Important Factors in Marital Success and Satisfaction and Marital Communication (Review the Literature)

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Abstract

Since the divorce statistics are increasing in the whole world and this increasing rate is to the extent that makes some countries confront some crisis, thus in the last decade the researchers have focused on studying many effective factors on the marital success and satisfaction. Marital success and satisfaction is a state during which the spouses feel happiness and satisfaction for getting married with each other and being together. This report presents the findings from a study which was conducted to examine what professional marriage counselors believe to be the key factors that affect marital success and satisfaction. A review of the literature provided the researcher with knowledge about the existing beliefs in the field of study. The three main factors found from the study were the presence of external support, effective communication, and quality time spent together by the individuals in the marriage. While there were other factors that were found to be moderate or weak, including forgiveness, empathy, compromise, intentionality, and respect, it is important to remember that marriages are best suited for success when the individuals spend time together, communicate effectively, and are supported by those around them.

Key words: marital communication, marital success

INTRODUCTION

Most people who have ever been married would probably wholeheartedly agree that all marriages include conflict (Tallman & Hsiao, 2004). As two individuals merge their lives into one, problems erupt. Both parties carry their unique experiences, personalities, and cultures with them into the union. The existing similarities and differences can be exciting and attractive but may also create tension and even fierce contention. In today's society, the face of intimate relationships is changing. Deep bonds between persons of diverse cultures are becoming more common and intercultural marriages are on the rise (Waldman & Rubalcava, 2005; Frame, 2004). There is much evidence proving that there are serious problems among couples in making love and as well as keeping it. In fact, the problem of dissatisfaction in marital life constitutes the main problem for which the couples decide to refer to counseling centers. Since marital satisfaction is largely associated with solving conflicts which for sure occur in the changing marital life, the necessity of using some solutions for these conflicts which would lead to more and better satisfaction seems quite important and clear. The short term effect of marital satisfaction is couples playing their roles quietly well in regard to each other and also to their children. This would specify the family health and make appropriate grounds for the blooming of their own talents as well as their children's. The long term marital satisfaction is defined as the entrance of healthy individuals from family into society which will reduce the costs concerning social disorders and incompatibilities and also will result in cultural, social, political and religious growth (Nazari , 2004). Over the past 50 years the rate of divorce in word has reached historical heights. According to Divorce Source (2015), people marrying for the first time have a lifetime divorce rate of 40 percent. Divorce is even more prevalent for second and third marriages – reported at 60 and 70 percent respectively. But why is this problematic? Research suggests the impact of divorce has serious implications for both individuals and society.

Statement Problem

Nowadays all of the social regulations and institutions make efforts toward maintaining the sanctity of family, because family formation is

a necessity which arises from the innate and acquired needs of men and women and due to its creation and social nature, every human being requires empathy with the person who lives with him/her and this is a necessary issue for reaching the human perfection, and marriage is considered as a conventional and dynamic phenomenon toward this issue. Marriage has always been approved as the most important and the best social customs for fulfilling the emotional needs and security requirements of adults. Marriage is a relationship between two human beings and it is delicate, dynamic and sophisticated concept. This phenomenon is considered as one of the most important events happening in the life of each human being after being born (Homaei, Khayyatan, 2007). In Iran the marital discords and divorce are among the social acute damages and researchers evaluated divorce as a severe stress (1st rank from the point of severity), and they ranked it among the stressful life events (Sarokhani, Divorce, 2002). Although many marriages fail, they do not all fail for the same reason. There is not just one concrete reason for the collapse of marriage. Some of the common factors behind divorce include: lack of communication, financial issues, infidelity, differing expectations, commitment, child-rearing concerns, employment, etc. Lack of communication is identified as one of the most common explanations for divorce. Communication entails discussions about issues and other important roles that play intermarriage. Open communication is fundamental in the relationship to guarantee that partners understand one another (Clark, 1995).

Presently, there is a great amount of social and political attentiveness in marriage planning and premarital counseling as services delivered throughout the community (Stahmann, 2000). The existing insecurity of marriage has encouraged greater demand for preventative tactics to marriage such as marriage education and development programs (Stahmann, 2000). Specific attention is being placed on preparation for marriage and premarital intervention programs (Carroll & Doherty, 2003). Some states have even explored encouragements and requirements as a way to encourage involvement of couples into premarital education programs (Brotherson & Duncan, 2004).

Marital satisfaction is not a static and stable concept, and most of the spouses experience some changes in the amount of satisfaction during their common life (Rahmani, 2007). According to

the definition, marital satisfaction is a state during which the spouses feel happiness and satisfaction for getting married with each other and being together (Hassanzadeh, 2011). On detecting the effective factors of marital satisfaction experts have consensus that consent in marriage requires special abilities and skills in both parties, and one of them is communicational skills and the ability to solve problems. On the other hand we should pay attention that social, political, and cultural changes have created special changes in the attitude toward marriage, and expectations of both parties from the common life which reveal the necessity of research about this matter in different eras of life. Ineffective communication results in the formation of deep interpersonal distance experienced in all aspects of life and all parts of the society. Lack of use of required skills for starting, and continuing an enjoyable marriage leads to loneliness, physical illness, and stress, lack of competence, and job dissatisfaction, family problems and even death (Mir,Ahmadizadeh, Nakhaei, Tabatabaei,2003). In religious societies marriage is the only social system providing the conditions for an enjoyable sexual intercourse (Schumacher, Leonard, 2005), and it results in the connection between two opposite sexes based on the stable sexual relations (Sarokhani, Divorce, 2002).

Mindfulness is the process of actively drawing novel distinctions. It results in context-sensitivity and a heightened awareness of alternative perspectives (Langer, 1989). In contrast, mindlessness is based in the past. It occurs when an individual gets locked into patterns of behavior either over time or on initial exposure. It results in insensitivity to context and perspective.The current research applies the concept of mindfulness to close relationships, specifically marriage, by measuring its relationship to marital satisfaction. It is hypothesized that spouses who score higher in mindfulness also will score high in marital satisfaction. Mindful techniques, such as drawing distinctions across situations, acknowledging the existence of alternative perspectives, and recognizing that disadvantages may also be advantages from others' points of view, may help foster more positive and satisfying marital relationships by creating an environment that is rich with open-mindedness and flexibility, rather than criticism and rigidity.

Mindfulness

In the past decade, dozens of studies have emerged suggesting the effectiveness of a particular type of mental practice for promoting changes in the brain's social circuitry (Hölzel et al., 2011). Variations of this method share the goal of cultivating a state (and an enduring trait) of mindfulness. Mindfulness involves a state of mind that is purposeful, nonreactive, nonjudgmental, and attuned to the present moment (Carmody, 2009). It has shown to be cultivated and strengthened through a process known as mindfulness training (Baer, 2011). The most well-known and well-researched form of mindfulness training is Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), an 8-week program of systematic training in meditation as a self-regulatory approach to stress reduction and emotion management (Kabat-Zinn, 1990).

However, many other mindfulness training courses exist across the country, including self-guided programs accompanied by audio-guided meditations. Elements of mindfulness have been incorporated into evidence-based treatment models such as Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for a wide range of psychological problems and Dialectical Behavior Therapy for the treatment of borderline personality disorder (Linehan, 1993). Nearly all mindfulness training programs rely heavily on specific forms of meditation. In fact, the terms "mindfulness training" and "mindfulness meditation" are often used interchangeably, although many mindfulness training programs also include exercises that do not involve formal meditation. Meditation has been used in Buddhist practice for 2,500 years, in part because of its perceived value in promoting self-regulation, self-awareness, empathy, compassion, and other qualities that are now understood to be elements of social and emotional intelligence. Contemporary mindfulness practices draw inspiration to varying degrees from the historical Buddhist methods, but they are practiced with a secular mindset and their effectiveness is evaluated with scientific tools (including brain imaging technologies such as functional magnetic resonance imaging [fMRI] and positron emission tomography).

Mindfulness and Marital Satisfaction

Different factors may contribute to the happiness of some marriages more than others. The purpose of the current research is not to

decipher which factors prevail as most influential, but to suggest that a tendency towards mindfulness may be positively correlated with an individual's sense of overall marital satisfaction. One of the most pervasive and heavily investigated marital satisfaction theories is that individuals seek out and marry other individuals who share more similarities than differences in personality, interests, and behavioral tendencies (Bruch & Skovholt, 1985; Lewak & Wakefield, & Briggs, 1985; Sherman & Jones, 1994). The idea is that marital satisfaction is enhanced by such selection because when couples have little in common, the probability for conflict and marital demise is relatively high (Bruch & Skovholt, 1985). If one spouse scores high in extraversion and the other scores low, they are likely to have a low level of marital satisfaction (Bruch & Skovholt, 1985; Nemechek & Olson, 1999).

It is thought, for example, that couples that share more similarities than differences might engage in fewer arguments, have fewer misunderstandings, and less overall conflict or negative interaction, than other couples (Caspi &Herbener, 1990).Some researchers reason that individuals choose similar partners because congruent traits and behaviors make a person feel validated, and comfortable with their self-image, and therefore, more aligned with their spouses (Nemechek & Olson, 1999). Nemechek and Olson suggest that similarity may be more appealing because there is some inherent byproduct of similarity that elicits a more satisfying relationship. That is, perhaps similar spouses are more prone to understand one another's perspective, so fewer misunderstandings ensue. The alternative to the above concept of selection of similar partners is that individuals choose partners with complementary personalities and attitudinal traits in order to achieve a greater sense of wholeness (Winch, Ktsanes, & Ktsanes, 1954). There is little support for this idea that happy marriages result from opposites attracting, but enough evidence exists to keep researchers from discarding it entirely (Lewak et al., 1985; Sherman & Jones, 1994). In addition, although most studies point to the ill effects of complementary personalities in married dyads,

Some researchers offer the side-note that having a few, rather than all, complementary traits could be healthy, and in fact, this is often the case in happy couples (Sherman & Jones, 1994). Given the obvious disparity between these two approaches, similarity versus

complementarity, many researchers have sought reconciliation by identifying just one personality type that correlates with marital satisfaction rather than an all-or-none premise. For example, and not surprisingly, there is nearly unanimous agreement that a strong negative relationship between neuroticism and marital dissatisfaction exists (Buss, 1991; Hjemboe & Butcher, 1991; Kelly & Conley, 1987; Kosek, 1996; Lester, Haig, & Monello, 1989). That is, a couple in which one member shows evidence of anxiety, depression, (Bouchard, et al.,1999; Kosek, 1996) emotional instability, poor impulsecontrol, feelings of social inferiority (Buss,1991; Hjemboe & Butcher, 1991; Kelly & Conley,1987), and/or hypersensitivity to criticism (Lester, et al., 1989; Nemechek & Olson, 1999) may experience higher rates of conflict and lower levels of marital satisfaction. Though personality traits and behavioral tendencies are not mutually exclusive, researchers have found that each can bring different dynamics to a relationship (Johnson & Booth, 1998). Further, since personality traits have been found to be relatively static and unchangeable over time (Johnson &Booth, 1998), focusing one's attention on changing or reevaluating a behavior may yield better and more immediate results than attempting to change an aspect of one's personality.

The Concept of Mindfulness

Mindfulness is defined as, "The awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose in the present moment and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment" (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p. 145). To some extent, lacking awareness is a basic survival mechanism, for it is impossible to pay attention to every inward and outward experience occurring each second of the day. In light of this survival mechanism, our natural inclination is to pay attention to experiences for a very short period of time, potentially with some, or hardly any, conscious awareness. Typically, these quickly judged appraisals are dualistic, either "good" or "bad" which may lead the individual to perceive their experience in a distorted way rather than Accepting the experience for exactly what it is. This distortion can lead to a sense of being unbalanced, or lead the individual to experience negative emotions; for example, an anxiety induced state due to rumination of a thought. The practice of mindfulness combats the state of being unaware, or mindless, which is thought to promote a more profound sense of wellbeing through

accepting the experience of the present moment, with deep understanding that the present moment will soon pass and be replaced by a new moment, full of new experiences.

Practicing this type of awareness allows choice in what sensory, emotional, or cognitive stimulus may be attended to in an automatic or in an effortful manner. Studies have adopted different definitions of mindfulness and mindfulness has been operationalized using a variety of measures intended to capture the multi-dimensional nature of mindfulness (Baer, 2007). Mindfulness has been shown integrating into physiological responses (Shaver, 2007), intrapersonal health (Bihari & Mullan, 2014) and relational experiences (Barnes et al., 2007; Brown et al., 2007; Carson, 2004). Some of the first measures of mindfulness captured similar, and partially overlapping, dimensions of mindfulness using distinct items. For example, the Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory (Walach, Buchheld, Buttenmüller, Kleinknecht, & Schmidt, 2006) assessed mindful presence, non-judgmental acceptance, openness to experiences and insight, while the Mindful Attention and Awareness Scale assessed presence and acceptance. In an effort to create a single measure that more fully assessed the dimensions of mindfulness, Baer and colleagues (2006) collected data using items from across five measures of mindfulness and subjected the five measures to a factor analysis. Results from the factor analysis indicated the measure, named the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire, assessed five dimensions of mindfulness: 1) observing, attending to sensations, thoughts, feeling and perceptions, 2) describing, the ability to label what is being observed, 3) acting with awareness, the degree to which one operates with concentration, focus, or comparatively, with "automatic pilot". Automatic pilot can be thought of as performing behaviors habitually or without effortful awareness of personal actions, 4) non-judgment, acceptance toward self of inner experiences, such as feelings and thoughts and 5) non-reactivity to inner experience, maintaining a sense of internal balance through allowing emotions and thoughts to come and go without holding on to emotions or thoughts through rumination. Studies show that the FFMQ has strong internal consistency (alpha = .75-.91) (Neuser, 2010) and scores on this measure are also highly correlated with scores on other measures of mindfulness (Baer, 2011). The measured dimensions show some strong conceptual relations with definitions of mindfulness; for

example, nonjudgmental acceptance and present focus, yet the overlap is not perfect. Although continued work on assessing mindfulness is needed, the FFMQ is one of the most commonly used measures and provides a good representation of the multidimensional nature of mindfulness. To better understand mindfulness, it may be helpful to review how mindfulness has been researched in prior literature.

Conflict in marriage

Marriage involves a union of two individuals who are embarking on the sometimes arduous, novel endeavor of becoming one. Thus, conflict emerges. The differences in opinions, beliefs, and actions may begin surfacing at an increased rate even during the honeymoon or the weeks after returning home. Newlyweds must individually and jointly construct a solution for significant differences as these conflicts possess the power to jeopardize the permanence and marital satisfaction within this union (Tallman & Hsiao, 2004). Oduro-Frimpong (2007) found in his study that all of his married participants exhibited some type of conflict within their marriage. In intimate relationships, conflict is an ordinary part, and does not have to drive spouses apart. The sources or reasons for conflict are diverse. Tallman and Hsiao (2004) maintained that conflict develops partially due to individuals'expectations that their partners will fulfill their emotional, social, and material needs throughout their married life. Allender and Longman (2009) reported that since men and women are both similar and dissimilar, the differences inherent in gender may be ―a huge potential for conflict and contempt‖ (p. 34).

In a marriage, individuals are intimate with one another and thus become vulnerable. Therefore, a spouse's words, actions, beliefs carry greater weight with his or her partner. A spouse has the capability to provoke increased feelings or passion from his or her spouse. At times, the vulnerability and closeness within this relationship create a potential for increased conflict. All marriages involve a fusion of two distinct lives with a history, a personality, values, and expectations. It is the ―active creation of a new culture that has never existed before (Gottman, Driver, & Tabares, 2002, p. 387). However, the conflict communication that may ensue based on this fusion may be constructive and productive. Rosen-Grandon, Myers, and Hattie (2004) found that when married couples were able to manage conflict along with various marital roles, they were able to

arrive at marital satisfaction through shared values. Marital satisfaction develops due to love, loyalty, and shared values. For married couples to arrive at marital satisfaction through love, communication and expression of affection is critical (Rosen-Grandon et al., 2004). Respected marriage counselor and scholar, John Gottman, claims that happy, stable marriages that possess an overall positive affect are better equipped to engage in conflict constructively (1999). A marriage built on a foundation of friendship and positive experiences can be significant for a couple's success during conflict. Gottman's (1999) Sound Marital House Theory of Marriage described how spontaneous demonstrations of fondness and admiration along with an appropriately filled emotional —bank account‖ influences marital conflict.

Overview of General Factors on Marital Success and Satisfaction

With the understanding that dissolutions of happy marriages may have negative effects on the individual's psychological well-being, it is important to look at what different factors might potentially impact marital success and satisfaction. One study that looked into the key factors for marital success and satisfaction was performed by Billingsley, Lim, Caron, Harris, and Canada (2005). In order to look into what factors helped build strong relationships, Billingsley et al. researched and performed a literature review on over 15 previous studies that had been conducted on long-term marriages between the years 1953 and 2004. Through their analyses, they found nine themes that were common throughout. These themes were: "permanence of relationship, love, sex, compatibility in personality, common interests, communication, decision-making, intimacy, and religion" (Billingsley et al., 2005, p.7).This finding allows us to see what factors have been found in past studies that have been said to impact marital success. One limitation with this study is that most of the research examined was at least twenty years old so there is limited information on whether these factors are still currently impacting marriages or if any new factors have arisen recently.

As second marriages divorce at a higher rate than first marriages, it could be useful to see whether there are different factors affecting marital success and satisfaction within first and second marriages. Mirecki, Chou, Elliot, and Schneider (2013) ran a study to

examine whether there were differences surrounding the factors that affect marital satisfaction between first and second marriages. This study provides information that implies that those who are in their first marriages are more likely to report higher levels of marital satisfaction than those in their second marriages but also that education levels are influential to the level of marital satisfaction in second marriages.

Communication

Communication is another theme that was very strongly seen throughout the research conducted. The respondents all stressed the importance of the individuals in the marriage being able to communicate openly and effectively on the overall success and satisfaction of the marriage. This theme strongly reflects the findings in the literature as the effectiveness of communication in relationships is important in the findings of Gottman as discussed in the literature review. Gottman et. al. (1998), Gottman (1999), and Driver and Gottman (2004) all discuss the importance of examining the partners' communication styles and the quality of their interactions when working with a couple. Knowing communication is important to relationships is key for marriage counselors as it helps them prioritize working on the communication skills or a couple when issues arise.

All couples experience conflict in their relationships – about how much time to spend with friends, how much money is spent individually, or who transports the children to and from activities – but some couples are able to work through their issues more effectively than other couples. One study found that many Americans consider open communication to be crucial for individual well-being and relationship satisfaction (Caughlin, 2003). John Gottman has conducted studies on the practices that extinguish and strengthen relationships. Fundamentally, the reflection is that suffering and satisfied couples manage their disagreements in different ways. Gottman places couples into "regulated" and "no regulated" categories. Gottman specified no regulated couples as those who are more likely to engage in conflict, more defending, more persistent, more irritated, more extracted as a listener, less caring, less interested in their companions, and less happy than regulated couples (Gottman &Levenson, 1992). Regulated couples are couples that overcome their

disagreements in ways that enable problem solving and does not harm their relationship. However, the communication between no regulated couples can be destructive; instead of using problem solving techniques, it creates escalated tensions and increases the couple's anguish. Unsurprisingly, no regulated couples take a lengthier time to bounce back from a disagreement and are less likely to obtain a resolution to their issue, which results in reoccurrence of the disagreement and continuance of their original dispute (Clarke & Brentano, 2006). One study found that disagreement content and communication style are both contributors of divorce. The association between argument topics and the process of communication increases the likelihood of divorce. This is specifically true when couples are disagreeing about finances (Dew et al., 2012).

Sexuality and Marital Success and Satisfaction

Sexuality is seen as a key part of a couple's relationship, so it would be important to know what kind of impact it would have on marital success and satisfaction. The two aspects of sexuality are pre-marital sexuality and marital sexuality. One study by Legkauskas and Stankevičienė (2009) examined the effects that premarital sex has on marital satisfaction for Lithuanian couples. In order to conduct this study, they used a convenience sampling of 41 middle-age couples from Lithuania. This study examined potential links between marital satisfaction and the age when the individual first had sex, whether the individuals had experienced premarital intercourse, the number of partners the individual had had before marriage, and whether the individuals had lived together before marriage. The researchers did not find evidence supporting a relationship between premarital sex and marital satisfaction. They showed that having more premarital partners tended to decrease marital satisfaction for both men and women. For men, they found that cohabitation led to lower marital satisfaction while younger age at first sexual experience led to lower marital satisfaction for the women. In order to measure marital satisfaction, Legkauskas and Stankevičienė (2009) created a 16 item Marital Satisfaction Scale and had the couples complete it. They also had the subjects fill out a questionnaire on their previous sexual experiences. It is important when looking at these results to remember that the individuals were from a different country and culture, but they still provide some insight into the potential effects.

Another study looked at the effects that marital sexuality has on the likelihood of marital disruption. This study was designed and run by Dzara (2010). Dzara discovered that there were limited effects found on the likelihood of marital disruption from marital sexuality. Dzara used panel data from the Marriage Matters Panel Survey of Newlywed Couples, 1998-2004, to examine whether the frequency of, satisfaction with, and agreement on marital sexual interaction early in the marriage has any effect on the likelihood that the couple would experience a marital disruption. The sample for this study was 1310 couples living in Louisiana. While these findings provide little insight into how important sexuality is on the marriage, it could imply that there are more important factors to consider when looking into how to keep marriages together.

Effectiveness/Satisfaction of Premarital Counseling

According to the article evaluating the Effectiveness of Premarital Prevention Programs: A Meta-Analytic Review of Outcome Research, premarital programs have become a concentration of nationwide public policy (Ooms, 1998). Several states in the U.S. have recommended or authorized legislation that compels or proposes incentives for couples to partake in premarital education. Family professors and experts have been advocating for improved arrangement for marriage. Despite the prevalent backing for marriage education programs, questions remain concerning their success in establishing marriage and avoiding divorce (Stanley, 2001). In order to address these questions, researchers opened a comprehensive, met analytic review and critical evaluation of conclusive research relating to the success of premarital education programs. This study addresses the diverse descriptions used to distinguish the kinds of premarital programs, including: premarital counseling, premarital education, premarital therapy, premarital education counseling, and marriage preparation. According to researchers, the literate uses these terms interchangeably. This study uses premarital prevention because it is a more general term and is intended to represent any type of prescribed, uniform tactic to preparing premarital partners for marriage (Carroll &Doherty, 2003). Carroll and Doherty (2003) identify premarital prevention as comprehension and skills-based preparation that offers information to couples on techniques to support and progress their relationship

throughout their marriage (Senediak, 1990). According to researchers, these programs are aimed to provide couples with a mindfulness of possible complications that may transpire after marriage and the information and assets to successfully avoid or improve such problems. Research has presented uniformity in the topics classically covered in premarital programs, with some of the shared topics including: communication, conflict resolution, commitment, roles, financial management, sexuality, etc (Carroll & Doherty, 2003). According to Carroll and Doherty (2003), this study evaluated an assortment of educational techniques used by premarital programs, such as: informal and formal groups, discussion and group presentations, couple experiences, and a mixture of presentation and experiential schemes. Research found that these structures were correspondingly effective in developing preparation for marriage (Stanley, 2001). Stanley and colleagues studied the success rate of a premarital programs ran by clergy versus skilled counselors and professors and found no distinctions between the two methods in consideration of producing positive change in interactions or on couples' rankings of Fulfillment with the education (Carroll & Doherty, 2003).

Together Time and Marital Satisfaction

It is expected that spending time together would be an important activity for couples, but what effect does spending time together have on overall marital satisfaction? Johnson and Anderson (2012) performed a study that looked at the relationship between marital confidence, time spent together, and marital satisfaction. In order to conduct their study, Johnson and Anderson collected data in three waves spread out at 18 month intervals on 610 newly married couples. They were able to find two key themes in their study. First, those with higher levels of marital confidence when they get married are more likely to spend more time together and have higher levels of marital satisfaction. Second, it can be reasonably assumed that couples that spend more time together will report higher levels of marital satisfaction than those who don't spend as much time together. The results of their study showed several key points. First, it showed that couples who had higher levels of confidence at the first point of data collection would have spent more time together at the second point of data collection. Second, it showed that those with

greater amount of time spent together at the second point of data collection reported a higher level of marital satisfaction at the third and final point of data collection. Therefore, it is important for premarital counselors and marriage counselors to assess for the couples' confidence in their marriage and to recommend that couples make a point in spending quality time together to improve their marriage or increase the likelihood of higher marital satisfaction and success.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the review of the previous studies, several key ideas were found. First, it was shown that a successful marriage can have a significant impact on one's psychological wellbeing. Gottman's ideas that communication styles and how the couple interacts being important to marital satisfaction was discussed. Other factors were discussed that could potentially affect the success and satisfaction of a marriage. Research that examined effects that the age at marriage has on the overall success of the marriage was discussed and it was seen that there is a general consensus that there is an age range where the success of the marriage increases until the effects level off. It was also found that the increased use of mindfulness techniques could lead to increased marital success and satisfaction. An individual's sexual experience before and during marriage was also discussed and, while there was no direct relationship between marital sexuality and marital success and satisfaction, several aspects of premarital sexuality for men and women were discovered to potentially have effects on overall marital success and satisfaction.

Premarital cohabitation was found to have an impact on marital quality regardless of the cohabitant while the effects of cohabitation were limited on marital stability if the cohabitant was the eventual spouse. It was also seen that spending time together can impact the couple's overall marital satisfaction. Lastly, it was seen that the amount and type of support, as well as whether the support was provided or solicited, had impacts on overall marital satisfaction. Throughout the review of the literature, it was noted that most of the studies that had been run were run either in the quantitative method or by way of systematic review. It was also noted that most of the research centered around individualistic factors, while only a few

looked into the effects that society could have on the couple. Therefore, this study will be conducted in a qualitative manner and will try to look at a wider range of viewpoints by examining the societal and communal factors as well as the individualistic factors.

However, the major factors that were most mentioned were the presence of external support, quality communication, and quality time spent together by the married couple. While there were other factors that were found to be moderate or weak, including forgiveness, empathy, compromise, intentionality, and respect, it is important to remember that marriages are best suited for success when the individuals spend time together, communicate effectively, and are supported by those around them. Even with these themes being prevalent in this study, it is important to look at each couple independently.

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