Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence And Marital Satisfaction Among Married Men And Women: A Case Of St. Teresa Parish, Eastleigh Ward, Nairobi County In Kenya

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Abstract:
Emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction are crucial elements that possibly enhance stability and durability in marital relationship. The application of emotional intelligence in marriage likely helps couples to monitor, recognize, and understand one's feeling and being able to manage ones' thoughts and emotions in their conjugal relationship. This study examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction among married men and women in Eastleigh Nairobi County, Kenya. The study was guided by Goleman's theory of emotional intelligence.
Materials and Methods: *The study employed a cross-sectional survey research design. Stratified random sampling technique was utilized to select 362 participants, using Yamane's (1967) formula. Data was collected using a researcher-developed socio-demographic questionnaire and standardized scales namely, Schutte Self Report Inventory (SSRI) of emotional intelligence and Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale (EMSS). The two scales were pretested before use and they were found to be good and reliable. Cronbach's alpha for SSRI was (α = .873), while that of EMSS was (α = .878). Quantitative data collected was analyzed using SPSS version 26.*
Results: *The study captured a wide range of age groups, with the 31-40 age group being the largest at 28%, followed closely by the 41-50 age group at 27%. The respondents were diverse in terms of gender, with 44% being male and 56% female. The distribution of respondents based on the duration of their marriages showed that the largest group, at 30%, had been married for 1-10 years, followed by the 20-30 years category at 28%. Findings revealed that there was a strong positive and significant relationship (r = .815, p = .000) between emotion recognition and marital satisfaction among married men and women in St. Teresa Parish, Eastleigh ward, Nairobi County in Kenya. There was a strong positive and significant relationship (r = .959, p = .000) between emotion regulation and marital satisfaction among married men and women in St. Teresa Parish, Eastleigh ward, Nairobi County in Kenya. There was a significant positive relationship between demographic factors between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction respectively. More findings indicated that 40.4% (n = 135) of the participants were at high level of marital satisfaction, 31.3% (n = 105) of the participants had moderate level of marital satisfaction, while 28.3% (n = 19) of the participants were within low level of marital satisfaction. Also, 46.4% (n = 155) of the participants had high emotional intelligence, 29.8% (n = 100) of the participants were under moderate level of emotional intelligence, and 23.8% (n = 80) of the participants were at high level of emotional intelligence.*
Conclusion: *The study concluded that there was a strong significant positive relationship (r = .815, p = .000) between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction among married men and women in St. Teresa Parish, Eastleigh ward, Nairobi County in Kenya.*
Keyword; *Emotional Intelligence, Marital Satisfaction, Emotion Recognition, Emotion Regulation.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence in marriage is vital as it possibly contribute in dealing with the highly dynamic and at times stressful situations that couples experience. Tavakol et al. (2017) asserted that emotional intelligence referred to an individual's cognitive abilities, capabilities and skills to deal with pressures and demands in the environment. It contributes to the individual's happiness and joy. Emotional intelligence revolves around knowing and controlling one's emotions and can help married people understand each other better. Married men and women who are equipped to manage their emotions are more satisfied in their marriage. According to Kariuki (2018),

marital satisfaction is a psychological state that entails assessing how well a married partner's needs, expectations, and desires are met in marriage. It is the extent to which married men and women experience stability and happiness in their marriages. Abedi et al. (2016) postulate that several researches have indicate that numerous factors contribute to marital satisfaction, including good temperament, trustworthiness, faithfulness, intimacy, interactivity and showing interest in a partner, empathy, sexual fulfilment, notice of emotions, understanding of emotions, source of emotion, and the proper management of emotions and its regulation. The relationship between emotional intelligent and marital satisfaction could hardly be refuted.

Emotional intelligence paves way for emotion recognition and emotion regulation which are fundamental in identifying, processing and expressing people's emotions. This affects how people relate with each other as they develop self-awareness, social awareness and self-management (Greenberg et al., 2017). In marriage, couples are likely to encounter negative emotions such as anger and perceived betrayal and this leads to reactions with negative attribution such as contempt. Emotion recognition and regulation then help couples to avoid negative reactions by analyzing the situation and expressing their emotions to their partners. This fosters behaviours and environments that allow marital satisfaction to be achieved (Bloch, Haase & Levenson, 2014).

In Iran, Heidari et al. (2017) argued that the quality of marital affairs was influenced by the emotional intelligence of the individuals in a marriage. The emotional intelligence of the couple considered all aspects of life and can be affected by the personality characteristics and traits of individuals. They contended that as marriage progresses, different emotions such as anxiety, depression and psychological disorders are experienced especially in women. This is attributed to alterations in expectations and demands as well as changes in responsibilities and roles in the family setup. Marital challenges may require the application of emotional intelligence, and emotional intelligence could help married people manage their issues amicably. Similarly in Poland, Zmaczyńska-Witek et al. (2019) found that marriage was not a static state as family circumstances change and also the duties, roles and interaction patterns that were found at the beginning of the marriage were not the same as marriage progressed. In the first few years of the marriage, there was marital bliss and satisfaction which declined in the next years, but there was again a rise in marital bliss and satisfaction in the later years.

In South Africa, Du Plooy and De Beer (2018) reported that between 2012 and 2013, there was 28% increase in the number of divorces while newly registered marriages declined. The number of divorce cases in the country continues to increase with marital dissatisfaction being described as the main cause of divorce in South Africa. Recognizing and regulating emotions for the couples was found to be difficult and this contributed to marital dissatisfaction (Du Plooy & De Beer, 2018). Also, Girma (2020) found in Ethiopia that marital satisfaction had become an area of concern due to the high cases of marital breakdown which led to an alarming increased in divorce cases. This was caused by increased emotional disturbances and couples were unable to identify ways of managing their emotions. Emotional intelligence was deemed as a crucial way of dealing with emotional disturbances as it helped to recognize and regulate emotions. The emotional disturbances and frustrations contributed in unfulfilled marital life. Therefore, married men and women need to devise a method of expressing their emotions for marital satisfaction to be attained (Bayle, Ayalew & Yimer, 2017).

Koech (2021) reported that Kenya was among African countries that had minimal statistical discrepancies of data concerning the citizens' marital status alongside Burkina Faso, Tanzania, Uganda and Benin. Between 2014 and 2020, there was an increase in the number of married couples in Kenya from 12.6 million to 16.7 million. But, in 2019, the abolishment of the minimum family life period in the Kenyan law played a part in the increase in legal separations and marriage dissolutions in the country. This led to an increase in divorce rate by about twenty per cent. In February 2020 alone, there had been 149 filed divorce cases which meant that there was an average of five filed divorce cases per day. The majority of the couples are divorced by the time they reach their tenth anniversary. The high divorce rate in Kenya was an indication of low emotional intelligence which negatively affected marital satisfaction in the country (Koech, 2021).

In the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kamomoe, Ngari, Gichure, Ndung'u and Esiu (2021) found that there has been an increase of married individuals faced with low marriage quality and they reported to their parishes on incidences of infidelity, harassment, emotional abuse, verbal threats, and emotional assault in their marriages. With limited means of managing their partner's emotions, most of these marriages ended up in divorce and separations

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK – GOLEMAN'S THEORY OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Goleman's theory of emotional intelligence was used as it provides a foundation in understanding emotion recognition and regulation as components of EI. The theory was propagated in 1995 and refined in 2001 by Daniel Goleman, a psychologist who used his experience to explain behaviours and emotions (Kanesan & Fauzan, 2019). The key components of the Goleman's EI theory are emotion recognition and emotion regulation (Goleman, 2020). Emotion recognition refers to an individual being self-aware of their emotions and having empathy by being aware of the emotions of others. An individual understands their strengths and weaknesses which affect their moods and emotions. In this way, individuals are able to monitor their own emotions as well as

identify the emotions in other people. The emotions of human beings are continuously evolving and are constantly communicated verbally and non-verbally. Emotion recognition helps to objectively assess the different emotional states faced by individuals and know the best way to deal with emotional situations (Kotsou et al., 2019). On the other hand, emotion regulation refers to the extent to which individuals are able to manage their emotions while managing their relationship with others. This includes self-control where an individual controls their emotions, adaptability where an individual adapts to their environment, and conflict management where conflicts are managed through communication, developing others, and building strong and collaborative bonds (Kanesan & Fauzan, 2019).

According to Goleman (2020), individuals with high EI can manage and adjust their emotions so that they adapt effectively to their environments. This results in positive effects such as good mental health, management of stress and aggressive behaviour as well as good control of impulses. In romantic relationships, Goleman (2020) postulates that there is a strong relationship between successful interpersonal relations and emotional intelligence which highlights that empathy is important and it leads to marital satisfaction. Goleman's theory of emotional intelligence fits the current study in a bid to assess the relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction among married men and women at St. Teresa Parish, Eastleigh. Erus and Deniz (2020) explain that emotional intelligence focuses on the psychological well-being of individuals and it affects marital life and helps to uphold marital relationships. In a marriage, emotional intelligence helps individuals to remain calm during conflicts and allow them to be empathetic while perceiving and understanding their spouses' feelings.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study employed a cross-sectional survey research design to determine the relationship between the research variables. This study was carried out in Eastleigh, a suburb of Nairobi City. The study specifically focused on St. Teresa's Parish which has the highest number of members in the Catholic Men Association and Catholic Women Association in the Archdiocese of Nairobi in Kenya. The study had a target population of 3910 married men and women. Stratified random sampling technique was used to identify the individuals who took part in the study. A sample size of 362 was determined with the use of Yamane's (1967) formula. Quantitative data was gathered using a researcher-developed socio-demographic questionnaire which comprised of age, gender, levels of education, and years in marriage. Also, the study utilized two standardized instruments namely; Schutte Self Report Inventory (SSRI) of emotional intelligence and Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale (EMSS). The instruments were pre-tested and results of the reliability of Cronbach's Alpha test pointed that the Emotional Intelligence Scale (of 5 point Linkert scale) had an alpha of $\alpha = .873$, having the total number of 33 items, while Marital Satisfaction Scale (on a 5 point Linkert scale) had an alpha of $\alpha = .878$, having the total number of 15 items. The two instruments were found to be reliable. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences; SPSS version 26 was used for data analysis. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings were presented in summary tables. The respondents were diverse in terms of gender, with 44% being male and 56% female. This balanced representation ensures that a range of perspectives is considered. Notably, the highest number of respondents were females. The study also captured a wide range of age groups, with the 31-40 age group being the largest at 28%, followed closely by the 41-50 age group at 27%. This suggests active participation from individuals in their thirties and forties.

IV. FINDINGS

Relationship between Emotion Recognition and Marital Satisfaction

The first objective of this study sought to find out the relationship between emotion recognition and marital satisfaction among married men and women in St. Teresa Parish, Eastleigh ward, Nairobi County in Kenya. The Pearson's coefficient correlation analysis was conducted to in order to attain this objective. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Relationship between Emotion Recognition and Marital Satisfaction			
		Emotion Recognition	Marital Satisfaction
Emotion Recognition	Pearson Correlation	1	.815**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	335	335
Marital Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.815**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	335	335
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

As seen in Table 1, findings pointed out that there was a strong positive and significant relationship(r = .815, p = .000) between emotion recognition and marital satisfaction among married men and women in St. Teresa Parish, Eastleigh ward, Nairobi County in Kenya.

Levels of Emotion Recognition

Descriptive statistical analysis was carried out and data was computed and scored in order measure the levels of emotion recognition among married men and women in St. Teresa Parish, Eastleigh ward, Nairobi County in Kenya. Thus, 23 statements (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 25, 26, 29, 32 and 33) were used to measure the levels of emotion recognition. Each of the statement was on a 5-point Likert scale where; 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly agree. The lowest score a participant may get was 1 and the highest possible score a participant may get was 115. Data was converted to composite scores and is presented under the three levels; 1-39 (low level of emotion recognition), 40-79 (Moderate level of emotion recognition), 80-115 (High level of emotion recognition).The outcomes of the analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Levels of Emotion Recognition

Levels	Frequency	Percentage
Low	120	35.8%
Moderate	109	32.5%
High	106	31.6%
Total	335	100%

As seen in Table 2, findings indicated that 35.8% (n = 120) of the participants scored low level of emotion recognition, 32.5% (n = 109) of the participants had moderate level of emotion recognition, while 31.6% (n = 106) of the participants were high level of emotion recognition.

Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Marital Satisfaction

The Pearson's coefficient correlation analysis was conducted to find out the relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction among married men and women in St. Teresa Parish, Eastleigh ward, Nairobi County in Kenya. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Marital Satisfaction

		Emotional Intelligence	Marital Satisfaction
Emotional Intelligence	Pearson Correlation	1	.815**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	335	335
Marital Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.815**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	335	335
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

As seen in Table 3, results revealed that there was a strong significant positive relationship (r = .815, p = .000) between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction among married men and women in St. Teresa Parish, Eastleigh ward, Nairobi County in Kenya.

V. DISCUSSION

Relationship between Emotion Recognition and Marital Satisfaction

Findings pointed that there was a strong positive and significant relationship (r = .815, p = .000) between emotion recognition and marital satisfaction among married men and women in St. Teresa Parish, Eastleigh ward, Nairobi County in Kenya. This implies that when levels of emotion recognition increased level of marital satisfaction also increased. Equally, when levels of emotion recognition decreased, marital satisfaction decreased. The findings underscore the importance of emotion recognition in fostering marital satisfaction among married men and women. Understanding and valuing emotions as an essential aspect of life can enhance emotional connection and mutual experiences, contributing to fulfilling and gratifying marital relationship. Ciarrochi et al. (2016) underscored the positive impact of emotion recognition on relationship satisfaction, emphasizing the importance of effective emotional expression and communication within marriages. These findings are similar with the findings of Brooks et al. (2020) highlight the association between optimism and marital satisfaction,

where a positive outlook can facilitate coping with stress and adversity, further fortifying the marital bond. Cappellen et al. (2018). demonstrated the influence of positive emotional experiences and the acknowledgment of emotions on overall life satisfaction affirmed the link between emotional recognition and marital contentment.

Levels of Emotion Recognition

Findings indicated that 35.8% (n = 120) of the participants scored low level of emotion recognition, 32.5% (n = 109) of the participants had moderate level of emotion recognition, while 31.6% (n = 106) of the participants were high level of emotion recognition. Emotion may be seen as being aware of one's internal state, and also being able to notice the emotions of others. Married people vary in temperament and personality, and recognizing emotion in oneself and that of the other is crucial as it may facilitate clear communication among married people. The participants of this study fell in different levels of emotion recognition. Participants with high emotion recognition could possibly be seen as being aware of the self as well as the other, while those who were under low level of emotion recognition may be struggling with self-awareness, and being unable to clearly articulate their internal reality and the external reality of the other person. Recognizing each partner's emotions could give a better understanding in marital relationship (Boateng et al., 2022). These findings corroborate with the findings of Alipour et al. (2020) in Iran, who focused on marital communication skills and found that emotional intelligence played a key role in marital satisfaction. The participants with high and moderate emotion recognition had the ability to recognize and express their thoughts, feelings, and desires to their partners, and this was crucial in addressing their own needs and, consequently, enhancing marital satisfaction. The study highlighted the importance of self-awareness, understanding one's emotion and that of the others' emotions, and effectively managing emotions in fostering satisfying and successful marriages among married people.

Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Marital Satisfaction

Results revealed that there was a strong significant positive relationship (r = .815, p = .000) between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction among married men and women in St. Teresa Parish, Eastleigh ward, Nairobi County in Kenya. Emotional intelligence could be seen as the ability to monitor, recognize, understand one's feeling and being able to manage ones' thoughts and emotions. A fulfilling and highly satisfied marital life can be one of the most critical factors in achieving happiness in the relationship. Any woman or man that decides to be married has great hopes for one's marriage to be filled with mutual pleasure, understanding, appreciation, peace, patience, and all the other characteristics that go along with it to foster a loving environment. Marital satisfaction is one without the presence of emotional intelligence. A proper regulation of emotion and the application of emotional intelligence in marital affair has an impact on the durability of marital relationships also have an impact on the wellness of the offspring as well as partners Kariuki (2018). The findings of this current study are similar with the finding of Anyamene (2020) in Nigeria, and findings of the study pointed that there was a significant low relationship (p = 0.20) existing among married teachers' emotional intelligence and their marital satisfaction. Mohammadimehr and Ayatollah (2017) further established in their study that satisfactory marriage was one that embraced emotional intelligence and was a shield against mental pressures and negative life events, while unstable and stressful marriages have negative consequences for physical as well as mental health of married partners. However, they stated that there was no perfect marriage. The findings of this study demonstrated the interrelationship between emotional intelligence and the marital satisfaction.

VI. CONCLUSION

Emotional intelligence is crucial in marital relationship as it possibly enhances stability in marriage through sincere recognition of emotions and its regulations among married partners. Marital satisfaction is a psychological state that could hardly be experienced without the application of emotional intelligence. By recognizing the importance of emotional intelligence and its relationship with marital satisfaction, couples could continually work towards developing skills of enhancing communication, recognizing and regulating emotions in order to facilitate the building of healthier, meaningful and satisfying conjugal relationship. Therefore, this study concluded that there was a strong significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction among married men and women in St. Teresa Parish, Eastleigh ward, Nairobi County in Kenya.

VII. RECOMMENDATION

This study recommends that couples should be encouraged to attend mental health workshops and also seek professional counselling to improve their communication patterns and expression of emotions. Also, counseling psychologists may be called upon to render effective counselling services to the married men and women in Nairobi County, Kenya. They could organize seminars on psychological topics like self-awareness, emotion recognition, and emotion regulations for couples in order to broaden their understanding about emotional intelligence.

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