

The Impact of The Companionship Of Spouse On the Elderly's Life Satisfaction

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This study attempts to see the impact of companionship of spouse on the life satisfaction of elderly people. The sample consisted of randomly selected 50 elderly above the age of 60 years, who were financially independent from their offspring. The scale for measuring the role of companionship of spouse was prepared by the investigator himself. Diener et al. (1985)'s well-being scale was used to measure life satisfaction. The sample was dichotomized on the basis of median of scores on 'companionship of spouse'. The two groups thus formed were (1) High companionship of spouse (N=25) and (2) Low companionship of spouse (N=25). Results indicated that there is a significant impact of companionship of spouse on life satisfaction of the elderly ($p < .01$). This shows that people with higher companionship of spouse were more satisfied with their lives in comparison to those who enjoyed less companionship with their spouse.

KEYWORDS: Spouse, Life Satisfaction, Elderly, Companionship, Marriage.

Marriage is an important milestone in an individual's life. The companionship of spouse is an integral part of marriage. An understanding and supportive spouse can serve as a buffer or as an agent for the coping mechanism for the stressed individual (Seers, McGee, Serey and Green, 2003). This relationship makes him feel needed, wanted, desired, admired, appreciated, approved and belonged to a degree not available in any other human relationship (Coleman, 1964; Kumar and Makwana, 1998). It serves as "emotional island in the area of stress" (Lohman, 1997). The independence of each nuclear family from its own kin and the relative social isolation of urban households makes the spouses the primary companionship and sources of emotional substances.

Although the companionship of spouse plays an important role in the well-being of individual at all age groups, in old age its importance increases more. The first important adjustment around family relationship elderly people must make, is establishing good relationship with their spouse. With the role change from worker to retiree, most people have the opportunity to spend more time at home than they ever had before. If their relationships with their spouse are good, this will contribute to the happiness of both. If however, their relationships are strained, friction is increased by constant

contacts. As is true of other times in the life span, happiness in old age too depends upon the fulfillment of the three 'A's of happiness—acceptance, affection, and achievement. If all the three 'A's are being received in the companionship of spouse, then it may lead to the happiness and life satisfaction of elderly people. This study is an attempt to investigate the impact of companionship of spouse on the life satisfaction of the elderly. Method Problem To study the impact of companionship of spouse on the life satisfaction of the elderly, it's hypothesized that there is a significant positive impact of companionship of spouse on the life satisfaction of the elderly. Sample The sample consisted of randomly selected 50 elderly above the age of 60 years who were financially independent from their offspring. Subjects from only middle to high socio-economic status were selected.

Measures

1. Life Satisfaction: Well-being measured by Diener et al consisting of 20 items were used in this study.

Reliability of The Test

The obtained indices of different types of reliabilities are as follows:

Inter-Rater Reliability	Inter-Scorer Reliability	Test-Retest Reliability
0.86	1.0	0.86

Validity of the Test: Criterion related validity coefficient of life satisfaction scale against the criterion of neuroticism was found to be $r=-0.75$ which is highly significant. This indicates that as the neuroticism decreases feeling of life satisfaction or well -being increases. Thus the test has high criterion related validity.

2. The scale for measuring the role of companionship of spouse was prepared by the investigator himself. The scale consists of 20 items and answers were obtained through 4 multiple options.

Results and Discussions

Table 1

Comparison of Spouse	N	Df	Life Satisfaction Mean	Life Satisfaction SD	t
Low	25	38	14.7	5.57	2.95*
High	25	38	19.15	3.79	

On the basis of Median of scores of companionship of spouse the total sample of 50 elderly was dichotomized into two groups: High companionship of spouse (above median), and Low companionship of spouse (below median). The mean life satisfaction scores of these two groups were then compared. Table 1 shows that there is a significant difference between life satisfaction of the two groups. Low companionship of spouse has less life satisfaction (Mean value

=14.7, S.D.=5.57) in comparison to High companionship of spouse group (Mean value=19.15 and S.D.=3.79).

The result of the present study shows that the $t=2.95$ ($df=38$) is significant at 0.01 ($p<0.01$) level. The researcher therefore concludes that there is a positive significant effect of companionship of spouse on the life satisfaction of the elderly. Through the above mentioned result, it can be concluded that companionship of spouse is an important support that creates joy and a sense of belonging through shared time together and expression of love and affection. Also it provides assistance such as financial support or help with chores, through all life's changes. The cause of more life satisfaction for older couples may be that there are many opportunities to enjoy their lives together and to grow closer. In addition, spouses provide extraordinary companionship and support when health and mobility decline and a partner needs assistance.

The significance of companionship of spouse can be estimated through the study of Hess and Soldo (1985). As it was pointed out in the study, the longer the relationships the more salient it is to self-identity and the harder to disengage from or admit failure.

As the companionship of spouse is an important unit of social support, studies by Mukamaland Soldz (2008) have reported positive relationship of social support with well-being and happiness in old age.

As the findings of the present study show that there is a positive significant impact of companionship of spouse upon life satisfaction of the elderly, it supports the view by Seers et al., (1983) that an understanding and supportive spouse can serve as a buffer or an agent for the coping mechanism of the stressed individual.

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