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Relationship Quality among Married Couples

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Abstract

What factors impact relationship quality among married couples? To answer this question, a regression model was estimated using a dataset created by the National Center for Family and Marriage Research through a survey of Married and Cohabiting Couples. Based on the regression, we find that there is no evidence of multicollinearity, serial correlation, or heteroskedasticity and that 49% of the variation in Y can be explained by the regression adjusted for degrees of freedom. The conclusions of this study were that listening, communicating well, showing affection and love, and encouragement are all important factors in determining relationship quality of married couples.

Relevant Literature

- Brown, Susan L.; Booth, Alan. "Cohabitation Versus Marriage: A Comparison of relationship quality." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 58.3 (1996): 668-678.
 - This study found that cohabitators have poorer relationship quality.
- Bulanda, J. R., & Brown, S. L. "Race-Ethnic Differences in Marital Quality and Divorce" *Social Science Research* 36.3 (2007):945-967.
 - They used a similar dependent variable in their research.
- Conger, Katherine J; Conger, Rand D; Elder, Glen H; Lorenz, Frederick O; Simons, Ronald L;Whitbeck, Les B; Huck, Shirley; Melby, Janet N. "Linking Economic Hardship to Marital Quality and Instability." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 52.3 (1990): 643-656.
 - This study used a similar dependent variable. Their dependent variable was how spouses see their marital quality.
 - Their results suggested that economic conditions do not directly influence the couples' interactions with one another.
- Hardie, Jessica Halliday; Lucas, Amy. "Economic Factors and Relationship Quality Among Young Couples: Comparing Cohabitation and Marriage." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 72.5 (2010): 1141-1154.
 - They used the same dependent variable for their research.
 - Used variables such as race and age.

Data

The data I retrieved was from a study done by the National Center for Family and Marriage Research in 2010. The data set was based on a survey of 2,150 married and cohabiting couples. <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/DSDR/studies/31322>

Variables

The variables used were as follows: the dependent variable of relationship quality using a rating of 1-10, number of children under the age of 18 in the household, a dummy variable for how satisfied the person was with how well his or her spouse listens, a dummy for if the spouse showed love and affection, a dummy for if the spouse gives encouragement, a dummy for if the person thinks the spouse will not cheat, a dummy for if the couple avoids discussing difficult topics, the number of times the person had been married, a dummy for whether the person had lived with the spouse before marriage, a dummy for the age of the person, a dummy for the type of home the individual lived in such as a one family home, a duplex, an apartment, and a mobile home, a dummy for family income, a dummy for the employment status of the person, a dummy for whether the person had a college education or not, and a dummy variable to account for the different races of white, black, and Hispanic.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Biological children under age 18 in household - X ₁₁	1403	0	8	.88	1.152
How would you rate your relationship with your current spouse/partner	1403	1	10	8.62	1.598
How many times have you been married- X ₂₁	1403	1	40	1.41	2.059
Listening- X ₃₁	1403	.00	1.00	.8617	.34531
Affection- X ₄₁	1403	.00	1.00	.8867	.31711
Encourage- X ₅₁	1403	.00	1.00	.8824	.32225
NotCheat- X ₆₁	1403	.00	1.00	.9330	.25011
Avoid_Difficult_Topics- X ₇₁	1403	.00	1.00	.1732	.37856
Live_with- X ₈₁	1403	.00	1.00	.5118	.50004
Employment- X ₉₁	1403	.00	1.00	.7142	.45196
young_age- X ₁₀₁	1403	.00	1.00	.0912	.28804
middle_age- X ₁₁₁	1403	.00	1.00	.3820	.48606
uppermiddle_age- X ₁₂₁	1403	.00	1.00	.4326	.49562
Onefamilyhome- X ₁₃₁	1403	.00	1.00	.8375	.36905
Duplex- X ₁₄₁	1403	.00	1.00	.0613	.23996
Apartment- X ₁₅₁	1403	.00	1.00	.0684	.25256
Mobilehome- X ₁₆₁	1403	.00	1.00	.0285	.16648
LowIncome- X ₁₇₁	1403	.00	1.00	.1076	.31002
HighIncome- X ₁₈₁	1403	.00	1.00	.4127	.49249
College_Education- X ₁₉₁	1403	.00	1.00	.7113	.45330
Black- X ₂₀₁	1403	.00	1.00	.0207	.14233
White- X ₂₁₁	1403	.00	1.00	.8489	.35828
Hispanic- X ₂₂₁	1403	.00	1.00	.0684	.25256
Valid N (listwise)	1403				

Results

$$Y_i = 4.787 - .048X_{11i} - .038X_{21i} + 1.267X_{31i} + 1.338X_{41i} + 1.148X_{51i} + .937X_{61i} - .240X_{71i} - .062X_{81i} + .094X_{91i} - .301X_{101i} - .193X_{111i} - .130X_{121i} + .180X_{171i} + .071X_{181i} - .208X_{191i} - .354X_{201i} + .021X_{211i} + .234X_{221i}$$

t= -1.560 -2.554 11.383 11.326 10.290 7.063 -2.899

(.031) (.015) (.111) (.118) (.112) (.133) (.083)

(.063) (.072) (.150) (.125) (.113) (.108) (.067) (.071)

t= -.973 1.304 -2.015 -1.541 -1.157 1.667 1.069 -2.926

(.247) (.128) (.170)

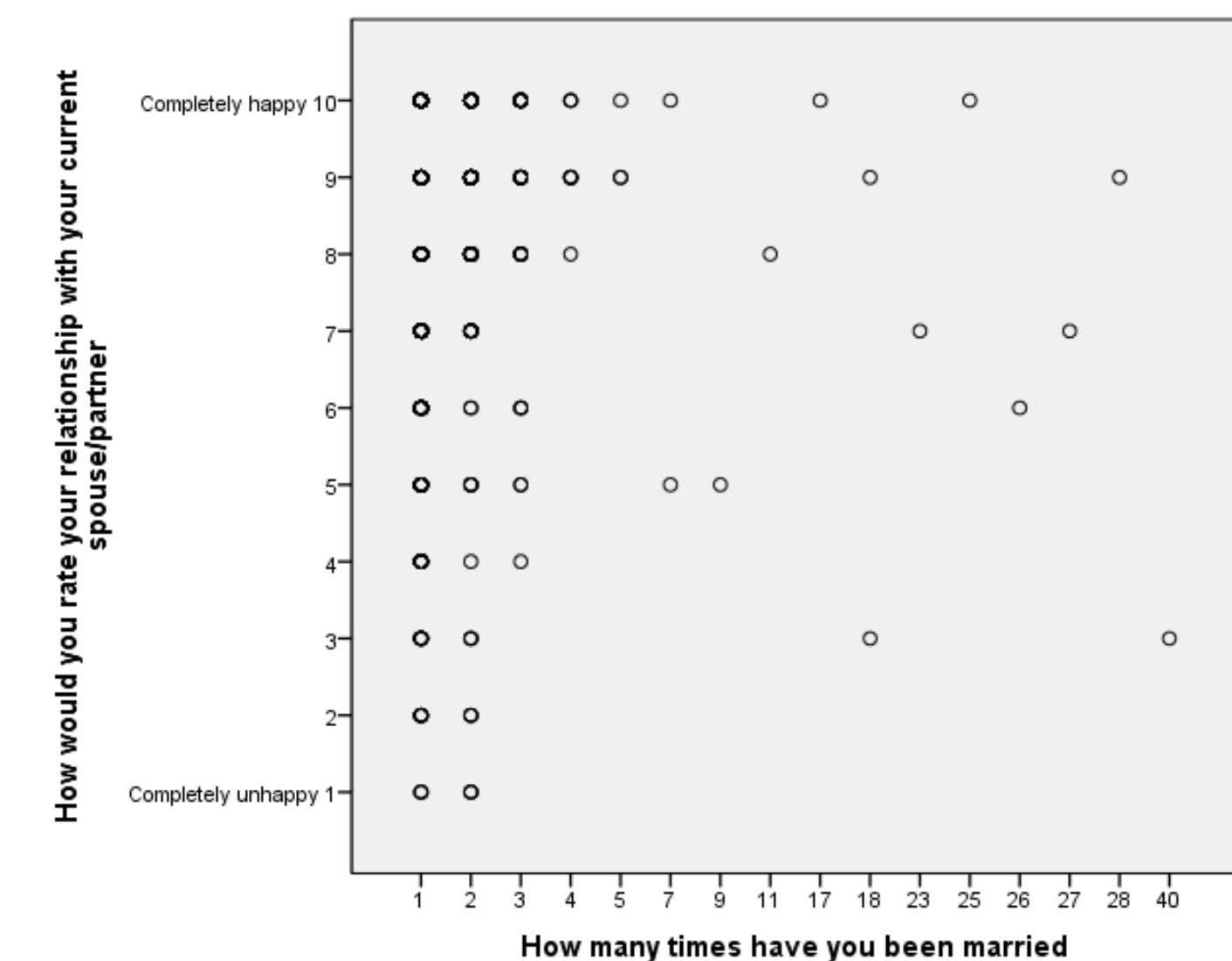
t= -1.433 .164 1.371

n=1403
Adjusted r-squared=.489
F=84.716

Tests

- To test for Serial Correlation, I used a Durbin Watson d-test. I found a value of 1.666, so this means there is no positive serial correlation.
- To test for multicollinearity, I ran a VIF test and found four variables that showed evidence of severe multicollinearity which means they have VIFs greater than 5 (one family home- 32.240, duplex-14.578, apartment-16.202, and mobile home- 7.626). These high values are not something to worry about because we often see multicollinearity when there are several dummy variables for one specific thing.
- To test for Heteroskedasticity, I used a Park Test on the number of marriages variable. I chose this variable because its range was a lot larger than I expected. This test showed that there was no heteroskedasticity.

Graph for Heteroskedasticity



Conclusion

- It is apparent that great listening skills, showing love and affection, giving encouragement, and being able to discuss difficult topics with your spouse are all important factors in determining the relationship quality of a married couple.
- Since many of these factors are personal choices that only the person in the relationship or marriage can change and work on, the policies that can be suggested cannot be directed toward the government, so we direct our attention to the married couples themselves and make suggestions as to what they can do to increase their relationship quality. First, people in relationships need to learn to express their feelings in a way that shows they care. Another piece of advice for these couples is for them to make an effort to listen and talk within their relationship no matter how difficult it is to talk about. Doing both of these things will make the overall relationship quality better by giving both people confidence in the relationship and help keep the relationship more positive.
- For further research, we could study interracial couples or gay couples. We could also study cohabiting couples instead of married couples

Acknowledgement

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