

**PSYCHOSOCIAL PREDICTORS OF MARITAL
SATISFACTION AMONG MARRIED PEOPLE IN
GAUTENG PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA**

JODY NEO NDLOVU

2013

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Psychosocial predictors of Marital Satisfaction among Married People in Gauteng Province, South Africa

JN Ndlovu

Dissertation (article format) submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Masters of Social Science in Research Psychology at the North-West University (Mafikeng Campus)

Supervisor: Professor E.S. Idemudia

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my spiritual father and mother

Reverend WD and Pastor EB Ngandu

You stood by me when everyone else wanted nothing to do with me.

God bless you some more.

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- God Almighty for giving me wisdom, time, life and the strength to make it this far. I am here because of your never ending and unconditional love.
- A special thanks to my supervisor, Prof. E.S. Idemudia, for your tremendous support, patience, and guidance. May my good God continue to bless you, without you this would have not been possible.
- My children for being patient with me when I could not give you all the attention you needed the most, may my good God see you through your growth.
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SUMMARY

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between psychosocial factors and marital satisfaction among married people in Gauteng Province, South Africa. Psychosocial factors are defined as age, gender, number of years in marriage, number of children, frequency of marriage, educational level, communication, wellbeing and alexithymia.

A sample of 500 married people, were asked to complete the research questionnaire comprising 119 items. They were selected using purposive and snow-ball sampling techniques. People known to the researcher were asked to help identify married people in their neighbourhood, work places, churches, and ask them to fill in a questionnaire. As they completed the questionnaire they were also asked to identify others who are married and ask them to complete as well. The geographical area was Gauteng Province, South Africa. The sample was representative of all racial groups residing in Gauteng, and they were people who were able to read and write for confidentiality and privacy purposes. Their levels of education were from high school to university graduates. They were also representative of all social classes.

Four scales were used, Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS-20), Primary Communication Inventory Scale (PCI), Ryff's Psychological wellbeing scale, and Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS). The results of this study indicate that psychological well-being, communication and alexithymia significantly predict marital satisfaction. Age and sex were also found to predict marital satisfaction.

PREFACE

Article format

For the purpose of this dissertation, which is part of the requirements for a professional masters' degree, the article format as described by General Regulation A.7.5.1.b of the North-West University was chosen.

Selected journal

The target journal for the submission of the current manuscript is the South African Journal of Psychology (SAJP). For the purpose of examination, tables will be included in the text.

Letter of consent

A letter of consent for the co-authors, in which they grant permission that the manuscript "Psychosocial predictors of marital satisfaction among married people in Gauteng Province, South Africa," may be submitted for purposes of thesis, is attached.

Page numbering

In the dissertation, page numbering is from the first to the last. For submission to the above mentioned journal, the manuscript is numbered according to the requirements of the SAJP. Thus, numbering starts on the title page of the manuscript.

Letter of Consent

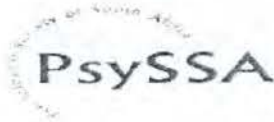
I, the undersigned, hereby give consent that Jody Neo Ndlovu may submit the manuscript entitled, "PSYCHOSOCIAL PREDICTORS OF MARITAL SATISFACTION AMONG MARRIED PEOPLE IN GAUTENG PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA" for the purpose of a dissertation in fulfillment for the Master of research degree in Psychology.

.....

Prof. E.S. Idemudia

Supervisor

Instructions to authors: South African Journal of Psychology



South African Journal of Psychology

Instructions to authors

Submitting a manuscript

SAJP is a peer-reviewed journal publishing empirical, theoretical and review articles on all aspects of psychology. Articles may focus on South African, African or international issues. Manuscripts to be considered for publication should be e-mailed to sajp@up.ac.za. Include a covering letter with your postal address, email address, and phone number. The covering letter should indicate that the manuscript has not been published elsewhere and is not under consideration for publication in another journal. An acknowledgement of receipt will be emailed to the author (within seven days, if possible) and the manuscript will be sent for review by three independent reviewers. Incorrectly structured or formatted manuscripts, or manuscripts not edited for language, will not be accepted into the review process. Only one article per author will be published per calendar year. Exceptions to this rule will be at the sole discretion of the editor (with his or her associate editors) in the case of an exceptional article that needs to be published, a special issue where the specific article will make a significant contribution, in writing or responding to a *riposte*, etc.

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- The manuscript should be no longer than 20 pages (5 500 words).
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Manuscript

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PEOPLE IN GAUTENG PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA

PSYCHOSOCIAL PREDICTORS OF MARITAL SATISFACTION AMONG MARRIED
PEOPLE IN GAUTENG PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract

This study investigated whether (1) socio-demographic factors such as age, gender, race, number of years in marriage, number of children, frequency of marriage, and educational level, (2) psychological well-being, and (3) communication will significantly predict marital satisfaction among married people in Gauteng Province and (4) whether married people with alexithymia do have satisfactory marriages?. Data was collected on married participants who were randomly selected in Gauteng Province. The sample comprised both males 313 (63.1%) and females 183 (36.9%), participants were above the consenting age of 18 years, with age ranging between 20 to 72 years. The results indicate that communication, alexithymia, and psychological well-being do predict marital satisfaction significantly. A positive correlation was found between dyadic adjustment and psychological well-being, also between communication and alexithymia. Three hypotheses were accepted, except for the one of demographic factors which was partially accepted since not all of them were found to predict marital satisfaction, except age and sex.

Keywords: Marital satisfaction, communication, alexithymia, psychological well-being

Introduction and Problem Statement

Marriage is believed to be the most enjoyable and friendly human relationship that shapes the foundation and structure of families (Ames, 2007). Having a satisfying marriage proves to be an advantage to couples, their children and members of the whole family. Satisfaction is defined by Caruna, Money and Berthon (2000), as a response to the feeling of experience and the fulfillment or gratification of a desire, need, or appetite, and the pleasure or contentment derived from such gratification, while Randall and Bodenmann (2009) predict that conflict often happens if the spouse's need or importance is not fulfilled which then results in dissatisfaction.

According to Tramilton (2011), marital satisfaction is the degree to which an individual's needs, expectations, and desires are being satisfied in their marriage; a subjective condition which can only be described by the individual spouse; an individual's personal evaluation of their marriage overall, not a quality of a relationship, a measurement of a relationship, or predictive of a relationship success. Ames (2007) believes that stronger marriages prevent social ills in the lives of people. According to Edwards (2009) children brought up by single parent, cohabitating homes or unsatisfied couples are likely to have less education, report poorer relationship quality, earn less income, experience higher divorce rates, have more troubled marriages and experience poor mental health that continues into adulthood. These children are then prone to unsatisfactory marriages in the future.

There is a reason to wonder whether married people are happy and satisfied in their marriages as well as investigate those factors that predict marital satisfaction among married people. According to statistical release P0307 (2010), a total of 170826 civil marriages were registered in 2010 in South Africa, most of which were solemnized by civil rites. The highest numbers of civil marriages were registered in Gauteng Province and the lowest registered in the Northern Cape. With regard to divorce, the data from 12 out of 62 courts showed that 22936 divorces were granted in South Africa in 2010. This may imply that if data were collected from all 62 courts, the figure could have been higher.

According to the National Census of 2010, Gauteng is home to about 19.7% of the total South African population. The majority of the population in Gauteng is African (75.3%), while the province is also home to a relatively large share of white people (18.4%). Coloureds and Asian people constitute small minority groups, with 4.1% and 2.3% of the population respectively (SSA, 2010). The province has always recorded the highest marriage trends in South Africa over the years since the recording of statistics commenced. The highest divorce rates were also reported in Gauteng, Africans being the most common race. In terms of occupational distribution, the skilled constitute highest proportion in divorce rates followed by the semi-skilled.

The study sought to clarify the following concepts: Socio-demographic factors such as age, gender, race, number of years in marriage, number of children, frequency of marriage, and educational level significantly predict marital satisfaction among married people in Gauteng Province; Does psychological well-being predict marital satisfaction? What is the role of communication in marital satisfaction among married people in Gauteng Province? Lastly, do people who have alexithymia enjoy satisfactory marriages?

Several studies have been conducted on marital satisfaction; some wanted to find out the links between premarital cohabitation and subsequent marital quality, stability, and divorce. Others to determine the relationship between attachment style, alexithymia, marital satisfaction and depressive symptoms, and many others. Most studies conducted on marital satisfaction were to find out if two variables are predictors of marital satisfaction and rarely were more than two variables investigated in one study. Only a few studies focused on more than two variables as predictors of marital satisfaction. Researchers identified factors which are believed to be predictors of marital satisfaction, and the most common have been found to be communication, psychological well-being, alexithymia, gender, level of education, frequency of marriage, number of children in a marriage, and sex differences. In South Africa, there are few identified studies conducted on the issue of marital satisfaction and its predictors, hence this research study was conducted, to determine if these factors do predict marital satisfaction in the South African community of Gauteng Province, given the culture differences.

Theoretical Background

Dynamic goal theory of marital satisfaction

Marital satisfaction is gaining increasing concern in modern society. Li and Fung (2011) propose the dynamic goal theory of marital satisfaction to integrate previous findings about marital satisfaction from a life span developmental perspective. The theory argues that people have multiple goals to achieve in their marriage. These marital goals can be classified into three categories: personal growth goals, companionship goals, and instrumental goals. The priority of the three types of marital goals is under dynamic changes across adulthood. The theorists believe that young couples emphasize the personal growth goals, middle-aged couples prioritize the instrumental goals, and old couples focus on the companionship goals. Whether the prioritized marital goals are achieved in marriage or not determines marital satisfaction. Other factors influencing marital satisfaction can be linked with marital goals in two ways. Some factors, such as life transitions and cultural values, can affect the priority of different marital goals while other factors, such as communication pattern, problem solving, and attribution, can facilitate the achievement of the prioritized marital goals.

Tramilton (2011) on the other hand, believes that marriage is a complex and complicated situation and that if done right, can lead to a rewarding lifetime of fulfillment, companionship and joy. He argues that there are six components that bring about marital satisfaction, namely: expectation - before marrying it can help greatly if a couple communicated their expectations of an upcoming life together; affection - marriages are doomed to fail with the absence of caring and affection, like, all marriages require nurturing and nourishing in order to thrive and stay alive; individuality - one theory behind a marriage that works refers to partners providing each other with sufficient space, lacking individuality but being around each other too much can lead to feelings of suffocation and codependency, both of which are unhealthy for any relationship; financial security - in order for a married couple to work well as a team, an agreement regarding monetary matters needs to be established from the very beginning, from spending habits to saving up a fund for the children's college; friendship - if a person wants to have a satisfying and meaningful marriage, she should look into marrying someone who is her best friend and not just a lover.

Finally; conflict - to keep a marriage healthy and functional, married couples need to, from the beginning learn how to manage and deal with whatever conflicts are thrown at them; whether it is a job crisis or a serious injury. Good marriages are about working together as a team and communicating in order to solve problems. Leaving conflicts unsolved can only bring about resentment and exacerbate the problem.

Self-determination theory

Self-determination theory provides empirically informed guidelines and principles for motivating people to explore experiences and events, and from that reflective basis to make adoptive changes in goals, behaviours, and relationships, including marital relationships (Ryan and Deci, 2008).

This theory is one of the useful therapies for dealing with alexithymia. The theory discusses some of the processes involved in enhancing autonomy which is also a subscale of psychological well-being scale, including the role of awareness, the importance of exploring and challenging interjects and external regulations, attention to need-related goal contents, and therapist attitudes required for a therapy approach that is process, rather than outcome focused. Within this theory, the construct of autonomy concerns self-endorsement of one's behaviour and the accompanying sense of willingness. It proposes that, when individuals are more autonomously engaged in the therapeutic process they will be more likely to integrate learning and behaviour change, resulting in more positive outcomes. It further argues that an atmosphere of autonomy support, which has often been found to facilitate the satisfaction of all three psychological needs, is crucial to client's active engagement and adherence.

Psychological well-being theory

Psychological well-being is another factor that is proven to predict marital satisfaction. Ryff's study developed an area in which she generated a theory-driven, empirically-based approach to assessment of multiple dimensions of positive psychological functioning (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). The Ryff's Scale of Psychological Well Being measures the individual's aspect of self-acceptance, establishment of quality ties to others, sense of autonomy in thought and action, the ability to manage complex environments to suit personal needs and values, together with a sense of purpose in life, continued growth and development as a person.

Ryff defined each aspect according to how that concept should be achieved. First, self-acceptance is a positive attitude toward the self. It is the acknowledgment and acceptance of multiple aspects of self, including good and bad qualities. It is the positive feeling about past life. Second, positive relations with others refers to warm, satisfying, trusting relationships with others. It is about the individual's concern about the welfare of others. It is the capability of strong empathy, affection and intimacy. It is the understanding of the 'give and take' of human relationships. Third, autonomy refers to individuals' self-determining and independence. It is the ability to resist social pressures, to think and act in certain ways. It is the regulation of behaviour from within. It is the evaluation of self by personal standards. Fourth, environmental mastery is the sense of mastery and competence in managing the environment. It is the controlling of complex array of external activities. It is how individuals make effective use of surrounding opportunities. It is the ability to choose or create contexts suitable to personal needs and values.

Fifth, purpose in life refers to a person's goals in life and a sense of directedness. It is the feeling that there is meaning to present and past life. It signifies that a person holds beliefs that give life purpose. It refers to the occurrence of aims and objectives for living by a person. Sixth, personal growth is the feeling of continued development. A person must see self as growing and expanding. It is openness to new experiences and it is the sense of realizing one's potential. A person sees improvement in self and behaviour over time. It is the changes in ways that reflect more self-knowledge and effectiveness.

This theory will help us define and determine the psychological well-being of the married people in Gauteng Province. The psychological well-being of a person refers to the wellness and stability of a person's self. Thus, this theory will enable us to assess the well-being of the married people in order for us to know and measure the level of these people's marital satisfaction. This theory has profound implications for assessing the well-being of individuals because of the knowledge of how individuals view themselves, their significant others and their society.

Robert (2012) used the Dualistic Model of Passion (DMP) to show the role of passion for activities in sustainable psychological well-being. He defines passion as a strong inclination toward a self-defining activity that people like or even love, find important, and in which they

invest time and energy on a regular basis. The model proposes the existence of two types of passion; harmonious and obsessive.

Harmonious passion originates from an autonomous internalization of the activity into one's identity while obsessive passion emanates from a controlled internalization and comes to control the person. Through the experience of positive emotions during activity engagement that takes place on a regular and repeated basis, it is believed that harmonious passion contributes to sustained psychological well-being while preventing the experience of negative affect, psychological conflict, and ill-being. Obsessive passion is not expected to produce such positive effects and may even facilitate negative affect, conflict with other life activities, and psychological ill-being.

Alexithymia theory

Alexithymia is proving to be a heuristically useful construct for exploring the role of personality and emotions in the pathogenesis of certain somatic illnesses and diseases, (Taylor: 2000). According to Schwartz (2012), Alexithymia is a personality characteristic in which the individual is unable to identify and describe their emotions. The main feature of alexithymia is an emotional unawareness, lack of social attachment, and poor interpersonal relating. Furthermore, those suffering from alexithymia have difficulty recognizing and understanding the emotions of others. Alexithymia means there is: difficulty in identifying feelings and distinguishing between feelings and the bodily sensations, difficulty in describing feelings to other people, limited imagination and, therefore, little or no fantasies and limited dreams; and an unawareness of what is happening in their own mind and a very concrete way of thinking. Not communicating emotions can be a stumbling block for marital satisfaction.

Communication theory

Scott (2013) discussed Aristotle's communication model. In this model, communication is said to be persuasive in nature. According to this model, the speaker plays a key role in communication, he is the one who takes complete charge of the communication, and he must be very careful about his selection of words and should understand his target audience. This model concentrates on persuasive communication which occurs when someone intentionally tries to persuade another person. He believes that there are three great elements of communication,

ethos, pathos, and logos. Ethos is essentially your credibility, the reason why people should believe what you are saying.

In order for communication to work in any marriage, the couple must learn to give each other a chance, both be actively involved in the processes of communication, and avoid being domineering in any conversation. Pathos refers to making an emotional connection, essentially the reason people should believe that what you say will matter to them. Logos is your mode of appealing to others' sense of reasoning. These three elements of communication reinforce one another. It is important to have an emotional connection during the communication processes. Respect is also important in a communication; a couple must learn to respect each other's opinions.

Communications skills can make or break an individual's personal and professional life. Companies want to hire and promote people with excellent communications skills. Divorces occur because spouses believe they no longer communicate. According to Scott (2013), Communication is perceived as a magical elixir, one that can ensure a happy long-term relationship and can guarantee organizational success. Good communication means different things to different people in different situations. It is of utmost importance for married people to be good communicators in order to have a satisfying marriage since this factor is proven to be a predictor of marital satisfaction, and it's also investigated in this study.

Gender Theory

Mill (2012) distinguishes between sex, gender and sexual orientation. He states that sex is the biological component of being male or female, gender is the social and psychological component, and sexual orientation is the way people experience sexual pleasure. These terms are often confused, and in a marriage they play a major role in determining an individual's satisfaction. Children learn at a young age that there are distinct expectations for boys and girls. Cross-cultural studies reveal that children are aware of gender roles by age two or three, at four or five, most children are firmly entrenched in culturally appropriate gender roles (Dunson, 2012). Children acquire these roles through socialization, a process in which people learn to behave in a particular way as dictated by societal values, beliefs, and attitudes. This explains why there are gender differences in marital satisfaction.

According to Dunson, gender stereotyping involves overgeneralizing about the attitudes, traits, or behaviour patterns of women or men; it forms the basis for feminism. Furthermore, he argues that gender socialization occurs through four major agents of socialization: family, education, peer groups, and mass media. Each agent reinforces gender roles by creating and maintaining normative expectations for gender-specific behaviour. Exposure also occurs through secondary agents such as religion and the workplace. Repeated exposure to these agents over time leads men and women into a false sense that they are acting naturally rather than following a socially constructed role. Family is the first agent of socialization; parents tend to socialize sons and daughters differently. Gender is investigated in this study as a predictor of marital satisfaction, according to this theory, gender roles are learned, which means they can also be unlearned if found that they bring about dissatisfaction in a marriage. This theory is useful in understanding gender differences and similarities in response to those factors that are investigated as predictors of marital satisfaction.

Marital satisfaction

According to Zhang, Ho and Yip (2012), husbands are more likely to be satisfied with their sexual and marital relations if they are two to four years older than their wives, and less likely to be satisfied if their wives were five or more years older. The literature shows that successful marriage is found mostly if the couple feels satisfied in running their marriage life (Lawrence, Pederson, Bunde, Barry, Brock, Fazio, et al., 2008). Hawkin and Booth (2005) stated that low level of marital quality may influence some factors in marriage life such as happiness, life satisfaction, health and self-confidence.

According to Lavner, Bradbury and Karney (2012), spouses exhibit high, stable satisfaction over the first 4 years of marriage. If the couple always feels satisfied with each other, any conflict that might arise is able to be reduced or avoided (Brown, 2004; Brown, Sanchez, Laura, Nock & Wright, 2006). Marital conflict often happens if the spouse's need or importance is not fulfilled which then results in dissatisfaction (Randall & Bodenmann, 2009). A partner factor also plays a role in marital satisfaction. A person who has effectively harmonized his past, present and future is in a better state of staying happy. A happy person is in a better position to bring happiness to another, if it's in a marriage, it stands a better chance of surviving and the couple is in a better position to have a satisfactory marriage.

A study was done by Ono and Raymo (2006) about utilizing wife perspective to analyze the quality of marital satisfaction, and they discovered that being a wife or a married woman does not necessarily bring satisfaction in a marriage, mainly because of their cultural influences. The wives who participated in that study were not particularly satisfied within their marriages. Furthermore, another study conducted by Rika, Jemain, Khairul and Mohamed (2009) explored the quality perspective into determining priority in marriage life for initiating loyalty in relation to satisfaction, and their conclusion was that couples who remain loyal to each other stand a better chance of being satisfied in their marriages.. The successful marriage brings joy to the extended family and society but marriage can also bring challenging problems (Ames, 2007) and couples face more necessities and have fewer supports than ever before (Edwards, 2009). A complicated marriage, managing a career while rearing children demands that couples have strong, very good abilities to communicate, resolve problems, bilateral relations and set goals. Without this foundation, it is easy to feel overwhelmed by stress and time pressures (Patricia & Kuhlman, 2005).

Scorsolini and dos Santos (2012) conducted a study in which they wanted to find out the correlation between subjective well-being, dyadic adjustment and marital satisfaction in Brazilian married people. Their findings were obtained through the analysis of correlations and of stepwise multiple regressions, where it was verified that all the factors of the dyadic adjustment showed correlation with the marital satisfaction. The satisfaction with life and dyadic satisfaction, were positively and significantly correlated ($r = 0.20$; $p = 0.04$), which reveals that people who say they are satisfied with life in different domains also do so in relation to the marital experience.

It has also been found that co-parenting behaviour mediated the association between spousal marital satisfaction and partners' parenting practices (Pedro, Ribeiro, & Shelton; 2012). This could be influenced by culture. Children are expected to bring joy in a marriage; however, if a child has an abnormality, the marital satisfaction is threatened. This was proven by Mohamadi, Farokhzadi, Alipour, Rostami, Dehestani and Salmanian (2012); they found that there is a significant difference between parents of normal children and those with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) children in their marital satisfaction.

The level of marital satisfaction was lower among parents of ADHD children compared to parents of normal children. People tend to display high levels of satisfaction during their early days of marriage than later on.

On the other hand, Hartley, Barker, Baker, Seltzer, Marsha and Greenberg (2012) found that the closeness in the mother–child relationship and household income had a significant effect on the level of marital satisfaction, and that variability in the slope of mothers' marital satisfaction was significantly predicted by fluctuations in the behaviour problems of the adolescent or adult child with an autistic spectrum disorder (ASD).

Furthermore, Ng, Loy, Gudmunson and Cheong (2009) conducted a study where they found that marital satisfaction significantly predicted life satisfaction for both men and women, but the influence was greater for women. Their results suggest that different interventions, according to attachment style, may be helpful for the enhancement of marital satisfaction and the reduction of the depressive symptoms of married couples. This prompted the discussion that subjective well-being is equally important in marital satisfaction.

To determine whether the number of children predicted marital satisfaction, Onyishi, Sorokowski, Sorokowska and Pipitone (2012), found a positive relationship between the number of children and marital satisfaction among parents. In their view, number of children was a strong predictor of marital satisfaction even when compared to other variables like wealth. In this study, however, number of children as one of the demographic factors was found not to be a strong predictor of marital satisfaction.

Frequency of marriage is another demographic factor investigated in this study. Bir-Akturk and Fisiloglu (2009) conducted a study on marital satisfaction in Turkish remarried families: marital status, stepchildren, and contributing factors. Their results indicated that there was no significant marital satisfaction difference in terms of marital status. Remarried individuals with residential stepchildren had lower marital satisfaction than those with nonresidential stepchildren and those without stepchildren. For first-married individuals, length of marriage and income predicted marital satisfaction. For post-divorce remarried individuals, gender and presence of mutual children were predictors. For post-bereavement remarried individuals, length of current marriage and income were significant predictors.

For those with stepchildren, only the residence of stepchildren significantly predicted marital satisfaction. Therefore, frequency of marriage in their study is a predictor of marital satisfaction.

In their attempt to investigate the relationship between dyadic coping and marital satisfaction of older spouses in long-term marriages, Landis, Peter-Wight, Martin and Bodenmann (2013), found that the partner's subjective perception of their spouse's supportive behaviour was more strongly linked to their relationship satisfaction than to their self-reported support. Furthermore, individual support perception was more important for marital satisfaction than coping congruency. This now brings us to the discussion of psychological well-being.

Psychological well-being and marital satisfaction

A general theory of subjective well-being is of importance in this project because it details those factors like happiness, emotion, mood, cognitive biases, and time perspective, all of which form part of well-being. Diener (2006) defines subjective well-being as an umbrella term for various types of evaluations, both positive and negative, that people make regarding their lives including evaluation of life satisfaction, engagement, and affect.

Psychological well-being as one of the factors that predict marital satisfaction is often discussed in relation to emotional well-being, subjective well-being, mental health, and mental well-being. It simply refers to how people evaluate their lives. According to Diener, Wirtz, Tov, Kim-Prieto, Choi, Oishi, et al (2010), subjective well-being refers to how people experience the quality of their lives and includes both emotional reactions and cognitive judgments. It encompasses moods and emotions as well as evaluations of one's satisfaction and the relative frequency of positive and negative affect. It tends to be stable over time and is strongly related to personality traits.

They noted that the protective effects of subjective well-being on mortality persist even when the behavioural factors are controlled, suggesting that physiological mediators are involved. Chida and Steptoe (2008) on the other hand, conclude that positive psychological states may influence inflammatory and coagulation factors, which are involved in cardiovascular disease. Segerstrom and Sephton (2010) conducted a study on first-year law students to establish a relationship between physiological factors and psychological factors on psychological well-being, and they found that changes in both optimism and positive affect across time were associated with changes in immune responses.

The effects of each persisted when controlled for the other, but were reduced to about half of their former strength. This implies that physiological well-being is a predictor of psychological well-being which, in turn, is a predictor of marital satisfaction; therefore physiological well-being is equally important.

This dynamic relation over time suggests that increasing positive affect strengthens immunity, and that the relation between the two is not due simply to inborn temperament or stable differences in life circumstances. This therefore means that subjective well-being is important in bringing about physical health which in turn brings about psychological well-being.

In order to unfold psychological well-being further, Day and Adcock (2013) investigated religiousness and couple well-being as mediated by relational virtue and equality, and they found that religiousness's relationship to couple well-being was fully mediated by relational virtue but was not connected to relational inequality. They also found that relational inequality was associated with women's conflict, men's conflict, and marital instability. They did not find that higher religiousness benefits marital outcomes directly. These findings do not support the idea that religious activities are directly associated with stronger relationships. According to these findings, religiousness is not a predictor of marital satisfaction.

On the other hand, Urquia, Oa, and Ray (2013) believe that marital status has a role to play in the psychological well-being of an individual. They argue that non-cohabiting, divorced, and separated women, particularly those who became so around the time of pregnancy, have the highest burden of psychosocial problems. They further argue that psychosocial problems associated with non-marital cohabitation are concentrated among those with the shortest duration of cohabitation.

Their research findings suggest that newly formed couples may benefit from appropriate interventions to lessen their vulnerability to adverse outcomes. Positive psychological well-being is good for every marriage. This is, according to McNulty and Fincham (2012), there are four ostensibly positive processes: forgiveness, optimistic expectations, positive thoughts, and kindness, which can either benefit or harm well-being depending on the context in which they operate.

Although all four processes do predict better relationship well-being among spouses in healthy marriages, they also do predict worse relationships in more troubled marriages.

Parenting also contributes to well-being and marital satisfaction. To establish how psychological well-being relates to marital satisfaction, Gordana, Irma, and Gordana (2012) conducted a study and found that individual differences in the psychological well-being of adolescents' parents may be more attributable to self-perceived midlife changes (particularly for mothers) and marital satisfaction (particularly for fathers) than to perceived level of parent-adolescent conflict. This draws a distinction between mothers and fathers' perception of marital satisfaction.

Furthermore, Lickenbrock, Ekas and Whitman (2011) examined associations between mothers' positive and negative perceptions of their children, marital adjustment, and maternal well-being, and their results revealed that marital adjustment mediated associations between positive perceptions and maternal well-being. They argue that mothers who reported higher levels of positive perceptions of the child were higher in marital adjustment and well-being. The results also revealed that marital adjustment moderated the relation between negative perceptions and negative maternal affect. Mothers low in marital adjustment had a positive association between negative maternal perceptions of the child and negative maternal affect.

Another study conducted by Pateraki and Roussi (2013) confirms the strong relationship between marital satisfaction and depressive symptoms, but also suggests that this relationship is complex. For example, in addition to gender and spousal support, they found indications that social context, social support from others and the mutual influence that partners exert on one another, are factors that may play an important role in clarifying the mechanisms that link marital quality and well-being. Socio-demographic variables were found to play a role in determining holistic psychological well-being in a South African Setswana-speaking community (Khumalo, Temane, & Wissing, 2012). They argue that urban living, employment, education and being married were associated with higher psychological well-being. Furthermore, rural or urban environmental setting, followed by employment status, accounted for the greatest variance in psychological well-being measures. Age and gender were not significantly associated with well-being. The findings suggest that the current state of African rural living is detrimental to well-being.

Hahn (2013) argues that the presence of children moderated the relation between partners' work-home segmentation preference and employees' psychological detachment. The relation was weaker when there were children in the household. Moreover, employees' and their partners' psychological detachment were positively associated. Again, the relation was weaker when there were children in the household. Finally, both employees' and their partners' psychological detachment contributed to employees' well-being, and these people are more likely to have satisfactory marriages. This means that a person cannot separate work life and marriage life because somehow they influence each other.

These findings are supported by Perrin (2008) who concluded in her study about marital satisfaction and psychological well-being in clinical and non-clinical samples that depression and marital satisfaction significantly impact each other and that the clinical sample significantly differs in level of depression from the non-clinical sample. Yoon and Lawrence (2013) conducted a study on psychological victimization and found that for both husbands and wives, psychological aggression was significantly more detrimental to marital satisfaction than physical aggression, and only husbands' psychological aggression predicted dissolution. Additionally, psychological aggression and marital satisfaction trajectories demonstrated bidirectional influences.

According to Walker, Isherwood, Burton, Kitwe-Magambo and Luzcz (2013), an individual's own depressive symptoms are related to their levels of marital satisfaction, whereby higher scores on the depression scale predicted lower marital satisfaction scores for the individual. None of the individual's other variables (physical well-being, socio-demographic, or social network satisfaction), nor any of the spouse variables, were related to individual levels of marital satisfaction. These findings reinforce the importance of psychological well-being as influencing the quality of older couple relationships.

Furthermore, a study conducted by Amiri, Khouzesh, Ranjbar, Fakhari, Mohagheghi, Famam, et al (2012) on women with major depressive disorders found no relationship between age, educational level, age difference of couples and the number of children with family processes and marital satisfaction. The patients with low educational level reported less social support. Marital satisfaction and family coherence were lower when the husband had a psychiatric disorder.

The family processes (family coherence, problem-solving skills, communication skills and religious beliefs) and social support positively predicted marital satisfaction, while the husband's psychiatric disorders negatively predicted marital satisfaction. Bandura (2000) defined self-efficacy as one's belief in his/her ability to succeed in specific situations. Therefore, as one possesses more self-efficacy in a particular area, they are more likely to work towards goals and challenges in that domain than to avoid them, and that on their own bring about satisfaction in a person, which in turn will bring happiness and satisfaction in a marriage.

Alexithymia and marital satisfaction

Alexithymia literally means lack of words for emotions. The term was originally used to describe the extreme difficulty that certain psychiatric patients had in identifying and describing their feelings. In addition to these emotional difficulties, the patients had very concrete cognitive styles, used little symbolism and fantasy, and reported impoverished dream states (Campos, Chiva, & Moreau, 2000). This study however, applies the concept of Alexithymia to people who are assumed to be well and not having some form of psychological conditions. This concept is often discussed in relation to gender differences and marital satisfaction.

Several investigators have reported that alexithymia is associated with difficulties in human relationships or with behaviours that may cause difficulties in bonding (Taylor, Parker & Bagby; Bourke, 1996; Troisi, Delle, Russo, Russo, Mosso & Passini, 1996; Muller, Buhner, Ziegler & Sahin, 2008). It is quite possible that these difficulties, such as insecure attachment styles, interpersonal hostility and avoidance as well as shyness with strangers and interpersonal indifference, are reflected in the association between alexithymia and being unmarried.

Here we consider this concept in relation to marital satisfaction, in order to determine to what extent it affects marital satisfaction. Karakis and Levant (2012) found that normative male alexithymia negatively correlates with relationship satisfaction and communication quality but positively correlates with fear of intimacy. In this study however, there was no gender discrimination in alexithymia. It is also important to consider culture when dealing with the concept of alexithymia.

In their study to examine how satisfaction is related to culture, alexithymia (difficulty in distinguishing between and identifying emotions), emotional intelligence, and marital values, Lee and Howard (2011) discovered that some variables were influenced by the minority-majority statuses of the group, some by the country of residence, some by the culture of origin, and others remained constant across groups. The level of marital satisfaction varied across ethnic cultures. Eid and Boucher (2012) found that it is negatively related to dyadic adjustment for both men and women. In addition, men's alexithymia is negatively related to the dyadic adjustment of their partner. However, alexithymia in women does not seem to be related to their partners' dyadic adjustment.

Franz, Popp, Schaefer, Sitte, Schneider, Hardt et al., (2007), conducted a study on alexithymia and gender using the TAS 20 scale, where they found that men are slightly more commonly alexithymic than women, men and women are equally capable of identifying their feelings, but women are marginally more able to describe their feelings and less prone to externally oriented thinking. Research conducted by Hessea, Rauscher and Wenzel (2012) found links between alexithymia and deficiencies in the ability to grow and maintain close relationships. Their results indicate partial support for the inverse relationship between self-disclosure and both relational uncertainty and alexithymia.

Alexithymia and relational uncertainty interact to predict levels of intended self-disclosure. The inverse relationship between relational uncertainty and intended self-disclosure was stronger for low rather than high alexithymics. A study conducted by Kim, Lee and Park (2011) assumes that alexithymia mediates between attachment style and marital satisfaction, and these factors influence depressive symptoms. Their results show that alexithymia mediated perfectly between attachment anxiety style and marital satisfaction and, that alexithymia and marital satisfaction had significant influence on depressive symptoms.

In their view, attachment style, alexithymia, and marital satisfaction seem to be important factors in depressive symptoms among married people. This study however, draws no attention to gender differences in alexithymia, but focuses on alexithymia in general and its influence on marital satisfaction.

Communication and marital satisfaction

Communication is one of the predictors of satisfaction in marriage; this is evidently shown by the study done by Rehman, Janssen, Newhouse, Heiman, Holtzworth-Munroe, Fallis, et al (2011) who found that the way couples communicate during conflict discussions is a reliable predictor of marital satisfaction. According to Rehman et al (2011), there are generally five levels of communication, and they are: sharing of general information, sharing of facts, sharing of opinions and beliefs, sharing of feelings and emotions, and sharing of needs, intimate concerns, hopes and even fears.

The strength of any relationship is based on how the people communicate; married people in particular need to communicate about everything. Not communicating about finances can also cause problems in a marriage. Williamson, Karney, and Bradbury (2013) discovered that financial strain and stressful life events were the strongest correlate of negative communication, with higher levels of stress predicting more negativity. They further argue that the way intimate partners communicate is integral to how they feel about their relationship and, with some exceptions, cross-sectional and longitudinal studies demonstrate modest but reasonably consistent associations between communication behaviours and relationship satisfaction. Communication and conflict resolution skills training improved marital satisfaction (Askari, Noah, Hassan and Baba, 2012).

Culture also plays a role in determining the way communication occurs between married people (Williamson, Ju, Bradbury, Karney, Fang, and Liu, 2012), for example in some African cultures like Tsonga's in Limpopo Province, South Africa, women are not allowed to argue with men or even maintain eye contact, they are expected to only listen when a man talks, that affect communication in a marriage. There can be other factors associated with marital satisfaction and communication.

A study conducted by Gourounti, Lykeridou and Vaslamatzis (2012), found that high marital stress and poor communication with partner were positively and significantly associated with state anxiety, trait anxiety and depression; high marital benefit was negatively and statistically associated with state anxiety, trait anxiety and depression; and that communication with partner was positively and statistically associated with marital benefit and negatively with marital stress.

In their study to examine the mediating effects of constructive and destructive communication between partners on the relationship between work–family conflict and marital satisfaction, Carroll, Hill, Yorgason, Larson and Sandberg (2013), found that work–family conflict was significantly and negatively related to marital satisfaction; but this relationship became insignificant when constructive and destructive communication were added to the model, evidence for full mediation. This can simply mean that teaching communication skills may be a potent point of intervention for couples who experience high levels of work-family conflict. Marital discord is a stressful event that would evoke one's efforts to cope with it.

Fink and Shapiro (2013) revealed that coping mediated the association between marital instability and depression, but not marital dissatisfaction and depression, suggesting that coping, traditionally considered adaptive for individuals in the context of controllable stressors, may not be adaptive in the context of couple relationship instability. It is important for couples to communicate about sex as well. Hess and Coffelt (2012) believe that there is an association between the use of sexual terms, particularly slang terms, and both satisfaction and closeness. In therapeutic settings, couples are encouraged to develop their own language that is only understood by them, in so doing their communication will improve to their own advantage.

Hypotheses

1. Socio-demographic factors such as age, sex, race, number of years in marriage, number of children, frequency of marriage and educational level can significantly predict marital satisfaction among married people.
2. People who have a well-established psychological well-being are more likely to have marital satisfaction than those who don't.
3. Couples who communicate well with each other stand a better chance of enjoying a satisfactory marriage.
4. People who do not have alexithymia are more likely to experience marital satisfaction than those who have.

Operational definition of terms

1. **Marital Satisfaction:** In this study, it refers to the mental state that reflects the perceived benefits and costs of a particular person, married people are either happy, and enjoying their marriages or they are not, here we refer to their level of satisfaction within their marriage as they view it. It is measured by means of the 32 item Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) which has been found to be a reliable and valid tool for measuring marital satisfaction.
2. **Married people:** refers to two people who are legally married and are living together; these people may be married by customary law, in the magistrate's office, by means of white wedding, may be married in community of property or ante nuptial, or may be married by only observing traditional rights, like paying bride price or otherwise. Any form of marriage is considered a marriage in this study.
3. **Psychological well-being:** refers to subjective, social, and psychological dimensions as well as health related behaviours. It is measured by means of a 42 item Ryff's Psychological Well-being Scale (PWBS) which has been validated and found to be a reliable tool for measuring psychological well-being.
4. **Alexithymia:** inability to express feelings with words. It is often used for people who are sick and sometimes hospitalized, in this context, alexithymia is measured on people who are assumed to be well and married, to determine the extent to which they communicate their feelings and how it affects their marriages; this is done using a valid and reliable 20 item Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS 20).
5. **Communication:** in this context means the inter-relationship between two people, how two people who are married talk to each other, how well they communicate their feelings to each other, and how well they engage in a conversation with each other, also how well they talk things through and how well they manage to resolve conflicts in their relationship. It is measured by means of a 25 item Primary Communication Inventory (PCI) scale which has been found to be reliable and valid.

Methodology

Study design

This study is a cross-sectional research design with a quantitative research approach. The dependent variable is marital satisfaction (dyadic consensus, dyadic cohesion, dyadic satisfaction, and affection expression), and the independent variables are alexithymia (difficulty identifying feelings, difficulty describing feelings, and external oriented thinking), communication (non-verbal communication and verbal communication), psychological well-being (autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, and self acceptance), and demographic factors (age, sex, race, number of years in marriage, educational level, and number of children in marriage).

Sample and characteristics

A total sample of 500 participants, randomly selected using a purposive and snowballing non-probability sampling techniques, in the households and work places of married people in Gauteng Province, South Africa, participated in the study. The methodological advantage of this study is that the sample consists of participants randomly selected from various work places and households in Gauteng whose communities are racially and economically diverse. All racial groups in Gauteng Province were represented in fair percentages (63.9% Black, 6.5% Coloureds, 10.9% Asians, and 8.7% Whites, a total of 10.5% opted not to disclose their racial group according to the population pyramid trend in South Africa). The study utilized a questionnaire of 119 items sub-divided into five sections as follows A, B, C, D, and E, (see Appendix A). All participants were married and above the consenting age of 18 years. Age of participants ranged between 20 and 72 years. Males were 313 (63.1%) and females were 183 (36.9%).

Instruments

Data was collected using a questionnaire. Section A comprised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS), section B comprised Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS – 20), section C comprised of the Primary Communication Inventory Scale (PCI), section D comprised the Psychological Well-being Scale (PWB), and finally, section E comprised demographic attributes. (See **Appendix A**)

Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier:1976)

This scale measures marital satisfaction. It assesses such items as affection expression (AE), dyadic cohesion (DC), dyadic consensus (DCS), and dyadic satisfaction (DSC). The scale consists of 32 items, and has a coefficient alpha reliability of 0.96. It also offered a criterion-related validity in that it measures differences between married individuals and divorced individuals showing a significant difference. The theoretical scoring range can be from 0 to 151. The high score indicates higher satisfaction. The scale is sub divided into four as follows: Dyadic consensus – a degree to which the respondent agrees with partner (questions 1-3, 5, 7 – 9, 10 – 15); Dyadic satisfaction – degree to which the respondent feels satisfied with partner (questions 16 – 23, 31, 32); Dyadic cohesion – degree to which the respondent and partner participate in activities together (questions 24 – 28); and Affection expression – degree to which the respondent agrees with partner regarding emotional affection (questions 4, 6, 29, 30).

Toronto Alexithymia Scale (Parker, Taylor, and Bagby : 2003)

This scale contains 20 items, and the most widely used to gauge Alexithymia. It is a self-report test that utilizes a five point Likert scale (Muller, Buhner, & Ellgring; 2003). Scores can range from 20 to 100 with the higher numbers representing a higher tendency for the Alexithymia construct (Guttman & Laporte, 2002). The TAS-20 yields three factors in the most widely accepted format. It has an alpha coefficient greater or equal to 0.70 which is recommended standard for establishing internal reliability (Parker, Bagby, & Taylor, 2003). With regard to validity, the TAS-20 scale does appear to have discriminate validity.

The total alexithymia score is the sum of responses to all 20 items, while the score for each subscale factor is the sum of the responses to that subscale. The TAS-20 uses cutoff scoring: equal to or less than 51 = non-alexithymia, equal to or greater than 61 = alexithymia. Scores of 52 to 60 = possible alexithymia. It is divided into 3 subscales: Difficulty Describing Feelings (DDF) 5 items (questions 2, 4, 7, 12, 17); Difficulty Identifying Feeling (DIF) subscale 7 items (questions 1, 3, 6, 11, 9, 13, 14); Externally-Oriented Thinking (EOT) subscale is used to measure the tendency of individuals to focus their attention externally 8 items (questions 5, 8, 10, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20).

The Primary Communication Inventory(Locke, Sabaght, &Thomes: 1967)

This scale is used to assess the perception of communication ability between the two members of a couple. It has 25 items with 5-point Likert scale responses, the scores range from 2 to 125, with higher scores reflecting higher couple satisfaction with their communication. There are two sub-scales; namely, verbal communication (VC) with 7 items (questions 6,7,9,11,15,18,,23) and scores ranging from 7 to 35, and non-verbal communication (NVC) with 18 items (questions 1 - 5, 8,10,12 -14, 16,17,19-22,24,25) and the scores ranging from 18 to 90. It has been found to have a mean internal reliability of 0.86, and correlation coefficient of 0.56, the PCI has also been found to be sensitive to therapeutic interventions and the mean internal reliability for overall communication ability (Cronbach Alpha) to be .89, with a construct validity of .72 significant at .01 level.

The Psychological Well-being Scale (Ryff:1989a)

This scale is used to measure psychological well-being. The scale has also been standardized through comparison with subjective measures of psychological well-being;it is significantly linked to personality factors, and has been cross-culturally validated (Schmutte & Ryff, 1997). It is also subdivided into subscales, all of which have high levels of internal consistency: Positive relations (PR) with others 0.88, Autonomy (Aut)0.83, Environmental mastery (EM)0.86, Personal growth (PG) 0.85, and Self-acceptance (SA) 0.91, and all subscales have high levels or correlation: Positive relations with others 0.98, Autonomy 0.97, Environmental mastery 0.98, Personal growth 0.97, and Self-acceptance 0.99.These sub-scales have 7 items each, divided as thus: Autonomy (questions 1,7,13,19,25,31,37); Environmental mastery (questions 2,8,14,20,26,32,38); Personal growth (questions 3,9,15,21,27,33,39); Positive relations (questions 4,10,16,22,28,34,40); and Self-acceptance (questions 6,12,18,24,30,36,42).

Procedure

After an ethical approval from the university with reference number NWU-00052-12-A9, the researcher went to different workplaces and moved from house to house in Gauteng Province identifying those people who were married and an informed consent was then obtained with information concerning aims, objectives, and methods of the study in a language that they understand. The researcher also asked the people she knows to help her identify married people in their respective work places so that she can also ask for their permission to participate in the study. Participation in the study was voluntary. The questionnaires were left with the willing participants and an agreement was reached as to when the researcher could return for collection in order to avoid invading their privacy.

Participants were assured of the confidential nature of the study and as such were told not to write their names or provide any contact information such as residential addresses or work place names that would identify them, therefore eliminating identification bias. Caring for data during and after analyses was discussed with all participants. Only the authors have access to the data. All data is kept in an access restricted place by the second author of the study. Data is expected to be destroyed after one year commencing from the date of collection, i.e. 2013. The study was not expected to be harmful but participants were advised not to continue completing the questionnaire should it make them uncomfortable in any way and the researcher would collect them back uncompleted at an appointed time. Only 15 copies of the questionnaire were returned uncompleted and the researcher thanked the participants, went ahead and looked for other people who could complete them.

Results

The study was anchored on four hypotheses. Hypothesis one stated that “socio-demographic factors such as age, sex, race, number of years in marriage, number of children, frequency of marriage and educational level can significantly predict marital satisfaction among married people”. Hypothesis two stated that “people who have a well-established psychological well-being are more likely to have marital satisfaction than those who don’t”. Hypothesis three stated that “couples who communicate well with each other stand a better chance of enjoying a satisfactory marriage”, and hypothesis four stated that people who are able to verbally express their emotions are more likely to experience marital satisfaction than those who don’t.

The four hypotheses were tested, the prospective associations between the four variables were examined, and the predictive paths from the independent variables derived from these hypotheses. The independent variables (socio-demographic factors, communication, alexithymia, and psychological well-being) were tested on the dependent variable (marital satisfaction) using hierarchical multiple regression. Independent variables were socio-demographic factors (age, sex, race, educational level, number of years in marriage, frequency of marriage, and number of children), communication (non-verbal ‘NVC’ and verbal ‘VC’), alexithymia (difficulty describing feelings ‘DDF’, difficulty identifying feelings ‘DIF’, and externally oriented thinking ‘EOT’), and psychological well-being (autonomy ‘Aut’, environmental mastery ‘EM’, personal growth ‘PG’, positive relations ‘PR’, and self-acceptance ‘SA’). The dependent variable was marital satisfaction measured with DAS (dyadic consensus ‘DCS’, dyadic cohesion ‘DC’, dyadic satisfaction ‘DS’, and affection expression ‘AE’).

A hierarchical multiple regression was used to test for statistical significance for the hypotheses. Correlation design was used to correlate the relationship between marital satisfaction and its psychosocial predictors. Results are presented below. First, a correlation of all variables were carried out (Table 1). The essence of this step was to help know which variables were significant for the next step of hierarchical regression. Second, the method used in these analyses was that independent variables were expected to significantly predict marital satisfaction. The first variable, sex was entered as demanded by the rules of multiple regressions, followed by age. Subsequently, all other variables were hierarchically entered by step wise procedure.

The results generated four models; the four sub-scales of marital satisfaction were individually regressed with the independent variables as shown in the results to follow.(Tables 2, 3, 4, and 5).

Table 1: Descriptive statistics and Intercorrelation for study variables (n = 496)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1 DCS	–													
2 DS	.64**	–												
3 DC	.49**	.63**	–											
4 AE	.65**	.52**	.39**	–										
5 DDF	-.28**	-.35**	-.27**	-.32**	–									
6 DIF	-.35**	-.43**	-.33**	-.32**	-.71**	–								
7 EOT	-.14**	-.26**	-.17**	-.10**	.39**	.38**	–							
8 NVC	-.41**	-.42**	-.43**	-.32**	.23**	.41**	.18**	–						
9 VC	-.57**	-.62**	-.54**	-.43**	.38**	.52**	.22**	.73**	–					
10 Aut	.17**	.21**	.16**	.10**	-.30**	-.31**	-.32**	.20**	.20**	–				
11 EM	.14**	.18**	.22**	.14**	-.23**	-.29**	-.21**	.10**	.19**	.63**	–			
12 PG	.10**	.19**	.19**	.10**	-.30*	-.34**	-.28**	-.15*	.20**	.64*	.56**	–		
13 PR	.18**	.25**	.23**	.15**	-.23**	-.33**	-.26**	.15**	.22**	.58**	.60**	.62**	–	
14 SA	.18**	.19**	.25**	.12**	-.29**	-.35**	-.28**	.19**	.26**	.62**	.57**	.65**	.62**	–

NB: DCS = dyadic consensus; DS = dyadic satisfaction; DC dyadic cohesion; AE = affection expression; DDF = difficulty describing feelings; DIF = difficulty identifying feelings; EOT = externally oriented thinking; NVC = non-verbal communication; VC = verbal communication; Aut = autonomy; EM = environmental mastery; PG = personal growth; PR = positive relations; SA = self – acceptance

Note: * = p <0.05; ** = p <0.01

Pearson bivariate correlation analysis indicated that marital satisfaction (DCS, DS, DC, and AE) was significantly and positively related with autonomy (r ranging between 0.10 and 0.17; p>.01.), environmental mastery (r ranging between 0.14 and 0.22; p<.01.), personal growth (r ranging between 0.10 and 0.19; p<.01.), positive relations (r ranging between 0.15 and 0.25; p<.01.), self acceptance (r ranging between 0.12 and 0.25). Marital satisfaction was also negatively and significantly related with verbal communication (r ranging between -0.43 and -0.62; p<.05), non-verbal communication (r ranging between -0.32 and -0.43; p<.05), difficulty describing feelings (r ranging between -0.27 and -0.35; p<.05), difficulty identifying feelings (r ranging between -0.32 and -0.35; p<.05), and external oriented thinking with r ranging from -0.10 and -0.26; p<.05).

Table 2: Regression analysis with DCS as a dependent variable and Age, Sex, DDF, EOT, DIF, NVC, VC, EM, PG, PR, and SA as independent variables.

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	B	SE	β	
Sex	3.8	0.979	0.171	3.344	0.925	0.152	2.803	0.813	0.127	2.874	0.815	0.13
Age	-0.13	0.053	-0.111	-0.104	0.05	-0.088	-0.086	0.044	-0.073	-0.099	0.044	-0.083
DDF				-0.128	0.153	-0.05	-0.098	0.136	-0.039	-0.109	0.137	-0.043
DIF				-0.496	0.097	-0.307	-0.081	0.092	-0.05	-0.082	0.094	-0.051
EOT				0.023	0.112	0.01	0.05	0.099	0.02	0.071	0.1	0.029
NVC							-0.021	0.125	-0.009	-0.02	0.126	-0.009
VC							-0.475	0.053	-0.517	-0.469	0.053	-0.51
EM										-0.098	0.133	-0.038
PG										-0.257	0.106	-0.132
PR										0.194	0.111	0.093
SA										0.009	0.107	0.005
Aut										0.183	0.118	0.086
constant	59.896	2.308		68.77	3.231		82.659	3.141		81.454	4.766	
R			0.195			0.038			0.594			0.604
R ²			0.038			0.153			0.352			0.364
F			9.726			17.756			37.947			23.067

NB: Sex = M/F; DDF = difficulty describing feelings; DIF = difficulty identifying feelings; EOT = externally oriented thinking; NVC = non-verbal communication; VC = verbal communication; Aut = autonomy; EM = environmental mastery; PG = personal growth; PR = positive relations; SA = self-acceptance; B = unstandardized regression coefficient; SE = standard error; β = standardized regression coefficient, R = multiple correlation coefficients, R² = proportion of variance explained, F = F ratio

Results of the hierarchical multiple regression in Table 2 above indicate that when dyadic consensus was regressed on age and sex in model 1, the whole model significantly predicted marital satisfaction with $R^2 = .04$, $F(2,493) = 9.7$, $p < .01$, suggesting that the predictors in the model contributed about 4% to variance in marital satisfaction, sex ($\beta = 0.171$, $t = 3.859$) and age ($\beta = 0.111$, $t = -2.495$). In model 2, when difficulty describing feelings, difficulty identifying feelings, and external oriented thinking were added in to the regression equation, the whole model significantly predicted marital satisfaction with $R^2 = .15$, $F(5,490) = 17.756$, $p < .01$, suggesting that the predictors in the model contributed about 15% to variance in marital satisfaction.

R^2 also changed from .04 it was in model 1 to .15, suggesting an increase of about 11%. However, only difficulty identifying feelings emerges as a significant predictor of marital satisfaction ($\beta = -.31$, $t = -2.5$).

In model 3, non-verbal communication and verbal communication were added to the regression equation, the whole model significantly predicted marital satisfaction with $R^2 = .35$, $F(7.488) = 37.947$, $p < .01$, suggesting that the predictors in the model contributed about 35% to variance in marital satisfaction. R^2 also changed from .15 it was in model 2 to .35 in model 3, suggesting an increase of 20%. However only verbal communication emerges as a significant predictor of marital satisfaction ($\beta = -.52$, $t = -8.957$).

In model 4, autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, and self acceptance were added to the regression equation, the whole model significantly predicted marital satisfaction with $R^2 = .36$, $F(12.483) = 23.067$, $p < .01$, suggesting that the predictors in the model contributed about 36% variance in marital satisfaction. R^2 also changed from .35 it was in model 3 to .36 in model 4, suggesting an increase of 1%. However only personal growth emerged as a predictor of marital satisfaction ($\beta = -.13$, $t = -2.430$).

Table 3: Regression analysis with DS as a dependent variable and Age, Sex, DDF, EOT, DIF, NVC, VC, EM, PG, PR, and SA as independent variables.

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β
Sex	1.993	0.736	0.121	1.527	0.671	0.093	1.071	0.58	0.065	1.099	0.581	0.067
Age	-0.068	0.04	-0.077	-0.047	0.036	-0.053	-0.029	0.031	-0.033	-0.035	0.031	-0.039
DDF				-0.165	0.111	-0.087	-0.123	0.097	-0.065	-0.132	0.097	-0.07
DIF				-0.406	0.07	-0.337	-0.102	0.066	-0.085	-0.086	0.067	-0.072
EOT				-0.087	0.081	-0.048	-0.07	0.07	-0.039	-0.048	0.072	-0.026
NVC							0.106	0.089	0.062	0.103	0.089	0.06
VC							-0.369	0.038	-0.578	-0.395	0.038	-0.576
EM										-0.035	0.095	-0.018
PG										-0.015	0.075	-0.01
PR										0.19	0.079	0.122
SA										-0.141	0.076	-0.096
Aut										0.084	0.084	0.053
constant	43.741	1.737		54.18	2.342		63.991	2.239		61.27	3.396	
R			0.137			0.445			0.638			0.647
R ²			0.019			0.198			0.407			0.418
F			4.734			24.257			47.905			28.951

NB: Sex = M/F; DDF = difficulty describing feelings; DIF = difficulty identifying feelings; EOT = externally oriented thinking; NVC = non-verbal communication; VC = verbal communication; Aut = autonomy; EM = environmental mastery; PG = personal growth; PR = positive relations; SA = self-acceptance; B = unstandardized regression coefficient; SE = standard error; β = standardized regression coefficient, R = multiple correlation coefficients, R² = proportion of variance explained, F = F ratio

Results of the hierarchical multiple regression in Table 3 above indicate that when dyadic satisfaction was regressed on age and sex in model 1, the whole model significantly predicted marital satisfaction with $R^2 = .02$, $F(2,493) = 4.7$, $p < .05$, suggesting that the predictors in the model contributed about 2% to variance in marital satisfaction, sex ($\beta = 0.121$, $t = 2.707$) and age ($\beta = 0.077$, $t = -1.716$).

In model 2, when difficulty describing feelings, difficulty identifying feelings, and external oriented thinking were added in to the regression equation, the whole model significantly predicted marital satisfaction with $R^2 = .20$, $F(5,490) = 24.257$, $p < .01$, suggesting that the predictors in the model contributed about 20% to variance in marital satisfaction. R^2 also changed from .02 it was in model 1 to .20, suggesting an increase of about 18%. However, only difficulty identifying feelings emerges as a significant predictor of marital satisfaction ($\beta = -.34$, $t = -5.780$).

In model 3, non-verbal communication and verbal communication were added to the regression equation, the whole model significantly predicted marital satisfaction with $R^2 = .41$, $F(7,488) = 47.905$, $p < .01$, suggesting that the predictors in the model contributed about 41% to variance in marital satisfaction. R^2 also changed from .20 it was in model 2 to .41 in model 3, suggesting an increase of 21%. However only verbal communication emerges as a significant predictor of marital satisfaction ($\beta = -.58$, $t = -10.469$).

In model 4, autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, and self acceptance were added to the regression equation, the whole model significantly predicted marital satisfaction with $R^2 = .42$, $F(12,483) = 28.951$, $p < .01$, suggesting that the predictors in the model contributed about 42% variance in marital satisfaction. R^2 also changed from .41 it was in model 3 to .42 in model 4, suggesting an increase of 1%. However only positive relations emerged as a predictor of marital satisfaction ($\beta = .12$, $t = 2.408$).

Table 4: Regression analysis with DC as a dependent variable and Age, Sex, DDF, EOT, DIF, NVC, VC, EM, PG, PR, and SA as independent variables.

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	B	SE	B	
Sex	0.199	0.533	0.017	-0.071	0.506	-0.006	-0.318	0.45	-0.027	-0.464	0.449	-0.039
Age	-0.032	0.029	-0.051	-0.021	0.027	-0.033	-0.015	0.024	-0.024	-0.018	0.024	-0.028
DDF				-0.083	0.084	-0.061	-0.083	0.075	-0.061	-0.101	0.075	-0.074
DIF				-0.231	0.053	-0.267	-0.005	0.051	-0.006	0.033	0.052	0.039
EOT				-0.061	0.061	-0.047	-0.045	0.055	-0.035	-0.029	0.055	-0.023
NVC							-0.102	0.069	-0.083	-0.128	0.069	-0.104
VC							-0.221	0.029	-0.45	-0.208	0.029	-0.423
EM										0.133	0.073	0.097
PG										-0.009	0.058	-0.009
PR										0.087	0.061	0.078
SA										0.072	0.059	0.069
Aut										-0.111	0.065	-0.098
constant	21.342	1.256		27.42	1.767		35.215	1.738		29.98	2.624	
R			0.052			0.338			0.553			0.571
R ²			0.003			0.114			0.306			0.326
F			0.675			12.629			30.763			19.461

NB: Sex = M/F; DDF = difficulty describing feelings; DIF = difficulty identifying feelings; EOT = externally oriented thinking; NVC = non-verbal communication; VC = verbal communication; Aut = autonomy; EM = environmental mastery; PG = personal growth; PR = positive relations; SA = self-acceptance; B = unstandardized regression coefficient; SE = standard error; β = standardized regression coefficient, R = multiple correlation coefficients, R² = proportion of variance explained, F = F ratio

Results of the hierarchical multiple regression in Table 4 above indicate that when dyadic cohesion was regressed on age and sex in model 1, the whole model significantly predicted marital satisfaction with $R^2 = .003$, $F(2,493) = 4.7$, $p < .05$, suggesting that the predictors in the model contributed about .03% to variance in marital satisfaction, sex ($\beta = 0.017$, $t = .37$) and age ($\beta = -0.051$, $t = -1.131$). In model 2, when difficulty describing feelings, difficulty identifying feelings, and external oriented thinking were added in to the regression equation, the whole model significantly predicted marital satisfaction with $R^2 = .11$, $F(5,490) = 12.629$, $p < .01$, suggesting that the predictors in the model contributed about 11% to variance in marital satisfaction. R^2 also changed from .003 it was in model 1 to .11, suggesting an increase of about 10.97%. However, only difficulty identifying feelings emerges as a significant predictor of marital satisfaction ($\beta = -.27$, $t = -4.358$).

In model 3, non-verbal communication and verbal communication were added to the regression equation, the whole model significantly predicted marital satisfaction with $R^2 = .31$, $F(7.488) = 30.763$, $p < .01$, suggesting that the predictors in the model contributed about 31% to variance in marital satisfaction. R^2 also changed from .11 it was in model 2 to .31 in model 3, suggesting an increase of 20%. However only verbal communication emerges as a significant predictor of marital satisfaction ($\beta = - .45$, $t = -7.540$). In model 4, autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, and self acceptance were added to the regression equation, the whole model significantly predicted marital satisfaction with $R^2 = .33$, $F(12.483) = 19.461$, $p < .01$, suggesting that the predictors in the model contributed about 42% variance in marital satisfaction. R^2 also changed from .31 it was in model 3 to .33 in model 4, suggesting an increase of 2%. However only environmental mastery emerged as a predictor of marital satisfaction ($\beta = .09$, $t = 1.823$).

Table 5: Regression analysis with AE as a dependent variable and Age, Sex, DDF, EOT, DIF, NVC, VC, EM, PG, PR, and SA as independent variables.

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	B	B	SE	B
Sex	0.52	0.229	0.102	0.439	0.217	0.086	0.346	0.204	0.068	0.342	0.205	0.067
Age	-0.022	0.012	-0.081	-0.015	0.012	-0.053	-0.012	0.011	-0.042	-0.012	0.011	-0.043
DDF				-0.12	0.036	-0.204	-0.115	0.034	-0.195	-0.124	0.034	-0.212
DIF				-0.069	0.023	-0.184	0.002	0.023	0.006	0.006	0.024	0.015
EOT				0.029	0.026	0.051	0.33	0.025	0.059	0.031	0.025	0.054
NVC							-0.001	0.031	-0.003	-0.009	0.032	-0.016
VC							-0.082	0.013	-0.385	-0.08	0.013	-0.375
EM										0.03	0.033	0.051
PG										-0.026	0.027	-0.058
PR										0.047	0.028	0.097
SA										-0.023	0.027	-0.051
Aut										-0.021	0.027	0.051
constant	12.586	0.54		14.45	0.757		16.817	0.787		16.824	1.199	
R			0.124			0.362			0.49			0.498
R ²			0.015			0.131			0.24			0.248
F			3.836			14.772			21.991			13.269

NB: Sex = M/F; DDF = difficulty describing feelings; DIF = difficulty identifying feelings; EOT = externally oriented thinking; NVC = non-verbal communication; VC = verbal communication; Aut = autonomy; EM = environmental mastery; PG = personal growth; PR = positive relations; SA = self-acceptance; B = unstandardized regression coefficient; SE = standard error; β = standardized regression coefficient, R = multiple correlation coefficients, R² = proportion of variance explained, F = F ratio

Results of the hierarchical multiple regression in Table 5 above indicate that when affection expression was regressed on age and sex in model 1, the whole model significantly predicted marital satisfaction with $R^2 = .02$, $F(2.493) = 3.84$, $p < .05$, suggesting that the predictors in the model contributed about 2% to variance in marital satisfaction, sex ($\beta = 0.102$, $t = 2.272$) and age ($\beta = -0.081$, $t = -1.795$).

In model 2, when difficulty describing feelings, difficulty identifying feelings, and external oriented thinking were added in to the regression equation, the whole model significantly predicted marital satisfaction with $R^2 = .13$, $F(5.490) = 14.772$, $p < .01$, suggesting that the predictors in the model contributed about 13% to variance in marital satisfaction. R^2 also changed from .02 it was in model 1 to .13, suggesting an increase of about 11%. However, only difficulty describing feelings emerges as a significant predictor of marital satisfaction ($\beta = -.204$, $t = -3.347$).

In model 3, non-verbal communication and verbal communication were added to the regression equation, the whole model significantly predicted marital satisfaction with $R^2 = .24$, $F(7.488) = 21.991$, $p < .01$, suggesting that the predictors in the model contributed about 24% to variance in marital satisfaction. R^2 also changed from .13 it was in model 2 to .24 in model 3, suggesting an increase of 11%. However only verbal communication emerges as a significant predictor of marital satisfaction ($\beta = -.38$, $t = -6.156$).

In model 4, autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, and self acceptance were added to the regression equation, the whole model significantly predicted marital satisfaction with $R^2 = .25$, $F(12.483) = 13.269$, $p < .01$, suggesting that the predictors in the model contributed about 25% variance in marital satisfaction. R^2 also changed from .24 it was in model 3 to .25 in model 4, suggesting an increase of 1%. However, only positive relations emerged as a predictor of marital satisfaction ($\beta = .09$, $t = 1.674$).

Discussion

This study investigated (1) whether socio-demographic factors such as age, gender, race, number of years in marriage, number of children, frequency of marriage, and educational level predict marital satisfaction among married people in Gauteng Province, (2) whether psychological well-being predicts marital satisfaction, (3) the role of communication in marital satisfaction among married people in Gauteng Province, and (4) whether people who are able to communicate their emotions in a marriage, have satisfactory marriages?

Results of hypothesis 1 showed that not all socio-demographic factors predict marital satisfaction; Only age and sex were found to be the main significant predictors. Therefore, this hypothesis is partially accepted. This is supported by Zhang et al.,(2012), who believe that age is highly significant in predicting marital satisfaction, this was discovered while doing a study to ascertain whether similarity breeds marital and sexual satisfaction. They found that husbands are more likely to be satisfied with their sexual and marital relations if they were two to four years older than their wives, and less likely to be satisfied if their wives were five or more years older. Ng et al., (2009) further support this by their argument that marital satisfaction significantly predicts life satisfaction for both men and women, but found a greater influence for women. A study conducted by Amiri et al (2012) partially supports the findings of this study about the other demographic factors in that they found no relationship between age, educational level, age difference of couples and number of children with family processes and marital satisfaction, however, contrary to their study, age was found to be a significant predictor of marital satisfaction in this study.

Furthermore, cross-cultural studies reveal that children are aware of gender roles by age two to three; at four to five, most children are firmly entrenched in culturally appropriate gender roles (Dunson, 2012). Family is the first agent of socialization; parents tend to socialize sons and daughters differently. In addition to this, Seider (2013) maintains that age and gender moderate the relationship between discreet emotion sequences and marital satisfaction. Therefore, the findings of this study are not farfetched; there were earlier researchers who also found similar observations.

A further discussion of this is supported by Ng, Loy, MohdZain, and Cheong (2013) who argue that females report higher levels of anxiety and lower levels of marital satisfaction than do males. This further supports the fact that sex is a predictor of marital satisfaction.

Age in this study refers to a person's age not age of marriage. There is however an interesting finding about age in marriage, where marital satisfaction in couples from different cultures was generally negatively predicted by the duration of marriage, was generally unrelated to wife's age, but the effect of husband's age was important to marital satisfaction in couples from all cultures(Wendorf, Lucas, Olcay Weisfeld, and Weisfeld, 2011).

Hypothesis 2 showed that psychological well-being is a significant predictor of marital satisfaction, particularly the sub-scale of positive relations which was found to be a significant predictor of marital satisfaction across all the subscales of marital satisfaction as shown in the regression equations Tables 3, 4, and 5 above.To measure psychological well-being, Ryff's Psychological Well-being Scale (PWB) was used. The observations show that psychological well-being does predict marital satisfaction; the coefficients are positive, implying that the higher the psychological well-being, the more marital satisfaction a person will experience. The observations of this study confirm the hypothesis that psychological well-being predicts marital satisfaction, implying that our participants have harmonized the concept of mental health, psychological, subjective, emotional, and mental well-being. The participants had a fair level of psychological well-being. Positive mental and emotional well-being depends on many factors, including quality of relationships with family and friends, employment in a positive workplace environment, the ability to participate and contribute to the community, and the ability to access appropriate mental health services when needed.

On the other hand, emotional well-being as defined by WHO (2013), refers to emotional quality of an individual's everyday experience, the frequency and intensity of experiences of joy, stress, sadness, anger, and affection that make one's life pleasant or unpleasant. According to the dynamic goal theory of marital satisfaction (Li and Fung, 2011), there are three classes of goals of marital satisfaction, and among them is personal growth goal which is also believed to be of more importance to the young couples. The findings of this study also suggest that personal growth which is one of the subscales of psychological well-being, is a significant predictor of marital satisfaction.

However, this study does not draw attention to age in relation to psychological well-being. This theory holds that whether the prioritized goals are achieved in a marriage or not determines marital satisfaction. This means that the goals must be achieved for one to have marital satisfaction. Both males and females showed no significant difference in the way they responded to the questions asked about factors that determine psychological well-being like autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, their purpose in life, and self- acceptance. The samples in this study were all non-clinical, and the findings are not different from Perrin's findings, psychological well-being predicts marital satisfaction (Perrin, 2008)

Hypothesis 3 shows that communication plays a major role in predicting marital satisfaction, especially verbal communication which proved to be significant throughout all the sub-scales of marital satisfaction as shown in Tables 2, 3, 4, and 5 above. It was also negatively correlated to marital satisfaction. Communication in marriage is like a river, when a husband and a wife are not communicating, a huge dam is built stopping the flow of water. This causes everything around them to suffer and slowly die. Seeds that were once planted cannot grow any more, and the couple starts developing inward thirst for their unmet needs, which in turn causes multiple problems throughout the relationship. Communicating effectively with each other in a relationship does not come naturally, it may seem like that in the beginning, but at the end of the honeymoon phase, reality sets in. Marriage means communication, both verbal and non-verbal. It involves a lot more than talking. Many essential messages are transmitted through attitude, facial expressions, and body language, as well as through words that are left unsaid.

To become a good communicator, one has to pay attention to what the partner is saying through his moods, attitudes, movements, and actions. In a marriage, communication keeps ideas and emotions flowing between the couple (Dell'Aglio, 2012). Unfortunately, every marriage goes through difficulties keeping their communication smooth and clear. This explains why communication is another predictor of marital satisfaction, the participants showed a fair level of satisfaction in their communication with their partners, hence satisfied in their marriages. The way couples communicate during conflict discussions has been found to be a reliable predictor of marital satisfaction.

Some people may decide to suppress to avoid confrontation, but that doesn't make the relationship any healthy, communication is critical for a healthy marriage. Couples must learn to understand each other better and recognize and accept each other's point of view, they need to love and accept each other, learn to listen and listen with undivided attention. The basic ingredient needed for experiencing marital satisfaction is the level of communication between the two individuals, that is, how well the spouses are able to express their feelings, desires and expectations to each other. Whether it's an expression of affection, sexual satisfaction, reaching of consensus on a matter, management of conflicts, and role distribution, all depends on the way one communicates. Either in a verbal or a non-verbal way, one should become adept in expressing oneself. The findings of this study are further supported by Dell'Aglio (2012) in her study about couple communication, attachment style, and relationship satisfaction where she found that there is a significant relationship between couple communication and relationship satisfaction.

Hypothesis (4) was also accepted because the results show that people who are able to communicate their emotions (non-alexithymia) in a marriage have satisfactory marriages. The results show a positive correlation between marital satisfaction and psychological well-being, a negative relationship between communication and marital satisfaction, and the same between alexithymia and marital satisfaction.

From the results of this study, it is evident that those who have difficulty identifying their feelings do not enjoy marital satisfaction at all, it has also been found that difficulty describing feelings also cause people to have non-satisfactory marriages, but at a lower rate as compared to difficulty identifying feelings.

Once a person cannot identify own feelings, it is clear that they cannot describe it. The results of this study suggest that the more people keep their emotions in without communicating, the less satisfied they will be in their marriages, and the more they keep the lines of communication open the less they will struggle with marital satisfaction. Communication can be challenging for any married couple, but a personality trait called alexithymia that keeps people from sharing or even understanding their own emotions can further impede marital bliss. There is however a gender difference in alexithymia where males were found to be the ones who have difficulty communicating their feelings (alexithymia) than females.

The above findings are supported by Franz et al., (2007), who conducted a study on alexithymia and gender using the TAS 20 scale, where he found that men are slightly more commonly alexithymic than women, men and women are equally capable of identifying their feelings, but women are marginally more able to describe their feelings and less prone to externally oriented thinking. The findings of Seider (2013), also supports the findings of this study about the concept of alexithymia, he found that spouses who had a greater likelihood of expressing sadness consequents in response to anger antecedents were in more satisfied marriages. This further confirms the findings that alexithymia is a predictor of marital satisfaction. Lee (2011) also found similar results in her study to investigate the impact of alexithymia, emotional intelligence, marital values, and culture on relationship satisfaction, her results indicated that alexithymia had a negative impact on relationship satisfaction across cultures.

Limitations

The limitation of this study is that the researcher could not control the collection of data since participants were allowed to take a questionnaire home to complete it. Couples could have discussed the responses which might impact on the results.

The fact that opinions of divorce were not included in the study, could be another limitation in that, divorce on its own might be an indication of marital dissatisfaction given the high rates of divorce in Gauteng Province as shown by StatsSA..

Another limitation is that it was biased in its sampling method in that those who could not read were not included because the researcher did not want to risk invading their privacy in anyway. However the sample size was fair and representative of married people in Gauteng Province.

Recommendations

The study made a contribution in revealing that not all hypothesized demographic factors are predictors of marital satisfaction. Future research could differently approach the other hypothesized demographic factors like race, number of children, frequency of marriage, and educational level to determine their role in a marriage. These results cannot be generalized for the South African population because the sample is only representative of one province out of nine; they can only be generalizable if the same study could be extended to other provinces of the country and similar results were found.

A further study can be conducted to investigate the relationship between marital satisfaction and divorce. It is recommended that these psychosocial factors should be considered important elements in programmes aimed at improving and enhancing optimal marital satisfaction.

Conclusion

Demographic factors like age and gender were found to be the predictors of marital satisfaction. The other demographic factors like race, number of children, frequency of marriage, and educational level, could not be proven by this study as predictors of marital satisfaction. Other factors like communication between married people, communicating emotions (alexithymia), and psychological well-being were also found to be predictors of marital satisfaction. These psychosocial predictors should be considered important elements in programmes aimed at improving marital satisfaction. Only hypothesis 1 was partially accepted, hypotheses 2, 3, and 4 were fully accepted.

Declarations

The authors have no financial disclosures or conflicts of interest to report.

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Appendix A

Section A: Dyadic Adjustment Scale(DAS)

Most people have disagreements in their relationships. Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list. Please do not leave any blank spaces. Circle the star under one answer for each item. Please only circle one answer per item.

		Always Agree	Always Almost Agree	Occasionally Disagree	Frequently Disagree	Always Almost Disagree	Always Disagree
1	Handling family finances	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦
2	Matters of recreation	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦
3	Religion matters	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦
4	Demonstration of affection	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦
5	Friends	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦
6	Sex relations	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦
7	Conventionally (correct or proper behaviour)	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦
8	Philosophy of life	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦
9	Ways of dealing with parents or in-laws	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦
10	Aims, Goals and things believed important	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦
11	Amount of time spent together	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦
12	Making major decisions	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦
13	Household tasks	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦
14	Leisure time interests and activities	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦
15	Career decision	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦

		All the Time	Most of the Time	More Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
16	How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separations, or terminating your relationship?	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖
17	How often do you or your mate leave the house after fight?	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖
18	In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖
19	Do you confide in your mate?	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖
20	Do you ever regret that you married?	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖
21	How often do you and your partner quarrel?	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖
22	How often do you and your partner "get on each other's nerves?"	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖
		Every day	Almost Everyday	occasionally	rarely	never	
23	Do you kiss your mate?	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	
		All of them	Most of them	Some of them	Very few of them	Very few of them	
24	Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	

How often would you say the following events occur between you and your mate?

		Never	Less than once a month	Once twice month	or a	Once or twice a week	Once a day	More often
25	Have a stimulating exchange of ideas	❖	❖	❖		❖	❖	❖
26	Laugh together	❖	❖	❖		❖	❖	❖
27	Calmly discuss something	❖	❖	❖		❖	❖	❖
28	Work on a project	❖	❖	❖		❖	❖	❖

There are some things about which couples sometimes disagree. Indicate if either item below caused differences of opinions or were problems in your relationships during the past few weeks.

	YES	NO	
29	❖	❖	Being too tired for sex
30	❖	❖	Not showing love

31. The stars on the following line represent different degrees of happiness in your relationship. The middle point, "Happy", represents the degree of happiness of most relationships. Please circle the star which best describes the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship.

❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖
Fairly Happy	A Little Happy	Happy	Very Happy	Extremely Happy	Perfect

32. Which of the following statements best describes how you feel about the future of your relationship? Select only one statement.

A	I want desperately for my relationship to succeed, and would go to almost any length to see that it does
B	I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and will do all I can to see that it does.
C	I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and will do my fair share to see that it does.
D	It would be nice if my relationship succeeded, but I can't do much more than I am doing now to help it succeed.
E	It would be nice if my relationship succeeded, but I refuse to do any more than I'm doing now to keep it going.
F	My relationship can never succeed, and there is no more that I can do to keep it going.

Section B: Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS - 20)

Using the scale provided as a guide, indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements by ticking the corresponding number. Give only one answer for each statement.

Tick 1 if you STRONGLY DISAGREE

Tick 2 if you MODERATELY DISAGREE

Tick 3 if you NEITHER DISAGREE NOR AGREE

Tick 4 if you MODERATELY AGREE

Tick 5 if you STRONGLY AGREE

		Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I am often confused about what emotion I am feeling	1	2	3	4	5
2	It is difficult for me to find the right words for my feelings	1	2	3	4	5
3	I have physical sensations that even doctors don't understand	1	2	3	4	5
4	I am able to describe my feelings easily	1	2	3	4	5
5	I prefer to analyze problems rather than just describe them	1	2	3	4	5
6	When I'm upset, I don't know if I am sad, frightened, or angry	1	2	3	4	5
7	I am often puzzled by sensations in my body	1	2	3	4	5
8	I prefer to just let things happen rather than to understand why they turned out that way	1	2	3	4	5
9	I have feelings that I can't quite identify	1	2	3	4	5

10	Being in touch with emotions is essential	1	2	3	4	5
11	I find it hard to describe how I feel about people	1	2	3	4	5
12	People tell me to describe my feelings more	1	2	3	4	5
13	I don't know what's going on inside me	1	2	3	4	5
14	I often don't know why I'm angry	1	2	3	4	5
15	I prefer talking to people about their daily activities rather than their feelings	1	2	3	4	5
16	I prefer to watch light entertainment shows rather than psychological dramas	1	2	3	4	5
17	It is difficult for me to reveal my innermost feelings, even to close friends	1	2	3	4	5
18	I can feel close to someone, even in moments of silence.	1	2	3	4	5
19	I find examination of my feelings useful in solving personal problems	1	2	3	4	5
20	Looking for hidden meanings in movies or plays distracts from their enjoyment	1	2	3	4	5

Section C: Primary Communication Inventory (PCI) Scale

Below is a list of items on communication between you and your spouse. Using the scale described here, tick the block with the number which best represents the extent to which you and your spouse behave in the specified way.

		Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1	How often do you and your spouse talk over pleasant things that happen during the day?	1	2	3	4	5
2	How often do you and your spouse talk over unpleasant things that happen during the day?	1	2	3	4	5
3	Do you and your spouse talk over things you disagree about or have difficulties over?	1	2	3	4	5
4	Do you and your spouse talk about things in which you are both interested?	1	2	3	4	5
5	Does your spouse adjust what he/she says and how he/she says it to the way you feel at the moment?	1	2	3	4	5
6	When you ask a question, does your spouse know what it is before you ask it?	1	2	3	4	5
7	Do you know the feelings of your spouse from his/her facial and bodily gestures?	1	2	3	4	5
8	Do you and your spouse avoid certain subjects in a conversation?	1	2	3	4	5
9	Does your spouse explain himself/herself to you through a glance or gesture?	1	2	3	4	5
10	Do you and your spouse discuss things together before making an important decision?	1	2	3	4	5
11	Can your spouse tell what kind of day you have had without asking?	1	2	3	4	5

12	Your spouse wants to visit some close friends or relatives. You don't particularly enjoy their company. Would you tell him or her?	1	2	3	4	5
13	Does your spouse discuss matters of sex with you?	1	2	3	4	5
14	Do you and your spouse use words which have a special meaning not understood by outsiders?	1	2	3	4	5
15	How often does your spouse sulk or pout?	1	2	3	4	5
16	Can you and your spouse discuss your most sacred beliefs without feelings of restraining or embarrassment?	1	2	3	4	5
17	Do you avoid telling your spouse things that put you in a bad light?	1	2	3	4	5
18	You and your spouse are visiting friends. Something is said by the friends which causes you to glance at each other. Would you understand each other?	1	2	3	4	5
19	How often can you tell as much from the tone of voice of your spouse as from what he/she actually says?	1	2	3	4	5
20	How often do you and your spouse talk with each other about personal problems?	1	2	3	4	5
21	Do you feel that in most matters your spouse knows what you are trying to say?	1	2	3	4	5
22	Would you rather talk about intimate matters with your spouse than with some other person?	1	2	3	4	5
23	Do you understand the meaning of your spouse's facial expression?	1	2	3	4	5

24	If you and your spouse are visiting friends or relatives and one of you starts to say something, does the other take over the conversation without the feeling of interruption?	1	2	3	4	5
25	During marriage, have you and your spouse, in general, talked most things over together?	1	2	3	4	5

Section D: Psychological Well-being Scale (PWB)

Please indicate your degree of agreement (using a score ranging from 1-6) to the following sentences.

1	=	2	=	3	=	4	=	5	=	6	=
Strongly Disagree		Moderately Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Moderately Agree		Strongly Agree	

1	I am not afraid to voice my opinions, even when they are in opposition to the opinions of most people.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	In general, I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3	I am not interested in activities that will expand my horizons.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4	Most people see me as loving and affectionate.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5	I live life one day at a time and don't really think about the future.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6	When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	My decisions are not usually influenced by what everyone else is doing.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8	The demands of everyday life often get me down.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9	I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how you think about yourself and the world.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10	Maintaining close relationships has been difficult and frustrating for me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11	I have a sense of direction and purpose in life.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12	In general, I feel confident and positive about myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13	I tend to worry about what other people think of me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14	I do not fit very well with the people and the community around me.	1	2	3	4	5	6

15	When I think about it, I haven't really improved much as a person over the years.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16	I often feel lonely because I have few close friends with whom to share my concerns.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17	My daily activities often seem trivial and unimportant to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18	I feel like many of the people I know have gotten more out of life than I have.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19	I tend to be influenced by people with strong opinions.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20	I am quite good at managing the many responsibilities of my daily life.	1	2	3	4	5	6
21	I have the sense that I have developed a lot as a person over time.	1	2	3	4	5	6
22	I enjoy personal and mutual conversations with family members or friends.	1	2	3	4	5	6
23	I don't have a good sense of what it is I'm trying to accomplish in life.	1	2	3	4	5	6
24	I like most aspects of my personality.	1	2	3	4	5	6
25	I have confidence in my opinions, even if they are contrary to the general consensus.	1	2	3	4	5	6
26	I often feel overwhelmed by my responsibilities	1	2	3	4	5	6
27	I do not enjoy being in new situations that require me to change my old familiar ways of doing things.	1	2	3	4	5	6
28	People would describe me as a giving person, willing to share my time with others.	1	2	3	4	5	6
29	I enjoy making plans for the future and working to make them a reality.	1	2	3	4	5	6
30	In many ways, I feel disappointed about my achievements in life.	1	2	3	4	5	6

31	It's difficult for me to voice my own opinions on controversial matters.	1	2	3	4	5	6
32	I have difficulty arranging my life in a way that is satisfying to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
33	For me, life has been a continuous process of learning, changing, and growth.	1	2	3	4	5	6
34	I have not experienced many warm and trusting relationships with others.	1	2	3	4	5	6
35	Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them	1	2	3	4	5	6
36	My attitude about myself is probably not as positive as most people feel about themselves.	1	2	3	4	5	6
37	I judge myself by what I think is important, not by the values of what others think is important.	1	2	3	4	5	6
38	I have been able to build a home and a lifestyle for myself that is much to my liking.	1	2	3	4	5	6
39	I gave up trying to make big improvements or changes in my life a long time ago.	1	2	3	4	5	6
40	I know that I can trust my friends, and they know they can trust me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
41	I sometimes feel as if I've done all there is to do in life.	1	2	3	4	5	6
42	When I compare myself to friends and acquaintances, it makes me feel good about who I am.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Section E: General Demographic Questions

In order to better interpret the findings please provide information on the following:

Sex : M/F	Race:	Number of years married:	Age:	Number of children:
Is this your first marriage?				Y/N
If not how many times have you been married?				
Have you or your spouse considered marriage counseling?				Y/N
Have you or your spouse attended marriage counseling?				Y/N
Please state the highest level of education that you have completed (e.g. high school graduate, some college, Bachelor's Degree, etc.):				

I think you are on the right track, some comments like the sample size you can go to WHO website on how to calculate sample size and see how far you were. Otherwise your results are good and explainable. Your discussion need to be more referenced. I guess you seem to mention statements that are not published and suitable for face to face talk rather than writing, only in discussion. Your are so perfect so keep up the good work.