Expression of Emotions: Analyzing Socio Demographic Profile of Pakistani Husbands and Wives

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to investigate the effects of socio demographic variables on emotional expressivity of Pakistani married sample. 433 husbands and 569 wives) participated in this cross sectional study. Data was gathered through self report measure of Berkeley Emotion Expressivity Questionnaire (BEQ; James & Gross, 1993) and a demographic profile sheet that assessed demographic variables (gender, age, family system, nature of marriage, level of education, profession, and years of marriage) of the married respondents. BEQ measures multiple facets of emotionality including positive expressivity, negative expressivity and impulse strength. Results are discussed in terms of the importance of socio demographic variables on emotion expressivity of individuals committed in married relationship. Findings demonstrate that gender, level of education and profession has significant impact on level of emotional expressivity. Unexpectedly, on the other hand, age of husbands and wives, nuclear and joint family system, arrange and love marriage, and years of marital relationship were not found to have significant impact on emotional expression of husbands and wives in the Pakistani sample. The article is concluded by briefly foregrounding some of the study's limitations as well as implications for the practice, and some of the directions for future research.

Keywords: Emotion, Expression, Marriage.

Introduction

It is sometimes suitable to restrain from openly expressing the emotions that arise during interactions with the social partners. Individuals often veil their emotions if they think that expressing them could potentially impair their relationship or hurt their partner's feelings. For instance, people may cover up negative emotional reactions that could lead their partner to dislike them, hide their worries in order to avoid worrying someone else, or may conceal their happiness in front of others who are sad. On the other hand, in certain situations, individuals deliberately express positive emotions to gain pleasing effects within an interpersonal relationship. A person may also sometimes reveal to others whatever he or she is feeling in order to make them feel happy and comfortable.

Individuals tend to differ in their overall pattern and style of expressing emotions that is known as emotion expressivity (Halberstadt, Cassidy, Stifer, Parke, & Fox, 1995). Scientists have tried to conceptualize emotion expressivity in a number of ways, we found the most encompassing one to be the definition of Halberstadt and collegues (1995, p.93). They distinctly explained emotion expressivity as "an individual's persistent pattern or style of exhibiting non verbal and verbal expressions that often emerge to be emotion related".

Scientific literature generously provide empirical evidences that proves the significance of emotion expressivity within personal and romantic relations (Geist & Gilbert,1996; Planap,

2003; Shapiro, Gottman & Carrere, 2000). Within interpersonal relationships, the inclination to be emotionally expressive may inflict on the extent of both spouses' contentment and displeasure with the relationship. On the one hand, the sharing of emotions such as affection, warmth, and susceptibility serves to create a sense of closeness and trust in the relationship. On the contrary, the display of emotions such as anger, unpleasantness, and irritation may lead to a perception of the relationship as disturbed and unproductive (Gill, Christensen, & Fincham, 1999; Folk & Moskowitz, 2000). Studies have also exhibited that nature of emotional expression (either positive or negative) is detrimental to interpersonal situations. Several studies have highlighted a close association between the type of emotions expressed and contextual interactional situations in romantic relations (Geist & Gilbert, 1996). Ample instances in the scientific researches of marital relationship depicts that husband's or wife's style of expressing or restraining emotional reactions is largely monitored by the a number of factors like, personality characteristics of the partner, thought patterns, perceptions of the individual, duration of married relationship, and other psychosocial and demographic factors (Miller, Caughling, and Huston, 2003).

Existing body of scientific work constitutes a large amount of studies that focus on both social and personality factors that influence emotion expression of individuals within a married relationship. Taking account of gender as an important demographic variable to study emotion expressivity in romantic relations, it has been proved through scientific researches that women report expressing both positive and negative emotions more than man do (Cartensen, Gottman & Levenson, 1995; Gross and John, 1998). Further, women usually are found to be more confronting and expressive of a number of various emotions, including happiness, sorrow, and fear (Brody,1993; Kring & Gordon, 1998). Men are less expressive emotionally and are, in the face of disagreement, more likely than women to be defensive and withdrawn. Several studies

have also documented that females may play the role of emotional specialists in their marital relations (Alexandar & Wood, 2000), which suggest that in marital relationships, women's expression of both positive and negative emotions during their interactions, exerts vital significance on relationship quality as well. Certain studies have also highlighted that husbands expression of emotionality is not influenced by social factors (Lavee & Ben Ari, 2004).

Furthermore, on the account of several empirical evidences, the truth has been highlighted that older couples are less expressive of negative emotionality and are more affectionate than younger couples whereas, middle aged couples are less affectionate and more expressive of negative emotionality (Levenson & Gottman, 1985). This finding has drawn our attention to the fact that age group and duration of married relationship has been proved crucial in exploring the intensity of emotion expressivity of married population.

However, the above mentioned findings on expression of positive and negative emotionality and associated socio demographic variables like age, gender and duration of marriage are exclusively based on research data from western and developed nations. Furthermore, there is also scarcity of scientific researches that have considered the effect of several other important demographic variables like nuclear and joint family system, arrange marriage and marriage of choice, education level and profession to study emotional expression of married males and females. Furthermore, few earlier mentioned evidences also depicts that in western cultures, multiple studies have rendered different incongruous findings regarding exploration of factors influencing the emotion expression of married individuals (Rauer & Volling, 2005).

It is worth mentioning here that in Pakistan the concept of expression of emotions has emerged only quite recently as compared to western world. Despite the fact that a few

indigenous qualitative explorations have discovered that Pakistani married women are more inclined towards the restriction of negative emotions within a married relationship, mainly to achieve social desirability and positive self impression. But still indigenous literature depicts lack of consistent findings that assess the essential role of demographic variables in order to explore that construct of emotion expressivity and its multiple facets. Furthermore, our study would be the first one that exclusively documents the impact of important demographics of married individuals in understanding their emotion processes.

The Present Study

The focus of the present study is to explore the impact of socio demographic variables on the expression of multiple emotions (positive, negative and impulse strength) within a marital relationship. We aim to find that how the level of emotion expressivity is influenced by gender, age, duration of marriage, professional and educational background, family system and nature of marriage.

Method

Participants

A national sample of (N=1002) volunteer married individuals (Males= 433,43.2%; and Females= 596, 56.8%) was recruited from major five cities of Pakistan by means of convenience sampling method. Individuals in the sample were neither divorced nor separated and all were living with their respective spouses. All the respondents were married at least for 1 year and all of them had minimum one child either son or daughter. Respondent's age range was about 20-80 years. 45.6% of the participants lived in joint family system in and 45.6% lived in nuclear family system. Both the family systems were part of urban areas of the country. The participants were

all Muslims and all were educated (minimum 10 and maximum 22 years of formal education)

With respect to profession, the respondents were house wives (22.1%), educationists (28.6%),

entrepreneurs (11.2%) and job holders in private or government sectors (34.1%). Among the

participants, 18.6 % were committed in marital relationship that they identified as "love

marriages" and 71.1% identified their marriages as "arranged" (marriages happened according to

their parent's will instead of their own).

Measures

Emotion Expressivity Questionnaire

Berkeley Emotion Expressivity Questionnaire (BEQ) developed by Gross & John, (1995)

was used to assess multiple facets of emotional expressivity i.e. expression of positive emotions,

expression of negative emotions and strength of impulse reactions. The measure was adapted and

translated in Urdu version for clear understanding of the Pakistani sample. Each item of the scale

is scored on 5 point scale where 1= strongly agree, 2= agree, 3= neutral, 4 = disagree and 5=

strongly disagree. The BEQ yields a total score in addition to 3 subscales for Impulse Strength,

Positive Expressivity, and Negative Expressivity. The Total scale has an internal consistency of

.82 to .86 and the three subscales have had internal consistencies ranging between .65 to .80.

The test-retest reliability of the BEQ is .86. BEQ scores correlate well with self-described and

partner-reported emotional expressiveness as well as the direct observation of the expressivity in

laboratory settings (Gross & John 1995; Gross & John, 1997).

Demographic Profile

Demographic form consisted of information about the respondent's gender, age, education, profession, monthly income, number of children, age of youngest child, duration of marriage, nature of marriage (love or arrange) family system (nuclear or joint) and general health.

Procedure

All the participants of the current study were approached personally and via acquaintances for the completion of research questionnaire and demographic information sheet. They were briefed about the purpose, objectives and the rationale of the study and were assured that the collected information would be kept confidential and would be utilized for the research purpose only. Besides the written instructions printed at the beginning of each booklet, the respondents were also instructed verbally as how to respond to various items in the booklet. Each participant was given two days to complete the questionnaire. The researcher personally collected all the questionnaires back from the respondents. All the participants were thanked for sparing their time and sharing their personal information for the purpose of research.

Table 1 is to be inserted here

Results

Table 2, 3 & 4 is to be inserted here.

Discussion

The aim of our study was to evaluate the significance of socio demographic variables on expression of various facets of emotions from married individual's perspective. In a sample of husbands 433 and 569 wives, we examined whether husbands' and wives' tendency to express or conceal positive or negative emotions and the strength of their impulse reactions is influenced by their gender, age, duration of married relationship, number of children, family system and nature of their marriage. Our results proved to be an illustration of the importance of emotion expressivity and its relationship with demographic variables of married people. The current results confirm expected assumptions that gender (Levenson & Gottman, 1983; Schapp, 1982), level of education and profession exert impact on husband and wife's inclination towards expression of emotions. On the other hand, impact of age, nuclear or joint family system, nature of marriage and duration of married years was, surprisingly, not found to be significant over the emotional expression of married individuals.

As according to previous researches (Cartensen, Gottman & Levenson, 1995b; Rehman, 2009) that marked gender as an important demographic variable to influence expressivity of emotions in married relationship, our current research also confirmed this scientific notion that level of emotion expressivity within a married relationship is effected by gender. Since we have assessed multiple dimensions of emotions, analysis of gender has revealed that there is no significant difference between males and females regarding positive emotionality. On the other hand, husbands and wives show significant difference in negative emotionality and impulse strength. Married men are higher in both negative emotionality and impulse intensity as compared to married women.

Moreover, our study reveals that higher level of education is related to higher positive expressivity, higher negative expressivity and higher impulse intensity. Among all the three

categories of education, highest level (M.phil, Ph.D) category is found to be the most expressive of all types of emotions. This might be due to the fact that as individual's level of education increases, he or she may learn to express and communicate rather than to conceal or mask inward feelings. Since, the comparison has not been done on the basis of marital status of the individuals regarding level of education; therefore, it cannot be declared with firmness that how factors within a marital relationship are operating in conjunction with the education level and influencing the individual's emotional expressivity. The finding of the study also leads to the assumption that educated married males and females possess the inclination to communicate and express whatever they are feeling. In view of the fact that, there is not single indigenous empirical evidence in terms of level of education and emotion expressivity among married adults; therefore, more indigenous work is required to authenticate the results of the current study. However, the present study evidently reveals the impact of education as an imperative demographic in monitoring the level of husband's and wives emotional expressivity.

Our scientific investigation also explored the impact of profession as an important socio demographic variable on the emotion expressivity of the married sample. Findings clearly divulge that except for the positive emotion expressivity, other two facets (negative expressivity and impulse strength) are strongly influenced by the nature of profession. Therefore, married individuals' involvement in their respective professions increases their tendency to be emotionally expressive and moreover, nature of professional experience has significant impact on negative expressivity as well as impulse intensity. in the midst of all the categories, teachers ,mentors and entrepreneurs possess higher level of negative emotion expressivity as well as impulse strength as compared to house wives. This finding has a bidirectional understanding which indicates that within a married relationship, being professional is important as each

spouse' learns to communicate negative emotions and exhibits the ability to control the impulses. In lieu of both the two significant categories, i.e. education and profession, a combined result of both the demographics could have rendered more evident findings.

We came up with several unexpected findings regarding some important soci demographic variables that we tried to capture within the course of present empirical exploration. Taking an account of indigenous context, it has been observed that individuals who tie the marital relationship as a matter of their own liking, that is termed as "love marriage" can be more expressive of their emotionality or likely to conceal their several negative emotions whereas, those having "arrange marriages" (marriages that result as the matter of liking of their parents) are not restricted and defensive in expression of emotions and express them fearlessly (Qureshi, Charsley & Shaw, 2014). Previously established scientific tendencies have revealed that in collectivistic culture like Pakistan where mostly mate selection is characterized by the families of the individuals, and marriage of choice is considered deviation from the norm, the level of satisfaction and emotional expression is observed to be different and vary in every case (Dion, 1993; Arif & Fatima, 2015). Our scientific study, however, has depicted astonishing findings regarding nature of marriage. There is no significant difference in the intensity of emotional expression in either love or arranged marriage. The present study, therefore, contradicts the existing body of logical research regarding expression of emotional intensity and nature of marriage being held. Our research came up with contradictory findings when we assumed husband's and wive's age to be fundamental factor to influence their level of emotional expressivity. Unexpectedly, we found out that age range from 20-80 did not make any difference in the respondent's ability to communicate their emotional experience.

Our scientific investigation also explored the collision effect of years of married life and family system on intensity of all facets of emotional reactions. The findings, contrary to our expectations, depicted that husband's and wife's level of emotional expression is not influenced by the difference that they live in either joint family or nuclear family. Moreover, the fact also do not make any significant difference that the respondent is married for how many years. The expression of emotions do not appear to increase or decrease with the time period elapsed within the marital relationship. Reasons for differences and no difference still need to be explored in future explorations. However, there might be confounding factors like age differences between spouses, which has not been explored in the current study, and the age at which the individual got married, that might be responsible for no difference in expression of emotions even when controlled by nature of marriage, family system, or duration of married years.

Conclusion

In sum, the results suggest a complex association between socio demographic variables and emotion expressivity. Conclusion can be drawn from our study that complex phenomena of expressivity of various kinds of emotions are significantly influenced by socio demographic variables like, gender, level of education and profession within a married relationship. However, several variables like nature of marriage, family system, years of marriage and age were found to be non significant despite the essential cultural significance of these variables in monitoring the intensity of emotional reactions.

Limitations & Suggestions

The study has certain strengths as well as some limitations. In order to get more credible information, data should have been taken from separated and divorced individuals as well for the sake of comparative perception of emotion expressivity of husbands and wives. Moreover, responses from couples are also needed to be obtained to get an awareness of spousal tendency to express emotions towards their respective spouse. Furthermore, a few more demographics like, age when get married, or married to an acquaintance or a stranger etc. could also be added to get a more comprehensive cultural and indigenous insight into the mechanism of emotions of married individuals. Moreover, besides demographic and social variables, several personality and close relationship variables (love style, intimacy etc) could also be incorporated for all-inclusive scientific approach towards emotion expressivity.

Implications & Future Directions

Based on demographic understanding of emotional expressivity within an indigenous perspective, the present study adds to our understanding of emotion mechanism operating in a collectivistic culture like Pakistan. Expression of emotions to one's partner is essential in maintaining a working relationship and the mental health providers would probably benefit from understanding the crucial role of demographics in understanding emotionality. The results of this study will, therefore, be of practical use for professionals who deal with intimate relationships specifically marriages and family issues in fields such as counseling psychology, social work.

A critical area for future investigation is to examine the factors that lead to high intensity of impulse strength and negative emotionality among husbands. As mentioned earlier, certain personality factors are required to be explored in detail for a better understanding of emotion

expressivity. Moreover, future researches should also explore critical variables that appear to be non significant in our current study. Really do nature of marriage, duration of marital years, and family systems have no influence over husband's and wife's level of emotion expressivity or there are any confounding variables that are operating beneath? Or the whole story may be attributed to personality or relationship variables? Or a longitudinal study should be conducted to explore the years of married life and its impact on the emotion expressivity of the spouses? Consequently, the present study has paved a way for future researches to challenge the intricacy and unpredictability of the present research regarding emotion expressivity.

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Tables & Figures

Table 1

Demographic and Background Characteristics of Wives and Husbands

Characteristics	Wives			Husbands		
	M	*SD*	N (%)	*M*	*SD*	N (%)
Age(in yrs)	35.52	9.58		40.88	10.73	
20-30			226(39.7)			72(16.66)
31-40			209(36.7)			174(40.2)
41-50			98(17.2)			111(25.6)
51-60			26(4.6)			55()12.7
61-70			10(1.8)			14(3.2)
71-80						6(1.4)
Education	3.27	1.27		3.14	1.32	

	Mean	SD	n(%)	Mean	SD	n(%)
Matric			86(15.1)			80(18.5)
Intermdite			60(10.5)			51(11.8)
Bachelor			105(18.5)			72(16.6)
Masters			250(43.9)			187(43.2)
M.Phill			52(9.1)			29(6.1)
Ph.D			10(1.8)			9(2.1)
Profession	1.98	1.06		3.41	0.77	
Housewife			215(37.8)			
Teacher			213(37.4)			77(17.8)
Business			17(3.0)			97(22.4)
Job			93(16.3)			250(57.7)
Familysys	1.49	0.55		1.53	0.5	
Neclear			271(47.6)			186(43.0)
Joint			247(43.4)			210(48.5)
YofMariag	12.28	9.57		14.08	10.5	
1 to 10			309(54.3)			207(47.8)
11 to 20			150(26.4)			115(26.6)
21 to 30			80(14.1)			76(17.6)
31 to 40			20(3.5)			27(6.2)
41 to 50			6(1.1)			5(1.2)
tyofMarge	1.34	0.65		1.39	0.64	
Love			423(79.4)			289(66.7)
Arrange			88(15.5)			98(22.6)
GenHealth	3.94	0.79		4.1	0.72	
V poor			5(.9)			
Poor			10(1.8)			4(.9)
Normal			133(23.4)			76(17.6)
Good			275(48.3)			206(17.6)

| v good | 134(23.6) | 126(29.1) |

Note: 1002 married individuals responded to the questionnaire.

Table 2

Mean Differences of husbands and wives on Negative Emotion Expressivity and Impulse Strength (N=1002)

	Husbands (N=433)		Wives (N= 569)				95%		
Variables	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*P*	UL	LL	Cohen's d
Negative Exp	15.45	3.76	15.00	3.61	1.90	.05	.90	-.01	0.12
Impulse Strength	14.76	4.81	13.85	4.54	3.04	.00	1.49	.32	0.19

Note. Exp= Expressivity; UL= Upper Limit; LL= Lower Limit.

Mean differences and *t*-test indicates that level of negative emotional expressivity and impulse strength is higher in husbands as compared to wives.

Table 3

Mean Differences of various categories of Level of Education on multiple facets of Emotion Expressivity

(N=1002)

Variables	Metric & F.A ($n = 215$) $M(SD)$	B.A & Masters ($n = 614$) $M (SD)$	M.Phill & PhD ($n = 100$) $M (SD)$	F	i > j	i − j	95% CI LL	UL	η^2
Pos.Emo	8.36(2.87)	8.93(2.79)	9.32(2.90)	5.55***	2 > 1	-.56**	-1.06	-.07	.02
					3 >1	.95**	-1.74	-.15	
Neg. Emo	14.06(3.84)	15.58(3.52)	16.05(3.24)	20.20***	2 > 1	-1.51***	2.14	-.89	.21
					3 >1	1.99***	.98	2.99	
Imp. Stre	13.00(4.60)	14.52(4.57)	15.88(4.88)	17.44***	2>1	-1.52***	-2.32	-.72	.20

3>1	-2.87***	-4.16	-1.58
3 > 2	-1.35*	.16	2.54

*Note.*Pos Emo= Postive Expressivity; Neg Emo= Negative Expressivity; Imp Stre= Impulse strength; $\eta^{2=}$ Eta Square

(effect size for *F* statistics).

Table 4

Mean Differences of various categories of Level of Education on multiple facets of Emotion Expressivity

(N=1002)

Variables	HouseWife (*n* = 215)	Teacher (*n* = 290)	Business (*n* = 114)	Job (*n*= 343)		i > j	i – j	95% CI		
	M(SD)	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*F*			LL	UL	η^2
N.E.	14.38(3.54)	15.55(3.49)	14.89(4.16)	15.48 (3.63)	5.47***	2>1	-1.16***	-2.03	-.30	.01
						4>1	-1.09***	-1.93	-.26	
I.S.	13.53 (4.48)	14.44(4.52)	13.64 (4.80)	14.71(4.74)	3.66**	4>1	1.17*	-2.24	-.11	.01

Note. N.E= Negative Emotionality; I.S= Impulse Strength.

Table 3 and 4 indicates Mean Differences of various categories of education and profession on multiple

facets of emotion expressivity of married individuals. Results illustrate that married individuals having

highest degrees of education posses high level of positive emotionality, high level of negative emotionality and high level of impulse strength. On the other hand, in terms of profession, teachers (both married males and females) exhibit high level of negative emotionality and high level of impulse strength. Post hoc analysis Bonferroni was computed for significant F-values to explore the difference among significant variables.

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