marital hardiness, marital adjustment, marital satisfaction, marital harmony and marital well-being on the basis of gender.

Marital hardiness will be significantly related to marital adjustment, satisfaction, harmony and marital wellbeing

Marital hardiness will be a significant predictor of marital adjustment, satisfaction, harmony and marital wellbeing

Operational definitions

Marital Wellbeing is marital happiness which is characterized by an abundance of ease experienced by the couple within the marital relationship. In terms of the quality of the marital relationship, this is the epitome that the couple can achieve. The dimensions of marital wellbeing are conceptualized to be

Marital Adjustment The ability to cope with the demands and challenges in the marital relationship

Marital Satisfaction A feeling of contentment not just about the spouse but with all aspects (physical, emotional, social, economical and sexual) of the marital relationship itself

Marital Harmony A sense of mutual acceptance of the strengths and weaknesses and to strike a balance between individuality and togetherness between the spouses; to move “in tune” with each other

Marital Hardiness is a personality type which is found to buffer the negative interpretation of stressful events and comprises of 3 dimensions namely,

Commitment: A conscious decision to stand for each other by making a personal investment of love, care, support, warmth and move beyond their respective self-centered interests and be concerned with their spouse’s well-being.

Challenge: The psychological strength to encounter the stressful situations in marriage not as a threat but as a learning experience for the growth of the marital relationship.

Control: The belief that they can influence their own behaviour during the stressful situations in marriage and can act rather than react during these situations (Sangeetha, 2007).

Materials and Methods

Research design

A cross sectional, multivariate, ex-post-facto research design was used for the study.

Sample

Purposive sampling was used for the selection of sample. The sample for the study consisted of professionals in the fields of Medicine, Information Technology and Education with a working spouse although not necessarily in one of the above mentioned professions. The age of the individuals who were part of the study was 22 to 58 years. The average age of the husbands was 38.22 years and that of the wives was 34.53 years. The respondents had a joint monthly income of not less than Rs 20,000/-. Couples having not more than two children and couples who were childless were included in the study. The couples who took part in the study were essentially living together. Of the 345 respondents, 116 were males and 229 were females.

Tools

The ABC scale of Marital Relationship (Nappinnai, 2006) measures 3 psychological aspects of marital relationship namely-Marital Adjustment, Marital Satisfaction and Marital Harmony. It has 3 sub scales with totally 50 items of which 20 items measure Marital Adjustment, 8 items measure Marital Satisfaction and 12 items measure Marital Harmony. 2 buffer items were used to check the response set. The response format was dichotomous. Internal consistency was calculated and the Cronbach alpha coefficient was found to be 0.81. The test retest reliability was 0.75. The rational validity was found to be 0.88.

The Marital Hardiness Scale (Sangeetha, 2009) comprises of 32 items grouped under 10 dimensions namely Marital Challenge, Discontent Management, Emotional Commitment, Stress Competency, Mutual Comfort, Signifying priorities of spouse, Commitment towards compatibility, Quality

of relationship, Forbearance towards in-laws and Physical and sexual commitment. The scale has 4 response categories -Always, Mostly, Sometimes and Never. The total score on the scale ranges from a minimum of 32 to a maximum of 128. Higher the score, higher the marital hardiness. Face validity was established. Internal consistency was calculated and the Cronbach alpha coefficient was found to be 0.88.

Statistical analysis

The independent sample t-test, Pearson's product-moment correlation and Multiple regression analysis were used.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows that there is a significant gender difference in Marital Satisfaction and Marital wellbeing at 0.05 level. However, there is no significant gender difference in Marital Adjustment and Marital Harmony. This finding supports the research done by Linda (1987) and Nappinnai (2006) who have reported no significant gender difference in marital adjustment. The mean reveals that men are more maritally satisfied compared to women. The study falls in line with the findings of Dasch (1990) who found a significant gender difference in marital satisfaction with husbands reporting more levels of satisfaction.

Hence hypotheses no 1 which states that, "There will be no significant difference in marital hardiness, marital adjustment, marital satisfaction, marital harmony and marital well-being on the basis of gender" is partially accepted.

Table 2 shows that there is a significant positive relationship between marital hardiness and the various components of

marital wellbeing at 0.01 level. This undoubtedly indicates that as marital hardiness increases marital adjustment, marital satisfaction, marital harmony and marital wellbeing increase.

A spouse with elevated levels of marital hardiness factor perceives the pitfalls in marriage not as a threat but as a learning experience for the strengthening of the relationship. Even the discontentment felt within the context of a marital relationship is communicated to the spouse without causing resentment. Marital hardiness encompasses the understanding that difference of opinion and conflicts are inevitable in a marital relationship, and this needs to be handled with emotional stability and maturity along with the high comfort levels that spouses share with each other. Such spouses are able to move beyond their respective self-centered interest and prioritize their spouses' priorities as their own. Couples high on marital hardiness give importance to the spousal compatibility and the quality of marital relationship.

More often than not the role of in-laws in a marital relationship becomes crucial. Individuals high on marital hardiness are able to whole heartedly acceptance their in-laws thereby reducing friction that may arise between spouses. Finally, the subtle but a very strong component of marriage- the sexual component is also handled very effectively by individuals high on marital hardiness. A spouse who has all the above mentioned characteristics capsulated as his personality is unquestionably a fantastic personality and is sure to make his/her marriage a top of the world experience. Hence, it is flawless to assume that increased marital hardiness leads to increased marital adjustment, marital satisfaction, marital harmony and marital wellbeing and the current research has statistically proven this assumption.

Hence hypotheses no 2 which states that, "Marital hardiness will be significantly related to marital adjustment, satisfaction, harmony and marital wellbeing" is accepted.

Table.1 Gender difference in Marital Hardiness, Marital Adjustment, Marital Satisfaction, Marital Harmony and Marital Wellbeing in professionals

Variable	Groups	N	Mean	SD	t
Marital Hardiness	Male	116	94.68	10.32	0.39 ^{NS}
	Female	229	95.13	9.73	
Marital Adjustment	Male	116	35.67	2.97	1.83 ^{NS}
	Female	229	34.88	4.08	
Marital Satisfaction	Male	116	14.65	2.23	2.11 [*]
	Female	229	14.16	1.54	
Marital Harmony	Male	116	36.03	3.03	1.65 ^{NS}
	Female	229	35.42	3.29	
Marital Wellbeing	Male	116	89.74	5.91	2.12 [*]
	Female	229	87.87	8.44	

NS Not Significant

*P<0.05 Significant at 0.05 level

Table.2 Relationship of Marital Hardiness with Marital Adjustment, Marital Satisfaction, Marital Harmony and Marital Wellbeing in professionals

	Marital Adjustment	Marital Satisfaction	Marital Harmony	Marital Wellbeing
Marital Hardiness	.36**	.37**	.36**	.43**

**P<0.01 Significant at 0.01 level

Table.3 Regression table- Predictor of Marital Adjustment, Marital Satisfaction, Marital Harmony and Marital Wellbeing in professionals

Predictors	Variables	R²	Beta	t
Quality of relationship	Marital Adjustment	.21	.46	8.4**
Quality of relationship	Marital Satisfaction	.14	.38	6.7**
Quality of relationship	Marital Harmony	.15	.39	6.9**
Quality of relationship	Marital Wellbeing	.24	.49	9.1**

**P<0.01 Significant at 0.01 level

From Table 3 it could be seen that of the dimensions of Marital hardiness, Quality of relationship has emerged as the most significant predictor of Marital Adjustment and accounts for 21% of the variance. This implies that with increase of every unit of Quality of relationship, there will be an increase in Marital Adjustment by.46 and this prediction was significant at the 0.01 level. Quality of relationship has emerged as the most significant predictor of Marital Satisfaction as well and accounts for 14% of the variance. This implies that with increase of every unit of Quality of relationship, there will be an increase in Marital Satisfaction by.38 and this prediction was significant at the 0.01 level.

Marital Harmony is also significantly predicted by Quality of relationship at 15% variance. This implies that with increase of every unit of Quality of relationship, there will be an increase in Marital Harmony by.39 and this prediction was significant at the 0.01 level. On the whole, Quality of relationship has emerged as the most significant predictor of Marital Wellbeing as well and accounts for 24% of the variance.

This implies that with increase of every unit of Quality of relationship, there will be an increase in Marital Wellbeing by.49 and this prediction was significant at the 0.01 level.

Hence hypotheses no 3 which states that, “Marital hardiness will be a significant predictor of marital adjustment, satisfaction, harmony and marital wellbeing” is accepted.

In professionals in the fields of Medicine, Information Technology and Education with a working spouse,

Men experience more Marital Satisfaction and Marital Wellbeing compared to women, however, there is no significant gender difference in Marital Hardiness, Marital adjustment and Marital Harmony

It is the specific personality factor of marital hardiness that determines Marital Adjustment, Marital Satisfaction, Marital Harmony and Marital Wellbeing

Quality of marital relationship, a dimension of Marital Hardiness, predicts Marital Adjustment, Marital Satisfaction, Marital

Harmony and Marital Wellbeing with very high significance

Implications

Changing expectations, a breakdown of traditional restraints and a more open style of living have all contributed to a hyper critical analysis of marriage now than ever before. In the wake of rising divorce rates, this study emphasizes on the positive resources that can be strengthened to make a marriage work.

The findings of the study can be used to develop a training module to enhance Marital Hardiness for couples as well as in premarital counseling.

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