

Emotional Intelligence and Happiness as Joint Contributors to Marital Satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

The success of a marriage is largely dependent on the satisfaction that a couple derives from their marriage. It is an important indicator of relationship quality and overall well-being within a marriage, and psychological factors such as emotional intelligence and happiness may play a significant role in establishing this well-being. This study examined the relationship between emotional intelligence, happiness, and marital satisfaction among married individuals, while exploring whether happiness contributes to marital satisfaction beyond emotional intelligence. The sample consisted of 206 married individuals (103 couples). The tools used for data collection were emotional intelligence scale by Singh and Narayan, oxford happiness questionnaire, and Spanier's dyadic adjustment scale for marital satisfaction. Correlation and hierarchical regression analysis was used to test the predictive role of emotional intelligence and happiness in marital satisfaction. The results indicated that emotional intelligence was positively and significantly associated with marital satisfaction. Happiness, when included in the regression model, also worked as a significant predictor and contributed to the explanation of marital satisfaction beyond emotional intelligence. These findings suggest that both emotional intelligence and happiness play an important role in marital satisfaction. The study highlights the importance of considering both emotional intelligence and happiness in understanding marital relationships and may have implications for relationship counselling aimed at enhancing marital satisfaction.

Keywords: *Emotional intelligence, happiness, marital satisfaction, married individuals, relationship quality*

Most human being's adult lives are marked by an important event called marriage. Important, because the changes it brings in terms of lifestyle as well as emotional and people connect are immense. One is required to adapt to a new person, from a completely new environment. In culturally oriented countries like India, adaptation is also for the families, their traditions, their financial status etc. In such a scenario, the ability to create a good relationship plays an important role in maintaining the overall well-being of the family as well as its members. This ability is largely governed by the individual's emotional competency to subjectively evaluate the quality and happiness experienced within the marital relationship. Their empathy for their partner and how they perceive and understand emotions helps in effective conflict resolution and overall marital satisfaction. Higher levels of marital

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satisfaction are associated with better mental health, greater relationship stability, and improved family functioning. Therefore, understanding the factors that contribute to marital satisfaction has become an important area of research in psychology and family studies. Two such factors are emotional intelligence and happiness.

Emotional intelligence is the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and use emotions effectively in oneself and others. People who have higher emotional intelligence are said to communicate more effectively, manage interpersonal conflicts more constructively, and respond to emotional situations with greater sensitivity. These abilities are particularly important in marital relationships where partners are frequently required to manoeuvre through difficult emotional experiences, resolve them, and keep maintaining the closeness.

In fact, marital satisfaction and emotional intelligence are mostly positively correlated. Schutte et al. (2001), for instance, discovered that people with higher emotional intelligence had stronger interpersonal interactions and were more satisfied with their relationships. In a similar vein, a meta-analysis by Malouff, Schutte, and Thorsteinsson (2014) found a strong positive correlation between romantic relationship satisfaction and emotional intelligence. Additionally, Nasiri Zarch, Marashi, and Raji (2014) discovered a strong correlation between marital satisfaction and emotional intelligence. In a related study, Bayrami et al. (2013) found that higher marital satisfaction and constructive conflict resolution techniques were positively correlated with emotional intelligence. All these results only emphasize how crucial emotional intelligence is.

Another important psychological factor that is said to influence marital satisfaction is happiness. Happiness can be broadly understood as a positive emotional state which is characterized by feelings of joy, contentment, and satisfaction. Individuals who experience higher levels of happiness are more likely to display positive emotions, optimism, and supportive behaviours in their relationships. It is often interpreted that these positive emotional experiences not only strengthen emotional bonds between partners but also contribute to greater relationship satisfaction. Empirical research has shown that positive emotions and happiness play a significant role in maintaining satisfying relationships. For instance, Lyubomirsky, King, and Diener (2005) suggested that happier individuals tend to develop more positive social relationships. Such individuals also demonstrate behaviours that foster stronger interpersonal connections. Similarly, Gable and Haidt (2005) emphasized that positive emotions contribute to relationship growth and the development of stronger emotional bonds between individuals.

Thus, with reference to marital relationships, it is assumed that happiness may influence the way individuals perceive and respond to experiences within their relationships. Individuals who experience greater happiness may be more resilient while facing marital challenges, appreciate their partners more, and are more likely to engage in supportive and affectionate behaviours. As a result, marital satisfaction may be greatly enhanced when partners are happy individuals.

The present study aims to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence, happiness, and marital satisfaction among married individuals. Specifically, the study aims to assess whether emotional intelligence predicts marital satisfaction and whether happiness contributes to marital satisfaction beyond emotional intelligence, thereby trying to provide a better understanding of the psychological factors that contribute to satisfied marital relationships.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Emotional Intelligence

Widely recognized as an important factor influencing interpersonal relationships, the concept of emotional intelligence naturally percolates to studies on marital satisfaction. People who are able to perceive, understand, and regulate emotions well, are supposed to be having good emotional intelligence and are also assumed to contribute to more harmonious marital interactions. Research by Schutte et al. (2001) found that individuals with higher emotional intelligence reported greater relationship satisfaction and more constructive emotional exchanges with their partners. Similarly, a meta-analysis conducted by Malouff, Schutte, and Thorsteinsson (2014) investigated emotional intelligence and romantic relationship satisfaction through several studies, and found a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and relationship satisfaction, suggesting that emotionally intelligent couples are more likely to experience fulfilling romantic relationships. Further support comes from Nasiri Zarch, Marashi, and Raji (2014), who investigated emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction among married couples. Their findings indicated that emotional intelligence was positively associated with marital satisfaction, as individuals with higher emotional awareness and emotional regulation reported better relationship outcomes for their study. Another study by Bayrami et al. (2013) studied emotional intelligence and conflict resolution strategies among married couples. The researchers found that higher emotional intelligence was associated with constructive conflict resolution and greater marital satisfaction. This again indicates that emotional competency in a person helps them maintain relationship stability.

Happiness

Research has also identified happiness and subjective well-being as important factors that impact marital quality. It is proven through various studies that individuals who feel life satisfaction and positive emotional states have more probability to develop supportive and satisfying relationships. Research by Erus Yıldız and Deniz (2020) examined the relationship between emotional intelligence, marital adjustment, and subjective well-being among married individuals. The study found that emotional intelligence was positively related to both marital adjustment as well as overall well-being. This also suggested the interconnected nature of emotional intelligence, relationship satisfaction, and subjective well-being. Similarly, Jethwani and Kalher (2024) examined emotional intelligence, perceived social support, and marital satisfaction among married adults. They found that a positive relationship exists between emotional intelligence and relationship satisfaction, and this suggests that individuals who are emotionally aware and feel supported tend to experience greater marital satisfaction. Another study by Kurniawan (2019) emphasized the importance of emotional intelligence in marital decision-making and relationship outcomes. The findings indicated that individuals with higher emotional intelligence were able to manage emotional challenges in their marriage in a better fashion and therefore reported higher levels of relationship satisfaction.

Marital Satisfaction

Quality of a marriage is governed by numerous psychological and interpersonal factors, like attachment styles, emotional regulation, and communication patterns. Research by Najm (2005) explored the relationship between emotional intelligence, attachment styles, and marital satisfaction and found that individuals with higher emotional intelligence and secure attachment styles go through greater marital satisfaction. Similarly, Abbasi et al. (2016) examined emotional intelligence, attachment styles, and marital satisfaction among married individuals. The results showed that emotional intelligence was positively associated with

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marital satisfaction and played an important role in improving relationship adjustment. Earlier, Masood and Mazahir (2015) examined relational communication and emotional intelligence in married couples. They highlighted the significance of emotional awareness and communication skills in preserving wholesome marriages and discovered that emotional intelligence and effective communication were major determinants of marital satisfaction.

Research Gap

Previous research has shown that emotional intelligence is associated with better relationship quality and marital satisfaction. Likewise, there are studies that have shown a positive relationship between good marriages and subjective well-being. Not many studies were found that investigated the impact of an individual's happiness on their own marital outcome, Also, most of the available information is in respect to independent functioning of these variables, indicating that there is limited research on the combined effects of both these variables and especially about the contribution of happiness to marital satisfaction beyond emotional intelligence. The present study seeks to address this gap by examining the role of both emotional intelligence and happiness in explaining marital satisfaction among married individuals.

METHODOLOGY

Research Questions

1. Does emotional intelligence impact the marital satisfaction of married individuals?
2. Does happiness predict marital satisfaction beyond emotional intelligence?

Hypotheses:

- **H1:** Emotional intelligence will significantly predict marital satisfaction among married individuals.
- **H2:** Happiness will significantly predict marital satisfaction over and above emotional intelligence.

Research Design

A quantitative, cross-sectional correlational research design was used to examine the relationships among emotional intelligence, happiness, and marital satisfaction of married individuals. Predictor variables were emotional intelligence and happiness and outcome variable was marital satisfaction. Hierarchical regression analysis was used to examine the predictive contribution of emotional intelligence and happiness to marital satisfaction.

Sample

The study sample consisted of N= 206 married individuals (103 couples). Participants included both husbands and wives who were educated till Class 12 at least, and were sufficiently proficient in English so as to comprehend and respond to the self-report measures.

Variables:

- Predictor Variables - Emotional Intelligence and Happiness
- Criterion Variables - Dyadic Satisfaction

Tools:

1. **Emotional Intelligence Scale developed by Singh and Narayan** is a standardized 31 item, self-report measure designed to assess four areas, i.e. individuals' ability to

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understand emotions, understand motivation, empathy and human relations. Reliability and validity both for the scale were found to be 0.86. A person scoring above 21 is said to be having an ok EI.

- 2. Oxford Happiness Questionnaire developed by Hills and Argyle** - is a 29-items questionnaire, which uses a 7-point rating scale. 11 questions out of the total 29, (Question numbers 1, 5, 6, 10, 13, 14, 19, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29) are marked for reverse scoring. The scale consistently demonstrates high internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.91 - 0.92) and good construct validity in terms of positive association with extraversion ($r = .38$ $p < .001$) and negative association with neuroticism ($r = -.57$ $p < .001$).
- 3. Dyadic Adjustment Scale built by Gram B Spanier**, is a self-reporting questionnaire that needs to be filled by both the partners for assessment of the quality of marriage and other similar dyads. It has 32 items, which are further divided into four subscales viz. Consensus, affectional expression, satisfaction, and cohesion. While the scale measures an individual's perception of the quality of marriage, adding the male and female scores and dividing by two give the dyadic score. The scale has two items (qs 18 and 19, which are reversed scored), and the total score is calculated by adding the scores of all the subscales.

Analysis of Data

After collecting the data from the participants, R statistical software was used to organize and evaluate the data. Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations were first computed to examine relationships among the variables. Hypothesis analysis was conducted using hierarchical regression analysis and for model 1, emotional intelligence was the predictor. For model 2 happiness was included to determine whether happiness explained additional variance in marital satisfaction beyond emotional intelligence.

RESULTS

This section presents descriptive statistics, and hierarchical regression outcomes, to assess if the decided hypothesis hold any grounds:

Descriptive Statistics:

Data was computed to examine the distribution of variables, and to ensure that further analysis would be suitable.

Table 1: Results showing descriptive statistics for Emotional Intelligence, Happiness and Marital Satisfaction.

Variable	Mean	Std Deviation	Min	Max
Happiness	129.40	22.15	64	167
Emotional Intelligence	22.55	4.14	10	30
Marital Satisfaction	111.10	21.83	34	147

Descriptive statistics for the study variables are presented in Table 1. The mean happiness score among participants was 129.40 (SD = 22.15), indicating moderate to high levels of subjective well-being in the sample. The mean emotional intelligence score was 22.55 (SD = 4.14), while the mean marital satisfaction score was 111.10 (SD = 21.83). The ranges observed in the data suggest adequate variability across all variables, which indicates that the sample has individuals with varying levels of happiness, emotional intelligence, and marital satisfaction.

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Correlation Analysis:

To examine the relationships among happiness, emotional intelligence, and marital satisfaction, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted (Table 2). Happiness was found to be positively correlated with emotional intelligence ($r = .56$), suggesting that individuals with higher emotional intelligence have a tendency towards greater levels of happiness. Happiness also showed a moderate positive relationship with marital satisfaction ($r = .44$), indicating that individuals who experienced higher levels of happiness were more likely to feel greater satisfaction in their marital relationships. Emotional intelligence was also positively correlated with marital satisfaction ($r = .38$), suggesting that higher emotional intelligence was associated with better marital adjustment.

Table 2: Results for correlation analysis between Happiness, Emotional Intelligence and Marital Satisfaction

Variable	Happiness	Emotional Intelligence	Marital Satisfaction
Happiness	1	0.56	0.44
Emotional Intelligence	0.56	1	0.38
Marital Satisfaction	0.44	0.38	1

Further, to examine the predictive role of emotional intelligence and happiness on marital satisfaction, a hierarchical regression analysis was conducted. The first level of the analysis tested Hypothesis 1.

H1: Emotional intelligence will be positively associated with marital satisfaction among married individuals.

To test this hypothesis, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted with emotional intelligence as the predictor and marital satisfaction as the outcome variable.

Table 3 (a): Results for simple linear regression analysis for emotional intelligence as a predictor of marital satisfaction

Predictor	B	SE	t	p
Intercept	66.04	7.83	8.44	< 0.001
Emotional Intelligence	2.00	0.34	5.86	< 0.001

Model Statistics: $R^2 = 0.144$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.140$; $F = 34.28$; $p = < 0.001$

The model (Table 3 a) was statistically significant, $F(1, 204) = 34.28$, $p < .001$, and explained 14.4% of the variance in marital satisfaction ($R^2 = .144$). This indicates that emotional intelligence significantly predicts marital satisfaction ($B = 1.99$, $t = 5.86$, $p < .001$). Thus, H1 is supported. The results of this simple linear regression analysis are presented in Table 3 (a) given above.

Hypothesis 2 proposed that happiness would significantly predict marital satisfaction over and above emotional intelligence. To test this hypothesis, happiness was added to the regression model to examine whether it would contribute additionally to the values of marital satisfaction (Model 2).

Table 3 (b): Results for simple linear regression analysis for happiness as a predictor of marital satisfaction

Predictor	B	SE	t	P
Intercept	45.58	8.78	5.21	< 0.001
Emotional Intelligence	1.02	0.39	2.60	0.010
Happiness	0.33	0.07	4.45	< 0.001

Model Statistics: $R^2 = 0.220$; **Adjusted $R^2 = 0.212$** ; $F = 28.62$; $p = < 0.001$

The overall model remained significant, $F(2, 203) = 28.62, p < .001$, explaining **22.0% of the variance** in marital satisfaction ($R^2 = .220$). Happiness emerged as a significant positive predictor of marital satisfaction ($B = 0.33, p < .001$). Thus, H2 is supported.

Model 1 explained **14.4% of the variance** in marital satisfaction ($R^2 = .144$). In Model 2 (after happiness was added), the variance increased to **22.0% ($R^2 = .220$)**. This amounts to an **increase of 7.6% in the explained variance ($\Delta R^2 = .076$)**, indicating that happiness contributes additionally in predicting marital satisfaction. With the inclusion of happiness, the effect of emotional intelligence decreased ($B = 1.02, p = .010$), yet it remained a significant predictor.

Thus, we can conclude that in Model 1 → **EI effect was strong**; and in Model 2 → **EI effect reduced, while happiness remained strong. Both predicted marital satisfaction positively.**

So overall, both hypotheses are supported, thereby indicating that for the given data set, emotional intelligence significantly predicts marital satisfaction, and happiness explains additional variance in marital satisfaction beyond emotional intelligence.

Summary of Findings

This study examined the connection between married people's emotional intelligence, happiness, and marital satisfaction. The results for the provided data set show that marital satisfaction and emotional intelligence are positively correlated. Additionally, the regression study revealed that marital satisfaction is significantly predicted by emotional intelligence. When happiness was added to the model, it also became a major predictor and helped to explain marital satisfaction in addition to emotional intelligence. Overall, the findings imply that happiness and emotional intelligence are significant factors in married people's marital satisfaction.

DISCUSSION

The current study assessed the relationship between married people's emotional intelligence, happiness, and marital satisfaction. The results showed that marital satisfaction was positively correlated with both emotional intelligence and happiness. These results support previous studies indicating that psychological health and emotional skills are crucial for the quality of close relationships.

According to the correlation study, marital satisfaction was more strongly correlated with happiness than with emotional intelligence. This implies that people are more inclined to see the good in their marriage if they have higher levels of subjective well-being. Research shows that subjective well-being, including happiness and life satisfaction, has been repeatedly

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linked to more stable and fulfilling interpersonal relationships (Brackett, Warner, & Bosco, 2005; Diener, 2000; Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2003).

Emotional intelligence is the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and use emotions effectively in oneself and others (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). People who have higher emotional intelligence are said to be better at managing interpersonal conflicts, communicate emotional needs, and respond empathetically to their partners. It has frequently been demonstrated that this emotional competency leads to better relationship quality and healthier marital interactions (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004). Additionally, research has shown that among married people, emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction are significantly positively correlated. For instance, Eslami, Hasanzadeh, and Jamshidi (2014) discovered that emotional intelligence could considerably predict the quality of a relationship and was significantly connected with marital satisfaction.

The hierarchical regression analysis further revealed that, after predicting for emotional intelligence, when happiness was included in the model, the predictive effect of emotional intelligence despite staying significant, decreased. This pattern suggests that while emotional intelligence contributes to marital functioning, yet a person's overall psychological well-being may play an additional role in marital satisfaction. Research examining emotional intelligence and life satisfaction has similarly shown that individuals with higher emotional intelligence tend to report greater life satisfaction and positive affect, which in turn influences their interpersonal relationships (Extremera & Fernández-Berrocal, 2002; Sánchez-Álvarez, Extremera, & Fernández-Berrocal, 2016).

Emotional skills might be seen facilitating effective communication and also emotional regulation within a marriage, but it cannot be denied that happiness reflects a broader sense of life satisfaction and positive affect that shapes how individuals evaluate their relationships. Therefore, it may be noted that marital satisfaction can be a result of the **interaction between emotional competencies and overall well-being**. This finding makes it important to consider both emotional intelligence and individual happiness levels when understanding relationship quality.

From a theoretical perspective, this finding may be understood in light of research distinguishing between **emotional competencies and subjective well-being**. Emotional intelligence represents a set of psychological skills related to emotional perception and regulation, whereas happiness reflects a broader evaluation of life satisfaction and positive affect (Diener, 2000). Individuals who possess emotional skills but experience lower levels of well-being may still struggle to experience satisfaction within their relationships. In contrast, individuals who report greater happiness may approach their relationships with more positive expectations, greater resilience, and a more constructive interpersonal orientation.

The findings of this study suggest that marital satisfaction may emerge from the interaction between emotional competencies and overall well-being. Emotional intelligence may facilitate effective emotional communication and conflict management, while happiness contributes to a more positive perception of relational experiences. Together, these factors may enhance relationship stability and satisfaction.

Overall, the results emphasize how crucial it is to take into account both subjective well-being and emotional intelligence when analyzing marital satisfaction. Focusing on fostering general happiness and psychological well-being in both people and couples, in addition to

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building emotional control and communication skills, may be beneficial for interventions targeted at strengthening marriages.

This study's results suggest that counselling for marital satisfaction might work better if they target both the development of emotional skills like self-awareness and regulation and the promotion of psychological health and happiness.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, this study's results show that emotional intelligence and happiness play significant roles in marital satisfaction. While emotional intelligence helps in effective management and regulation of emotions of oneself as well as within the marriage, happiness creates a broader sense of psychological well-being which enables the positivity with which a person perceives and experiences their marriage. The results of this study suggest the same, i.e. marital satisfaction may not depend only on how emotionally intelligent a person is, but also on their overall happiness and well-being. These findings align with perspectives from positive psychology which highlight the role of subjective well-being for living a healthy and fulfilling relationship (Diener, 2000; Seligman, 2011). Therefore, interventions that look at strengthening marital relationships may give better results when both emotional skills and overall happiness among couples are promoted.

Limitations and Future Research

The present study is cross-sectional and depends on self-report measures, and thus could have a bias arising due to the present mental state of the participants, or desire for social acceptability. Future research may employ longitudinal or experimental designs which can enable a better understanding of the direction and development of these relationships over time.

The data were analyzed at individual level, even though participants were part of couples, because individual's marital satisfaction was in consideration. Marital relationships involve interactions between partners, and so future research may examine how partners influence each other's emotional state and relationship satisfaction.

The study focused specifically on emotional intelligence and happiness. Marital satisfaction is said to be influenced by several other factors like communication patterns, personality traits, stress, social support etc. Future research could explore these variables to develop a more comprehensive understanding marital relationships.

Overall, further research is needed to examine the complex interplay between emotional intelligence, happiness, and relationship processes and come up with suggestions that help couples live a more fulfilled life.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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