Mindful Marriage: Exploring the Interaction Between Mindfulness and Length of Marriage on Marital Satisfaction

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Length of Marriage and Marital Satisfaction

- Research exploring the trajectory of marital satisfaction in length of marriages has identified a pattern, such that marital satisfaction first declines in early marriage and then increases in later years of marriage (e.g., VanLaningham, Johnson, & Amato, 2001)
- The decline of marital satisfaction in the early years appears to have a relationship with the onset of parenting and associated stresses (Orbuch, House, Mero, & Webster, 1996)
- Identifying mechanisms that may help couples preserve their marital satisfaction through the early years of marriage has significant implications for families and communities

Trait Mindfulness

- Research has consistently demonstrated a positive relationship between trait mindfulness and romantic relationship quality (e.g., Burpee & Langer, 2005)
- The positive relationship between mindfulness and adaptive emotional regulation (e.g., Hill & Updegraff, 2011) suggests that mindfulness may serve to buffer against the stressors that build up over time in a marriage

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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METHOD

Participants
- 331 married adults (mean age = 38.66 (9.6) , 92.7% female)

Procedure
- Participants completed an anonymous online survey

Measures
- Trait Mindfulness
  - Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire-Short Version (FFMQ-SF; Bohlmeijer, Peter, Fledderus, Veehof, & Baer, 2011)
- Marital Satisfaction
  - Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS; Schumm et al., 1985)

RESULTS

Primary Analyses
- Using the SPSS macro, PROCESS (Hayes, 2014), we tested our moderation model. Length of marriage was specified as a multycategorical variable and dummy codes were created (reference group = individuals married less than five years)
- Interaction terms were generated for each group and the moderator (mindfulness)
- Contrary to our hypotheses, neither length of marriage nor trait mindfulness predicted marital satisfaction

Follow-up Analyses
- A one-way ANOVA was conducted to assess for significant differences in trait mindfulness and marital satisfaction between marriage length groups
- Results indicated a significant effect of length of marriage on trait mindfulness, (F[3, 327] = 4.58, p = .004), but not marital satisfaction (F[3, 127] = .669, p = .573)
- Tukey’s post-hoc analyses revealed individuals married less than 5 years demonstrate lower trait mindfulness than individuals in both the 16-24 years (t[131]= -2.75, p = .007) and 25+ years marriage length groups (t[120] = -2.91, p = .004)

CONCLUSION

- The lack of a significance found in our moderation model may be due in part to measuring length of marriage categorically as opposed to continuously. It is also possible that a more discriminating marital satisfaction scale would elicit different results
- Follow-up analyses suggested that groups did not statistically differ on marital satisfaction, but the effect of length of marriage on trait mindfulness was significant. Individuals married less than 5 years demonstrated the lowest mindfulness, suggesting that early marriage may be an appropriate time to target mindfulness in couples therapy

REFERENCES

See handout.