



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



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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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

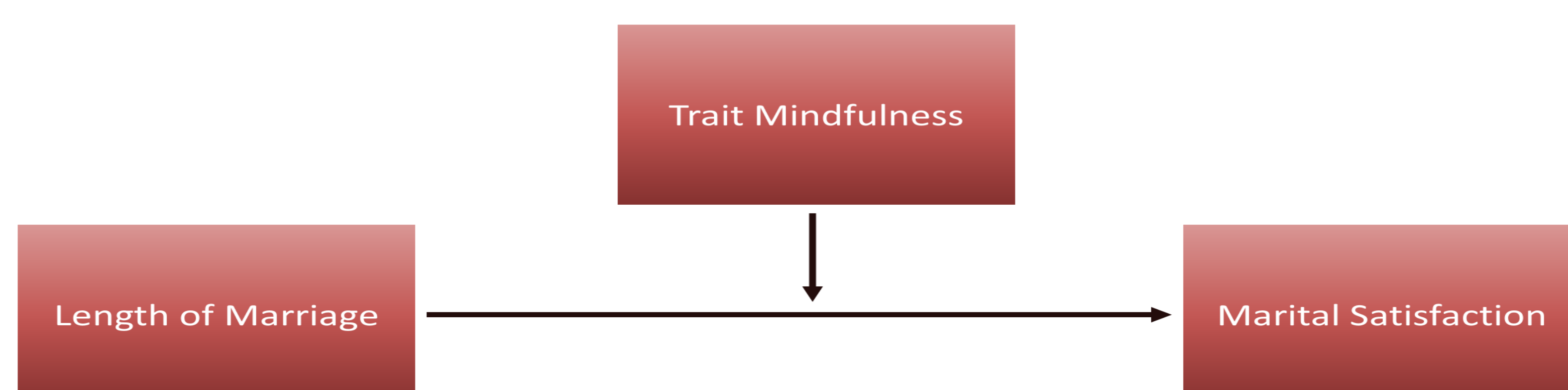
- Research has consistently demonstrated a positive relationship between trait mindfulness and romantic relationship quality (e.g. Burpee & Langer, 2005)
- The positive relationship between mindfulness and adaptive emotional regulation (e.g. Hill & Updegraff, 2011) suggests that mindfulness may serve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

THE CURRENT STUDY

Study Purpose

Although previous research has found that both length of marriage and mindfulness predict marital satisfaction, research has yet to explore the interaction between the two. Thus, our study contributes to the existing literature by exploring the relationship between length of marriage and marital satisfaction, moderated by mindfulness. We hypothesized that (a) length of marriage would positively predict marital satisfaction and (b) mindfulness will moderate this relationship, such that higher trait mindfulness will lead to higher marital satisfaction in both short and longer term marriages.

FIGURE 1: MODERATION MODEL



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)

TABLE 1 & TABLE 2

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for Main Study Variables (N = 331)

| Length of Marriage | N | Trait Mindfulness M(SD) | Marital Satisfaction M(SD) |
|--------------------|-----|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| < 5 years | 78 | 78.68 (11.71) | 5.31(3.67) |
| 5-15 years | 154 | 80.03 (11.93) | 5.24 (3.06) |
| 16-24 years | 55 | 84.59 (12.87) | 5.80 (4.84) |
| 25+ years | 44 | 84.87 (10.40) | 4.77 (2.75) |

Table 2
Moderation Results for the Effects of Length of Marriage and Trait Mindfulness on Marital Satisfaction

| | B | SE | t | p |
|-----------------|-------|-------|--------|------|
| Constant | 3.400 | 3.641 | .933 | .352 |
| Gender | .792 | .889 | .890 | .374 |
| Age | .074 | .038 | 1.947 | .053 |
| LENGTH (X1) | 6.578 | 3.631 | 1.812 | .071 |
| LENGTH (X2) | 4.333 | 4.551 | .952 | .342 |
| LENGTH (X3) | 5.279 | 5.713 | .924 | .356 |
| Mindfulness (W) | -.024 | .038 | -.624 | .533 |
| X1*Mindfulness | -.088 | .046 | -1.926 | .055 |
| X2*Mindfulness | -.057 | .055 | -1.033 | .303 |
| X3*Mindfulness | -.087 | .069 | -1.264 | .207 |

Note. N = 331. Gender: Female = 0, male = 1. Length of Marriage: LENGTH X1 = < 5 years vs. 5 -15 years, LENGTH X2 = < 5 years vs. 16-24 years, LENGTH X3 = < 5 years vs. 25+ years.

RESULTS

Primary Analyses

- Using the SPSS macro, PROCESS (Hayes, 2014), we tested our moderation model. Length of marriage was specified as a multicategorical 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
- Moreover, there were no significant interactions between length of marriage and trait mindfulness (*Table 2*)

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.