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Emotional intelligence and resilience as a predictor of marital satisfaction among spouses of patients with diabetes type 2

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ABSTRACT:

Background: Diabetes mellitus is a very common problem in today's sedentary lifestyle. It requires adhering to a strict diet and exercise regime. It also affects the immediate support group of the patient especially the spouse thus affecting the marital satisfaction in the process. So, investigating it along with emotional intelligence and resilience adds a new dimension in the existing literature. **Objective:** The aim of the present study is to investigate emotional intelligence and resilience as a predictor of marital satisfaction among spouses of patients with diabetes type 2. **Method:** The sample for the current study consisted of 150 married adults (75 males and 75 females) in the age group of 35 – 55 years residing in the tri city for at least three years. The sample was administered a questionnaire of emotional intelligence, resilience scale along with ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale. Inter-correlation analysis, t-test and multiple linear regression analysis were applied. **Results:** They revealed that emotional intelligence and resilience were positively related to marital satisfaction. It was found that emotional intelligence and resilience predicts marital satisfaction in just males but not in females. **Conclusion:** Emotional intelligence and resilience play an important role in prediction of marital satisfaction.

KEY WORDS: Diabetes, emotional intelligence, marital satisfaction, resilience

ABBREVIATIONS: EI = emotional intelligence, MS = marital satisfaction, R = resilience

Running head: "marital satisfaction in spouses of diabetics"

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INTRODUCTION:

Diabetes type 2 is a chronic or a long - term condition which affects the way our body handles glucose. A hormone named insulin is produced by the pancreas which turns the glucose derived from food to energy. Even if a person suffering from diabetes makes insulin, their cells are not utilizing it properly, this is known as insulin resistance. When our body makes insufficient insulin or does not utilize it properly, the glucose gets accumulated in the bloodstream instead of going into the cells. Due to the lack of glucose, the cells are unable to function properly. It also causes damage to various body parts too. Diabetes type 2 is diagnosed later in life especially from the age of 45 onwards[1].

An emotional intelligence model given by Mayer and Salovey comprises of four branches which are (a) perceiving emotions, (b) using emotions, (c) understanding emotions and (d) managing emotions. The combination of intelligence and emotion is described as emotional intelligence[2,-4]. The ability of an individual to function successfully despite various adversities in life is known as resilience[5-7]. The mid range theory by Polk classifies resilience into four patterns: dispositional patterns, relational patterns, philosophical patterns and situational patterns which are basically protective factors, social skills, personal beliefs and resilient coping patterns respectively. Resilience has been defined as a personality trait and process which involves social and family support and the characteristics of the individual[6,8].

Marital satisfaction is described the evaluation of an individual's marriage, their happiness and their ability to function together[9]. Marital satisfaction is determined by the happiness level, feelings and the perceptions of the couple[10,11]. It is subjective in nature[12] and the factors influencing it vary across different cultures[13]. There are number of factors which effect marital satisfaction of a couple for example the individual's personality, mutual understanding, intellectual maturity etc[14].In any chronic disease, immediate support group like family and spouse play an important role especially in maintaining the exercise, diet and medicine regimen. According to a study conducted by Searle et al (2007) very few studies have been dedicated towards the spouses and significant others since diabetes mostly involves self management[15]. So, in order to study the marital satisfaction of the spouses of patients with diabetes and how they are affected by emotional intelligence and resilience this investigation was conducted.

Hypotheses

The study was designed to explore the following:

1. Emotional Intelligence and Resilience will be positively related to Marital Satisfaction (H1).
2. Emotional Intelligence and Resilience will act a predictor of Marital Satisfaction (H2).

3. Gender differences may emerge on Emotional Intelligence, Resilience and Marital Satisfaction (H3).

EXPERIMENTAL SECTION

Participants

The sample was primarily taken from the various government and private hospitals and clinics for the study of current sample. The tri city of Chandigarh, Panchkula and Mohali were selected because residents mostly have a sedentary lifestyle. The sample comprised of 150 spouses of patients with diabetes type 2 having equal number of male and female spouses (75 males and 75 females), in the age range of 35-55 years. Since type 2 Diabetes is diagnosed later in life, the age range of 35-55 years was selected. Such a sample was taken as the patients have to follow a very specific and strict diet and exercise regime which especially affects the immediate support group like spouses which takes a toll on the marital satisfaction. Therefore, we are undertaking this study to investigate the role of factors such as emotional intelligence and resilience on marital satisfaction of the spouses of patients with diabetes type 2. For the purpose of selecting the sample, purposive sampling was used. Patients going to number of private and government hospitals and clinics were contacted. In general, a survey of hospitals showed that approximately hundred to two hundred patients with diabetes type 2 were visiting the Government hospitals in the city on a single day of outpatient department (O.P.D).

Inclusion-exclusion criteria

In order for the participants to be the part of this study, following criterions were followed (a) Individuals who had been married for at least four years and have at least one child. (b) Spouses of patients with diabetes type 2 between the age group of 35- 55 years who were at least graduates and had proficiency in English. (c) Spouses of patients who had been diagnosed with diabetes type 2 and were on medication for at least three years. (d) Those adults who had been living the urban area for at least past three years. Also, we excluded from the group (a) Those adults who were diagnosed with type 1 diabetes. (b) Those individuals who suffered from diabetes that do not last a lifetime for example gestational diabetes. (c) Those individuals who were unmarried, widowed and divorced and (d) Individuals undergoing any psychological treatment.

Behavioral Measures

The subjects were administered the following assessment tools with their consent:

1. *Schutte Self – Report Emotional Intelligence Scale* (**SSEIT**)[16]**:** The SSEIT consists of 33 items using 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) scale for responses. This test reports reliability rating of 0.90 and is reliable for adults and adolescents[17].

2. ***The Resilience Scale***[18]**:** This scale consists of 25 items using 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) scale for responses. It's a valid and reliable scale for variety of population. The test showed high reliability with coefficient alpha of 0.91.

3. ***ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale***[19]***:*** This scale consists of 15 items comprising of marital satisfaction scale (10 items) and idealistic distortion scale (5 items). The EMS Scale was evaluated for internal consistency and test-retest reliability. Cronbach's alpha revealed an internal reliability of 0.86. Test-retest reliability coefficient over time was 0.86.

Ethical concern

In order to maintain the privacy and confidentiality of the subjects their consent was duly taken and they were assured that the information received will remain confidential.

Statistical analysis

To meet the objectives of the study, correlation analysis and predictor analysis were applied. Descriptive statistics viz, mean and standard deviation was also performed and t-test was used to find out the gender differences among variables.

RESULTS

Results showed a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction (r = .342[**], $p \leq 0.01$); Resilience and marital satisfaction (r = .328[**], $p \leq 0.01$); Emotional intelligence and resilience (r = .586[**], $p \leq 0.01$).

Males scored higher on all the three variables of emotional intelligence (M=126.20), resilience (M=131.64) and marital satisfaction (M= 54.2793). Also, no gender differences emerged on any of these three variables. In fact, emotional intelligence and resilience did not emerge as predictors of marital satisfaction in female spouses unlike in the case of male spouses where emotional intelligence and resilience both predict marital satisfaction. The following Table 1 shows the regression values.

Table 1: Shows the regression-analysis for Marital Satisfaction among spouses of patients with diabetes.

Step-wise regression equation for MS				
Predictor variable	**Std coeff B**	**T**	**R2**	**F Change**
Males				
Emotional Intelligence	.554	5.688	.307	32.355**
Resilience	.505	5.002	.255	25.023**
$* * p \leq 0.01$				

DISCUSSION

The current study aimed to investigate whether emotional intelligence and resilience predicted marital satisfaction among spouses of patients with diabetes type 2, along with examining

the correlation between the variables in question. The results of the present study support the hypotheses, and also corroborate with previous researches.

Findings of the present study revealed that emotional intelligence is positively correlated to marital satisfaction. Therefore, hypotheses (H1) that anticipated a positive relation between EI and MS was supported in our investigation. Significant relation between marital satisfaction and emotional intelligence has also been supported by Anghel, 2016[20]; Abbasi, 2016[21]; Ilyas & Habib, 2014[22]. Emotional intelligence is described as the ability to understand interpersonal dynamics by utilizing intelligence, empathy and emotions[23]. As has been stated by Lavalekar, Kulkarni & Jagtap[24], marriage is considered an important aspect in the process of self-actualization, and the same is dominated by one's emotional intelligence. Hence, how satisfied or dissatisfied one feels with their marital life may be influenced by how competent they are at managing emotions of self and others. In previous studies emotional intelligence has been positively correlated with happiness[25] and to life satisfaction and adaptive coping styles [26]. Researchers have found that EI also predicts variance in life satisfaction[26, 27] and happiness[25]. While very few studies have been conducted to explore the link between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction, one such study was conducted by Schutte to examine relationship satisfaction using self- report. The study concluded that participants having high relationship satisfaction had higher emotional intelligence. The study also found that individual with high emotional intelligence had higher marital satisfaction[28], which is in line with the findings of the current study. The Ability model of emotional intelligence[2] has four sub branches – perceiving emotions, managing emotions, understanding emotions, and facilitating thought with emotion – which can have an impact on how effectively one adjusts and copes in their marital life, in turn influencing how satisfied they feel with their married life.

The ability of an individual to "bounce back" from difficult situations is known as resilience. In case of trauma, tragedy, health problems, relationship problems etc, the process of resilience helps us to adapt[29]. Resilience in family means adjusting positively to challenging life conditions[30]. Research shows resilience is a very basic and universal concept[31] and protective factors reside within the individual, family, social groups and community[32, 33].

A study by Huber et al. showed positive correlation between family resilience and marital satisfaction in midlife. Family resilience is described as a positive construct which describes how well a person adapts well in a right manner thus affecting the marital satisfaction[34]. Thus, we can deduce that spouses scoring high on resilience also have high marital satisfaction as their ability to adapt is better especially in case of problematic life events.

A resilience model given by Shores lists three main branches of resilience namely love of self, love of others and love of a higher power. The second domain describes the meaningful relation

individual has with others. It also includes the support provided to each other[35]. So, we may assume that the second domain of love of others is clearly indicative of the fact that if a person has support and meaning in a relationship, their marital satisfaction may also be high. Thus, we can say that the shores model also supports that resilience has a positive correlation with marital satisfaction.

According to the current study emotional intelligence and resilience were positively correlated which was supported by earlier theories. According to Salovey et al. individuals with higher emotional intelligence cope better with stressful situations as their ability to perceive and appraise emotions regulate their moods and expression of feelings. Emotional intelligence is believed to buffer the negative events by using emotional awareness, expression and management of emotions[36.]

Armstrong, Galligan & Critchley conducted a study utilizing the six dimensions of Swinburne University Emotional Intelligence Test (SUEIT)[37]. The six dimensions were emotional self- awareness, emotional awareness of others, emotional expression, emotional self- control, emotional management of self and lastly emotional management of others. It was found that individuals high on these six dimensions experienced less life- event stress[38]. Also, the dimensions of the test utilized in the study by Armstrong et al overlaps the dimensions of EI ability model. So we can assume as per the common dimensions shared by Armstrong's study and Salovey's theory that the individual's high on EI experience less stress and therefore have higher resilience.

According to a study conducted on leadership success by Maulding et al., there is growth in emotional intelligence as we age and few aspects of emotional intelligence can be taught. So, if leaders are coached to be calm and assertive, they may have increased resilience which positively affects the leadership qualities[39]. Therefore, it can be anticipated that with EI, resilience can be improved. In that context it would not be wrong saying that EI positively influences the level of resilience.

Findings also revealed that emotional intelligence acted as a predictor of marital satisfaction, and consequently hypotheses (H2) was supported by the results. Results are supported by the work of Abbasi et al who found that general EI, interpersonal adaptation and general mood act as predictors of marital satisfaction[21]. Hajihasani & sim also found that EI and age of marrying predicted MS in women who marry at an early age[40].

The current study also found that resilience predicted marital satisfaction which was supported by previous studies conducted. A study by Ganth, Thiyagarajan & Nigesh showed that EI, gender, resilience and status of infertility emerged as the predictors of marital satisfaction [41]. Factors such as spirituality, humor, teamwork, creativity, independence, insight, space in the relationship are few factors which affect a couple[42.] We might say that these factors affect resilience and hence

influence marital satisfaction. Also, as seen from the results of the current study, EI and R are both positively related to MS, so EI might play a role in effecting the resilience of an individual and thus affect marital satisfaction.

While it was expected that both emotional intelligence and resilience would predict marital satisfaction in females, surprisingly, nothing like that emerged in the findings of the current investigation. This could be due to marital satisfaction being affected by factors other than emotional intelligence and resilience, like upbringing, family environment, and social support. Also, it might be due to the fact that Indian culture is a patriarchal in nature where females have to follow their male dominants which may be father, brother, husband and in-laws. Thus, they learn to adjust according to the environment very quickly and learn to keep their emotions at the back end.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Spouses of patients with chronic health problems are involved to a great extent in their medical regimen[43]. Reason being, it is easier for spouses to inculcate healthy lifestyle changes in the patient due to regular monitoring[44].

In the present study, we have ascertained that there is a positive correlation between emotional intelligence, resilience and marital satisfaction. Emotional intelligence and resilience emerged as the predictors of marital satisfaction in males but surprisingly not in females. This might be due to small sample size and taking a larger sample might change the whole picture. Though a number of studies have been conducted on emotional intelligence, resilience and marital satisfaction, there is dearth of literature as far as their role in lives of spouses of diabetic patients is concerned, especially since diabetes type 2 is a chronic disease which influences the patients as well as their spouses for rest of their lives.

Limitations:

There are limitations in this study too as the sample has been taken from just urban areas. Rural population should also be included for wider study. Also, future studies on this topic can also take into consideration the socioeconomic differences.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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