

## Emotional Intelligence and Marital Satisfaction

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**Motto:** *"A soul connection is a resonance between two people who see each other's essential beauty, behind their facades, and who connect on this deeper level.*

*This kind of mutual recognition provides the catalyst for a potent alchemy, a sacred alliance whose purpose is to help both partners realize their deepest potential." (John Wellwood)*

### Abstract

**Introduction:** *This paper aims to emphasize the influence of emotional intelligence in marital satisfaction. The couple's life represents an important test of emotional intelligence for each of us. The first wave of love, unconditional opening to the other appear spontaneously without any effort from our part. However, when fears and conditionings break the barriers and begin to appear, difficult parts of our relationship and love are being tested. It takes emotional virtuosity to manage negative feelings that take place on the surface and in order to keep the positive feelings that characterize the relationship in the incandescent moments of the beginning. In order to study the deep emotional currents that run across a couple relationship it is indispensable to find out what leads to marital satisfaction respectively dissatisfaction.*

**Objectives:** *The overall objective is to identify defining characteristics of emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction and the relationship between them. Specific objectives are in the following areas: to detect the difference between a stable couple partnership in terms of the partners' emotional intelligence; to analyze the influence that the emotional intelligence of partners' exerts on their marital satisfaction*

**Methods:** *In this research 60 subjects had participated, with a mean age of 29 years, married for at least 5 years (mean 6.3 years) and living with a partner. The methodology is based on two tests: marital satisfaction index (IMS) and Scale of emotional intelligence (SIE) (Schutte et al. 1998).*

**Results:** *The results obtained were statistically significant almost entirely. Even if in terms of overall emotional intelligence there are no differences, on the level of its subcomponents there are significant differences between men and women involved in stable relationships. The results have shown significant correlations between marital satisfaction and the subcomponents of emotional intelligence like balancing personal emotions and balancing emotions of others.*

**Conclusions:** *The results revealed statistically significant differences in terms of personal balancing of emotions and other emotions between women and men involved in stable relationships. Thus, personal growth and individual autonomy of each partner and the development of emotional intelligence of each partner are the best way to preserve the couple's relationship.*

**Keywords:** *emotional intelligence, marital satisfaction, couple, love*

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## **I. Introduction**

Our consciously and unconsciously emotional life acts as a filter between the outside and inside, elects our choices and can alter our relationship leading us to victory or defeat.

Emotional intelligence redefines the picture of the world and human kind. In present times we know that emotions are the most important human resources.

Emotions are important because they:

- provide survival and any dysfunction of emotional states leads to a less inspired modality to face a situation;

- structure personality, attitudes, individualize us and define our identity;

- signal significant events to the individual and motivate behaviors centered on managing emotions;

- facilitate decision-making (researches show that when the nerve centers from the cerebral hemispheres are afflicted, people can't take even the smallest decision because they don't know what they will feel about the decision);

- contribute to deeper imprint of events in memory;

- set limits (help in drawing boundaries that are necessary to protect our mental and physical health);

- help communication (if we are more responsive to emotions of others, we are able to make them feel important, understood and loved);

- unit (our feelings unite us, our beliefs divide us): emotional intelligence harmonizes us with the environment and with ourselves.

Thus, the ability to cultivate emotional intelligence is essential for life and health in general, for our family and helps us to foster relationships and also represents a lasting guarantee for success in everything we do.

H. Bloomfield (cited Roco, M. 2001) studied how emotional intelligence is involved in the level of interpersonal relationships in family. He noted that relationships between individuals often end up in disappointment because many couples never try to find out what they really need for their love to be a success. To create and maintain a long-term love relationship, one must know how to communicate with his/her partner, proving to be skillful and using the complicated language of emotions.

Regarding the link between marital satisfaction and emotional intelligence, research has led to the following conclusions:

- happiness, emotional awareness and self-actualization are most strongly related to marital satisfaction;

- happiness, contentment regarding your own self and life are related to:

- ♣ a healthy self-esteem;

- ♣ contact with yourself;

- ♣ a sense of direction;

- ♣ realistic expectations;

- ♣ interpersonal skills;

- ♣ a sense of responsibility;

- ♣ the ability to maintain a positive attitude in front of difficulties, all these contributing to marital satisfaction.

So, marital satisfaction is correlated with a general state (happiness, optimism), followed by intrapersonal aspects of life (self-awareness, self-actualization), interpersonal aspects (social responsibility, interpersonal relationships) and followed by adaptability (reality testing).

In a sense, partners in a relationship "shape" each other in subtle ways. How each partner carves, shapes the other has been called the "*Michelangelo phenomenon*". The Michelangelo phenomenon is a process observed by psychologists in which interdependent individuals influence and "sculpt" each other (opposite to Blueberry phenomenon, in which interdependent individuals bring out the worst qualities in each other).

When partners live together for decades, their faces come to be similar, probably because of facial muscles that reflect the same emotions over the years. Gradually their faces come to look alike (Goleman, D., 2007). The number of positive connections made by a couple during a period of time could be a good barometer of their marriage. J. Gotman noted that the ratio of harmful and fulfillment moments in a couple has a remarkable anticipatory power. A ratio of five to one, that means the positive moments by far exceed the negative ones, indicates that the couple has a solid emotional base and a vigorous relationship, which almost certainly will flourish on the long term (Goleman, D., 2007).

## **II. Methods**

### **Objectives**

- ❖ to measure the level of emotional intelligence for each member belonging to a married couple

- ❖ to measure the level of marital satisfaction

### **Study participants**

To achieve the objectives and to test the

hypotheses, 60 subjects (30 women and 30 men) married for at least 5 years (mean 6.3 years) and living with a partner were included in the study. The subjects were average aged 29 years old, all had their higher education completed and all came from urban areas. Each subject completed an initial individual form with the above data.

**Procedure and experimental design**

To achieve the goal, we conducted a non-experimental study with a compared design to validate the first hypothesis and a correlational design for the second hypothesis. To verify the assumptions made and pursued in this paper, the following psychological tests were used:

- the Marital satisfaction index (IMS)
- the Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS).

Hypothesis no. 1: It is assumed that there are statistically significant differences between men and women involved in stable relationships in terms of the level of emotional intelligence.

Hypothesis No. 2: It is assumed that there is a statistically significant relationship between the level of satisfaction and the degree of emotional intelligence in stable relationships (married couples).

**III. Results**

Analyzing data from the SPSS table, shown below, note that the value of F ( $F = .011, p > .05$ ) is not statistically significant. Thus, we can say that there are no significant differences between women and men in terms of the overall emotional intelligence quotient.

Table 1 indicates the values of Levene test and t-test for the two groups on overall emotional intelligence quotient.

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	t-test for Equality of Means					
	f	Sig	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Total	.011	.916	.484	58	.630	2.500	5.168
Equal variances assumed			.484	57.947	.630	2.500	5.168
Equal variances not assumed							

1. Setting personal emotions REP

Table 2. Table indicates values for Levene test and t test for both groups on balancing personal emotions size.

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	t-test for Equality of Means					
	F	Sig	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
REP	.768	.384	-	58	.001	-	1.909
Equal variances assumed			3.657	53.438	.001	6.982	1.924
Equal variances not assumed			-			-	
			3.629			6.982	

Looking at the second table we note that the value of F ( $F = .768, p < .01$ ) is statistically significant. This result indicates that there are statistically significant differences between men and women

engaged in stable relationships regarding the balancing personal emotions, which confirms our hypothesis.

Previous studies demonstrated that specific subcomponents in which women have a higher score

than men in terms of emotional intelligence are interpersonal relationships, that means the ability to establish and maintain mutual satisfactory relationships

characterized by intimacy (in which we receive and give affection) and the ability to understand the other's feelings which confirms our hypothesis.

### 2. Evaluation of emotions EvE

Table 3 shows the values for the Levene test and t test for assessing the size of the two groups on emotions.

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	t-test for Equality of Means					
	F	Sig	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
EvE	.033	.857	.315	58	.754	.590	1.870
Equal variances assumed			.315	57.416	.754	.590	1.872
Equal variances not assumed							

The results show that there are significant differences between women and men regarding the size of balancing personal emotions and balancing emotions of others. Women succeed much better to recognize emotions, to label them, to perceive the physiological changes that accompany different types of emotions and also can recognize them in others, to empathize etc. It is assumed that women develop a higher level of emotional intelligence because they interact very early in parent-child relationship. Researches show that

mothers not only talk more about feelings to their daughters, but also display a rich repertory of feelings.

Moreover, recent research (Gur, Gunning-Dixon, Bilker, & Gur, 2002) shows that women have larger orbital frontal cortices than men, resulting in a highly significant difference in the ratio of orbital gray to the amygdala's volume. The larger volume of the cortex devoted to emotional modulation may relate to behavioral evidence for gender differences in emotion processing.

### 3. Using emotions UE

Table 4 displays the values of the Levene test and t test for both groups regarding the size of using emotions.

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	t-test for Equality of Means					
	F	Sig	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
UE	1.071	.305	-	58	.141	-	1.832
Equal variances assumed			1.493	53.659	.144	2.736	1.846
Equal variances not assumed			-			-	
			1.482			2.736	

The value of F (F = 1.071, p <0.01) is statistically significant. So there are differences between women and men in terms of using emotions size which confirms our hypothesis. Using emotions is related to the ability to operate with the emotional

intelligence developed, so it is necessary that people experience different psychosocial situations so they can use their emotions in different contexts and in relation to different kind of people. Women are more skillful in the use of words describing their emotions which

means that they can recognize with better accuracy the similarities and differences between emotional states (eg, between liking and loving); recognize the significance of emotional states based on complex situations and relationships that occur (for example, the connection between sadness and loss) and also between

conflicting emotions (eg love and hate toward the same person). To check the second hypothesis the correlation between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction was calculated using SPSS, to demonstrate the existence of a grounded statistical relationship between them.

Table 5 displays the values obtained regarding the correlation between emotional intelligence and the level of satisfaction in couple.

		IMS
Total Pearson Correlation	1	.439**
Sig tailed	.	000
N	60	60
IMS Pearson Correlation	.439**	1
Sig tailed	000	.
N	60	60

There are significant correlations between the marital satisfaction and emotional intelligence. These results are confirmed by previous studies which show that the marital satisfaction is correlated with a general

state (happiness, optimism), followed by aspects of intrapersonal life (self-awareness, self-actualization), interpersonal issues (social responsibility, interpersonal relationships) and by adaptability (reality testing).

Table 6 displays the values obtained by adjusting the correlation between balancing of personal emotions and marital satisfaction.

		IMS	REP
IMS	Pearson Correlation	1	.279(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.031
REP	N Pearson Correlation	.279(*)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.031	.
	N	60	60

Table 7 displays the values obtained by correlation between evaluation of emotions and marital satisfaction.

		IMS	EvE
IMS	Pearson Correlation	1	.077
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.559
	N	60	60
	Pearson Correlation	.077	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.559	.
	N	60	60

Table 8 displays the values obtained by correlation between balancing of others emotions and marital satisfaction.

		IMS	REC
IMS	Pearson Correlation	1	.471(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	000
	N	60	60
REC	Pearson Correlation	.471**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	60	60

Table 9 displays the values obtained by correlation between the use of personal emotions and marital satisfaction.

		IMS	UE
IMS	Pearson Correlation	1	.161
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.219
	N	60	60
UE	Pearson Correlation	.161	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.219	.
	N	60	60

#### IV. Conclusions

The results obtained were statistically significant almost entirely. There are two hypotheses proposed for validation, one comparative and one correlational. We will results briefly mention the results obtained for each hypothesis.

The first hypothesis is supported almost entirely: even if in terms of the general level of emotional intelligence there are no differences, at the level of its subcomponents there are significant differences between men and women involved in stable relationships. Thus, there are statistically significant differences regarding the regulation of personal emotions and of others, evaluation of own emotions and use of emotions.

The second hypothesis was partially confirmed. We obtained significant correlations between the marital satisfaction and the following subcomponents of emotional intelligence: balancing of personal emotions and balancing emotions of others. We think that personal development and individual autonomy of each partner, more precisely, the development of emotional intelligence of each partner is the best way to preserve a good relationship and to obtain marital satisfaction.

The results obtained in a previous study entitled "*Developing emotional intelligence through creative group*" demonstrate that the fundamental pieces of emotional intelligence and its overall structure can be improved through training and experience in a group centered on the development of creativity.

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