

Flourishing in Marriage among Arab Couples in Israel: The Impact of Capitalization Support and Accommodation on Positive and Negative Affect

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Abstract : Background and purpose: 'Flourishing in marriage' is a concept refers to married individuals' high positivity ratio regarding their marriage, namely greater reported positive than negative emotions. The study proposes a different approach to marriage which emphasizes the place of the individual himself as largely responsible for his personal flourishing within marriage. Accordingly, the individual's desire to preserve and strengthen his marriage largely determines the marital behavior in a way that will contribute to his marriage success (Actor Effect), regardless the contribution of his or her partner to his marriage success (Partner Effect). Another assumption was that flourishing in marriage could be achieved by two separate processes, where capitalization support increases the positive marriage's evaluations and accommodation decreases the negative one. A theoretical model was constructed, whereby individuals who were committed to their marriage were hypothesized as employing self-control skills by way of two dynamic processes. First, individual's higher degree of 'capitalization supportive responses' - supportive responses to the partner's sharing of positive personal experiences - was hypothesized as increasing one's positive evaluations of marriage and thereby one's positivity ratio. Second, individual's higher degree of 'accommodation' responses - the ability during conflict situations to control the impulse to respond destructively and instead to respond constructively - was hypothesized as decreasing one's negative evaluations of marriage and thereby increasing one's positivity ratio. Methods: Participants were 156 heterosexual Arab couples from different regions of Israel. The mean period of marriage was 10.19 (SD=7.83), ages were 31.53 years for women (SD=8.12) and 36.80 years for men (SD=8.07). Years of education were 13.87 for women (SD=2.84) and 13.23 years for men (SD=3.45). Each participant completed seven questionnaires: socio-demographic, self-control skills, commitment, capitalization support, accommodation, marital quality, positive and negative affect. Using statistical analyses adapted to dyadic research design, firstly descriptive statistics were calculated and preliminary tests were performed. Next, dyadic model based on the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) were tested using structural equation modeling (SEM). Results: The assumption according to which flourishing in marriage can be achieved by two processes was confirmed. All of the Actor Effect hypotheses were confirmed. Participants with higher self-control used more capitalization support and accommodation responses. Among husbands, unlike wives, these correlations were stronger when the individual's commitment level was higher. More capitalization supportive responses were found to increase positive evaluations of marriage, and greater spousal accommodation was found to decrease negative evaluations of marriage. High positive evaluations and low negative evaluations were found to increase positivity ratio. Not according to expectation, four partner effect paths were found significant. Conclusions and Implications: The present findings coincide with the positive psychology approach that emphasizes human strengths. The uniqueness of this study is its proposal that individuals are largely responsible for their personal flourishing in marriage. This study demonstrated that marital flourishing can be achieved by two processes, where capitalization increases the positive and accommodation decreases the negative. Practical implications include the need to construct interventions that enhance self-control skills for employment of capitalizing responsiveness and accommodation processes.

Keywords : accommodation, capitalization support, commitment, flourishing in marriage, positivity ratio, self-control skills

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