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Quantitative Research

Marital Happiness

December 1, 2015

Introduction:

Research has demonstrated the benefits of praying in a marriage and seeing the outcome of a happier marriage. It has not been specified if it is alone prayer that makes for a happier marriage or if the number of children or yearly income have anything to do with it. In this research I have looked at both prayer affecting marital happiness, number of children affecting marital happiness, income affecting marital happiness and have also looked at all three variables to try and find the underlying reason for happier marriages. In the present study I will use the General Social Survey (2010) to explore if prayer, income, or number of children have any effects on marital happiness.

Literature Review:

I wanted to answer what factors can or cannot determine a happy marriage versus an unhappy marriage. I first researched prayer in relation to marital happiness, followed by children and marital happiness, ending with annual income and marital happiness. Many researches have been done about religion and different religious practices having some effect on a certain variable. "In recent years, researchers have documented a strong resurgence of public interest in the spiritual–metaphysical domain and explanation of human experience, and a large proportion of the public reports the importance of spirituality and religion in their

lives"(Butler-20). As the want for more answers about religion began to grow we started to see the positive results. "The results of several studies reviewed in the previously mentioned meta-analysis suggest that the couple-focused construct of religious homogamy, as operationalized as shared religious affiliations and joint church or religious service attendance, was positively related to increased marital satisfaction and commitment and decreased divorce" (Olson, Marshall, Goddard, Schramm-1).There were also specific parts under the umbrella of religion that had the significant findings. "As such, these findings suggest that agreeing on general religious issues, praying for one's spouse, and having a forgiving spouse appear to help couples remain satisfied in their marriages even in the face of specific risk factors that might otherwise undermine marital quality" (Olson, Marshall, Goddard, Schramm-1). Specifically a research that looked at prayer found that, "Prayer is found to contribute to a perceived meaningful relationship with Deity. Through this prayer-invoked relationship, spouses perceived emotional

validation from Deity in addition to mindfulness of and accountability to Deity. Prayer was found to assist the conflict resolution process through lessening feelings of contempt, hostility, and enmity, and lessening emotional reactivity (mutually high contingency of negative exchanges; see Burman et al., 1993). Couple self-reports also indicated that prayer enhanced the spouses' productive focus on the relationship and behaviors beneficial to their partner. An increased understanding of their partner's perspective, and an increased commitment to focus on self-change independent of their partner were also reported to be enhanced by prayer" (Butler-31). With that we see that prayer most certainly has a positive relationship with overall marital happiness.

Children are a wonderful gift we have in our lives but do they have an effect on our marital happiness? [Research has] found that couples with children typically have less happy marriages than couples who forgo childrearing "(Villines-1). So research says that people who have children are generally less happy. "We find that, globally, happiness decreases with the number of children this association, however, is strongly modified by individual and contextual factors most importantly, we find that the association between happiness and fertility evolves from negative to neutral to positive above age 40." (Margolis-Myrsklya-1). Meaning that the more children you have in the moment of raising the children it has a negative effect on your happiness but when you are older having more children has the exact opposite effect, the more children you have the happier you are.

Lastly, we look at income to see if it has any effect on happiness of marriages. The saying is out there that money doesn't buy happiness but maybe if it bought marital happiness it would be pretty accurate. In recent studies we see that "financial stress can include cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses that affect the relationship. Economic strain leads to an increase in spousal hostility and a decrease in spousal warmth" (Freeman, Carlson, & Sperry. 1993, p. 325). In addition to increased hostility, financial stresses are associated with decreased marital satisfaction and stability (Kerkmann, Lee, & Allgood, 2000)." (Dakin & Wampler-300). In a more recent study they also found that "Low-income predicted less marital satisfaction and more psychological distress than couples with more adequate means." (Dakin & Wampler-307). Therefore it is safe to say that more income does result in a happier marriage.

Gaps in the Literature:

The main reason I wanted to do my research on this subject is because I wanted to see if Prayer actually affects marital happiness or if there was and underlying reason behind it such as number of children or income. As seen in the literature review there are many studies that say prayer affects marital status but I have a belief that something may be in consideration that they aren't putting out there like the fact that people who are more religious tend to be in the middle class of whom also tends to have a higher education than most. I don't think that prayer alone results in a happier marriage but that there is another factor that is the result of a happy or unhappy marriage. I also wanted to do this research because after looking at some of the researches out there I think that they have some flaws. For example "Although respondents were older, more highly educated, and had higher average incomes than the full populations of

these states." (Olson, Marshall, Goddard, Schramm-1). This is obviously a statement saying that the research's respondents did not represent the population. Also in one of the prayer studies they stated that "Approximately 32% of the original sampling frame was reachable via telephone" and as taught in class you must have a response rate of at least 70% to even be considered as a decent research. Another point would be that most of these researches were done with a small sample size compared to the size of the GSS survey that I will be using. Therefore it strengthens my research.

Proposed Research Design:

I plan to fill the gaps in the literature by running analysis on not only prayer, number of children, and income alone I will also run a test that combines all of them to see if considering the other two factors if factor A is significant. I will be using the GSS 2010 which is a huge survey done by a random sample of the population and has hundreds of variables that these people will answer. The GSS 2010 is a very reliable survey which is why I've decided to base my research off of this study. I've decided to use four different variables in my study: number of children (childs), how often you pray (pray), how much money you make (realinc), and how happy your marriage is (hapmar). I've also recoded the variable (pray) to (yesrel) to see if the people who never pray were taken out of the test if it would have any effect in the significance level. To my surprise it made it even less significant. The number of children is operationalized as 0, 0 children 1,1 child 2, two children etc. Prayer is operationalized as several times a day, once a day, several times a week, once a week, less than once a week, and never. Religious or

not was the recoded variable from pray and it is operationalized as several times a day, once a day, several times a week, once a week, and less than once a week. Income is operationalized as the specific value of money you make. Marital happiness is operationalized as very happy, pretty happy, and not too happy. I will run tests to see if the number of children you have affects your marital happiness, if how often you pray affects marital happiness, if how much money you make affects marital happiness, and finally I will see if considering all of these variables if any are specifically what causes marital happiness. I think some strengths of my research are that I am using data that has a large sample size that is also representative of the population. Some of my weaknesses are that I did not make the questions myself nor did I see who the people were who were answering the questions. Also it is 6 year old data. I think that I should have looked at more variables contributing to marital happiness and not just three factors.

Results:

The univariate analysis of pray (how often you pray) shows us how many times an answer was chosen (frequency) in the data set.

Label (how often do you pray)	Frequency	Valid Percent
Several times a day	587	29.0
Once a day	592	29.3
Several times a week	240	11.9
Once a week	118	5.8
Less than once a week	222	11.0
Never	264	13.0

The income variable had an average answer of $30,813.31 (mean). Its middle income was $23,310 (median). The minimum was $259 and the maximum was $119,606 which is an unbelievable difference which explains why the standard deviation is so large. The standard deviation is $29,348.29.

Mean	30,813.31
Median	23,310.00
St. Deviation	29,348.29
Minimum	259
Maximum	119,606

The univariate analysis of hapmar (marital happiness) shows the frequency, how many times the answer was repeated and the percentage the answer is out of the total percentage.

Label (marital happiness)	Frequency	Valid Percent
Very happy	544	61.4
Pretty happy	314	35.4
Not too happy	28	3.2

The univariate analysis of childs (number of children) shows you the frequency (how many times the answer was repeated during the study) of what label (how many children) was chosen.

Label (number of children)	Frequency	Valid Percent
0	562	27.5
1	332	16.3
2	528	25.9
3	329	16.1
4	144	7.1
5	61	3.0
6	35	1.7
7	18	0.9
8 or more	32	1.6

For the Bivariate Analysis I ran correlation tests on all three variables and found that the only significant variable was Income when looking at effects on marital happiness.

Label	N	Standard Deviation	Mean	P Value (significance)
Happiness of marriage	886	.554	1.42	.175
How often does R pray	2023	1.756	2.80	
Happiness of marriage	886	.554	1.42	.229
How many children	2041	1.739	1.89	
Happiness of marriage	886	.554	1.42	.035
Income	1805	29,348.86	30,813.31	
Happiness of marriage	886	.554	1.42	.255
Is R actively religious	1759	-	-	

The multivariate analysis shows that when considering all of the following variables the only statistically significant variable that effects marital happiness is income. We know this because it is less than (or equal to) .05.

Label	P value (significance)
How often does R pray	.149
Income	**.031**
Number of Children	.722

Conclusion:

I am confident that my research has added to the research that had been done before mine. I believe I have found that there is definitely an underlying factor that is causing other studies to find significance between prayer and marital happiness even if it wasn't any of the variables I found. Another thing I added was that income definitely has an effect on marital happiness whether you look at just income or a multiple of other variables. My weaknesses would be that I wasn't able to find the underlying variable that resulted in other studies to find prayer has an effect of marital happiness. I hope that in the future someone can run more tests with this data to find any other variables that affect marital happiness and if any variables are the true reason why prayer is related to marital happiness.

References

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