

Family Functioning and Mental Well-Being of Married Couples In Ongata Rongai Ward, Kajiado County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed at examining family functioning and mental wellbeing of married couples in Ongata Rongai Ward, Kajiado County, Kenya. The specific objectives of the study were to: assess the relationship between family communication patterns and mental well-being of the couples, establish the influence of family problem-solving techniques on the mental well-being of the couples, investigate the relationship between family behavior control and mental well-being of the couples, and determine the influence of family affection on the mental well-being of the couples in Ongata Rongai Ward, Kajiado. The study was guided by the Bowen's System Family theory. The study adopted convergent parallel design since both quantitative and qualitative data was collected and analyzed so as to triangulate the results. The target population were 1800 couples in Ongata Rongai aged between 18 and 60 years old, while the sample size constituted 328 couples. In sampling primary respondents (married couples), stratified random sampling technique was applied. The first level of sampling involved stratifying Ongata Rongai Ward into the four zones. Consequently, random sampling technique was applied to select respondents from each stratum/zone. The study employed the Couple functionality Assessment Tool for predictor variables and the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale for response variable. Key Informant interview schedules were used to collect data from couples with highest mental wellbeing. SPSS version 23 was used to compute descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and ordinary Least Squares, whereas qualitative data was analyzed through a thematic approach and presented along quantitative data. The results revealed statistically significant associations between family communication patterns ($r=.366, p=0.000$), problem-solving ($r=.673, p=0.000$), family affection ($r=.447, p=0.000$), behavior control ($r=.685, p=0.000$) and mental well-being. Effective and positive communication within the family was found to be crucial for promoting mental well-being, while problem-solving strategies and family affection were also key factors contributing to marital satisfaction and happiness. Based on these findings, it is recommended that interventions and support programs focus on enhancing communication skills, promoting effective problem-solving techniques, nurturing family affection, and addressing challenges related to family behavior control.

Keywords: Family communication, problem solving techniques, mental well-being, behaviour control, family functioning

INTRODUCTION

The family plays a crucial role in fostering healthy interactions and effective problem-solving among its members. A dysfunctional family is likely to impact the mental well-being of couples, with marital conflict identified as a prevalent issue globally, causing significant harm (Smith et al., 2021). Negative communication forms, such as verbal abuse, silence, criticism, sarcasm, threats, and unresponsiveness, can contribute to marital dysfunction and adversely affect family dynamics (Moss & Handley, 2020). Family

functioning refers to the way in which a family operates as a unit and encompasses communication, decision-making, problem-solving, roles and responsibilities, and the emotional climate within the family (Baucom et al., 2021). A family with healthy functioning is characterized by effective communication, clear boundaries, and support for each member's individual development. Conversely, a family with dysfunctional functioning may experience conflict, poor communication, and inadequate support for individual members (Nguyen et al., 2021). The quality of family functioning has been linked to the mental well-being of married couples. Research (see, among others, Potter et al., 2022; World Health Organization, 2020) indicates that couples in families with healthy functioning experience greater satisfaction in their relationship and report fewer mental health problems than those in families with dysfunctional functioning.

Effective communication has been identified as a key factor in promoting marital satisfaction and reducing stress levels in couples (Smith et al., 2021). Additionally, providing emotional support within families has been linked to a protective effect against the development of mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety. While extensive research exists on family functioning and mental well-being in married couples, there is a noticeable gap in research specific to married couples in Ongata Rongai Ward, particularly regarding the influence of unique cultural and social factors on family functioning and mental well-being in this population. The societal impact of mental health challenges among couples is significant, as dysfunctional families not only affect the well-being of the couples themselves but also have broader implications for society (Wong et al., 2022). In this context, mental well-being is conceptualized as the absence of psychological dysfunction among couples. It is imperative to assess family functioning and explore the mental well-being of couples to understand the interconnectedness between these factors within a marriage. Additionally, a re-examination of marital conflict resolution strategies among married couples is warranted to address the challenges posed by dysfunctional family dynamics.

Marital conflicts may result to family dysfunction and in turn may affect the mental well-being of couples. The statistics regarding marital conflicts around the world are alarming. According to a study by the World Health Organization (2021), the Americas have a 29.8% lifetime prevalence rate of marital conflicts, the Eastern Mediterranean has 37%, Europe has 25.4%, South East Asia is at 37.7%, and the Western Pacific stands at 24.6%. Furthermore, the study highlights that in the United States alone, 38 million women have experienced intimate partner violence in their lifetimes, with three women being killed daily by either a current or former partner. Additionally, according to research by Njeru et al. (2021), approximately 18,000 women have been killed by an intimate partner since 2003. Intimate partner violence is a significant indicator of family dysfunction.

The lifetime prevalence rate of marital conflicts in Africa is quite high, at 36.6% according to a study by the World Health Organization (2023). Sub-Saharan Africa, in particular, has a high rate of 66.7% of women in Sierra Leone experiencing serious marital conflicts. In South Africa, previous research has revealed that one out of every four women have faced some form of physical violence, and it is likely that these numbers have risen in recent years (Oparinde & Matsha, 2021). A different study found that a woman in South Africa is killed by an intimate partner every six hours (Leburu-Masigo & Kgadima, 2020)

Research in Kenya shows a high prevalence of intimate partner abuse among women. The Kenya Demographic and Health Survey as cited in Memiah et al. (2021) found that 39% of women have been abused by a partner. Additionally, the Gender Violence Recovery Centre located at the Nairobi Women's Hospital, as well as its Ongata Rongai branch, as cited in Voice of Africa (2010), reported that they receive eight new cases daily. Additionally, Makau (2023) stated that 49% of Kenyan women have experienced violence in their lifetime, with the same study reporting that the Nairobi Women's hospital receives 18 daily cases of rape and incest. It is noteworthy that many of these cases occur within the context of marriage, and the statistics suggest a growing trend in incidents of marital conflict.

Although local statistics provide important empirical expositions on the state of GBV in Kenya, there is little reflection on the place and/or relevance of family functioning as a predictor of mental well-being of married couples. A gap that the present study sought to bridge.

Statement of the Problem

The societal importance of well-functioning families is threatened by an increasing prevalence of dysfunctional family dynamics, particularly in Ongata Rongai Ward. This lack of functional families adversely impacts relationships, impedes members from fulfilling their roles, and disrupts communication. Elevated rates of violence in marriages contribute to family dysfunction in Kenya, with 49% of women reporting such experiences, potentially leading to negative societal consequences (Kassim, 2022; Makau, 2023). Dysfunctional families struggle to provide adequate support, resulting in mental health issues like depression, trauma, and anxiety, especially among children. The correlation between family dysfunction and couples' mental well-being suggests potential socioeconomic consequences, yet this relationship remains inadequately understood, particularly in the context of Ongata Rongai Ward, Kajiado County, Kenya. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the interplay between family functioning and the mental well-being of couples in the specified region.

METHODOLOGY

Convergent parallel design is adopted, where quantitative and qualitative data are collected and analysed. Consequently, the two sets of data are compared and then interpreting together. The use of this design was justified since the focus of the study was to collect numeric and narrative data for the study variables to examine the interlinkages between family functioning and mental well-being. Furthermore, this research design enabled the researcher to examine critical issues and relationship on family functioning and mental well-being of married couples. Since mixed methods approach was applied in data collection and analysis, quantitative data was triangulated with qualitative data.

The study was conducted in Ongata Rongai ward, Kajiado County. The Ward is the county assembly ward number 0912. It is situated about 17 kilometres south of the city of Nairobi City and to the west of Ngong Hills. Commonly referred to as “Rongai” or “Ronga” by the local residents, the ward has experienced growth in the recent past. The population of the area is estimated at 44,675 residents. The ward comprises of Ole Kasasi and Ongata Rongai sub-locations and covers approximately 16.50 square kilometres. It neighbours Nkoroï, Kandisi, Tuala, Rimpa, Merisho, Olekasasi, and Maasai Lodge.

The target population for this study comprised of all couples in Ongata Rongai ward aged between 35 and 60 years since they were deemed to have greater maturity, established family structure, life transitions and challenges, among others. Information available at the Ongata Rongai sub-County administrative office indicates that about 1800 adults in the Ongata Rongai ward are married and approximately 10% of these couples experience serious marital conflicts hence they are in a dysfunctional family (KNBS, 2020). After identifying the population, Creswell (2013) postulates that the size must be stated if it can be determined, and how those individuals were identified.

Various sampling techniques were applied in selecting respondents and informants of the study. In sampling primary respondents (married couples), stratified random sampling technique was applied. The first level of sampling involved stratifying Ongata Rongai Ward into the four zones. Consequently, random sampling technique was applied to select respondents from each stratum/zone. However, in selecting proportionate samples from each zone, exclusion and inclusion criteria was applied. For instance, married couples

were to be between 35 years to 60 years, couples who are legally married and living together, couples who have been married for at least five years. In contrast, couples who were separated or divorced, couples where one or both partners had a history of severe mental illness or substance abuse, or couples where one or both partners were at the time of the study undergoing treatment for a mental health disorder were excluded from the study.

For Key informants, purposive sampling technique was applied to select knowledgeable and long-term couples; for instance, those who were in marriage for a period exceeding 20 years. The researcher solicited data from 30 Key Informants as secondary population to offer a detailed account of the phenomenon under study. In qualitative research, suitable sample size is determined by the idea of saturation as proposed by Mason (2020). Sample size of 30-50 participants is sufficient (Yang & Zhang, 2022). Once the saturation point is reached, no further or new data can be collected. With this in mind, this study used a sample size of 30 in line with the concept of saturation in qualitative studies. This justified the use of 30 interviews. The sample size was computed as Yamane (1967) formula for sample size calculation:

$$\text{Sample Size (n)} = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Where:

n= minimum returned sample size

N= Population size=1800

e= the degree of accuracy expressed as a proportion=0.05

The sample size was;

$$n = \frac{1800}{1 + 1800(0.05)^2} = 328 \text{ (Rounded off)}$$

Table 1 below shows the sample frame for the sample regions/strata. With an assumption that the population density was evenly distributed, the region was divided into four equal strata presumably having 450 people each, where 82 respondents were selected using simple random sampling based on inclusion and exclusion criteria from each cluster zone to make a total of 328 respondents. Table 1 presents data on sample size.

Table 1

<i>Sample frame for the sample strata</i>			
Zones	Population	Proportion	Sample size
Zone A	450	25.0%	82
Zone B	450	25.0%	82
Zone C	450	25.0%	82
Zone D	450	25.0%	82
Total	1800	100.0%	328

Source: Ongata Rongai Sub-County Administrative Office

Couple functionality Assessment Tool was applied to collect data for the independent variables, which is a survey-based toolkit designed to measure key dimensions of couple relationships, such as communication and problem solving. Conversely, Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale was employed to collect data on the response variable. The Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being

Scale is a self-reported measure of mental well-being that was developed in the UK. It consists of 14 items that are designed to assess an individual's positive mental health and well-being. The scale includes items related to positive emotion, self-esteem, sense of purpose, and personal relationships, as well as items related to social connections and the absence of unpleasant thoughts and emotions. Questionnaires were administered through online data collection platforms, such as Google Forms. The questionnaire items were exported to Google Docs and the link was emailed to the research respondents. The research used in-depth interviews to gather data from participants. In this study, the interview schedules were done on the 30 informants to get complete and accurate information from them regarding their family's functioning. The qualitative data obtained from K.Is. was analysed to pick the key emerging issues and themes.

SPSS version 26 was used to compute both descriptive (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics for quantitative data. Additionally, the study integrated qualitative analysis to provide further context and insight into the data. Thematic approach was used to analyze qualitative data. This approach involved an iterative inquiry where data were grouped into emerging themes from emerging patterns and categories of responses.

RESULTS

The study utilized a structured questionnaire and unstructured interview questions. The primary aim of the study was to investigate the connection between family functioning and mental well-being among couples residing in Ongata Rongai ward, Kajiado County, Kenya. Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression were used to test associations. Pearson correlation was applied to test the direction and strength of the relationship between predictors of women participation in politics, while multiple linear regression was applied to establish the relative weights of each predictor variable against the outcome variable. First, descriptive statistics and Pearson Correlation results are presented for each predictor variable.

Descriptive Analysis

Data were collected using a close-ended questionnaires, whereas interviews were used to collect narrative data, which was important in triangulating the results. This ensured that the discussions were in-depth and provided a nuanced understanding of the issue under investigation. Recall that questionnaires were for primary respondents (married couples), while interviews were for key informants, that is, respondents who exhibited high knowledge on the interplay between family functioning and mental well-being of married couples. Subsequent section highlights key findings from the data.

Family Communication Patterns on the Mental-Well-Being of Couples

This section presents data on the interplay between family communication patterns and mental well-being of married couples. The section analyzes qualitative data along quantitative data. First, quantitative data is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2.

Family Communication Patterns on the Mental-Well-Being of Couples

	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std. Dev
I normally communicate my feelings, emotions, opinion etc. to my partner.	7.8%	17.1%	12.8%	50.2%	12.1%	3.4	1.14

My partner normally communicates his/her feelings, emotions, opinions to me.	11.4%	12.5%	7.8%	46.6%	21.7%	3.5	1.27
I mind about the content of the message I give or receive from my partner.	3.9%	10.7%	13.9%	52.0%	19.6%	3.7	1.02
My partner cares about the content of the message he/she gives me and receive from me.	4.6%	21.4%	24.9%	35.6%	13.5%	3.3	1.09
I normally pay attention to what I communicate to my partner.	4.3%	22.8%	24.2%	35.9%	12.8%	3.3	1.09
My partner cares about what he/she communicates to me.	2.1%	17.8%	22.8%	39.5%	17.8%	3.5	1.05
I make effort to convey and interpret information I give and receive from my partner.	1.1%	24.6%	22.1%	37.4%	14.9%	3.4	1.05
My partner makes effort to convey and interpret information I give him/her.	5.7%	17.4%	20.3%	44.5%	12.1%	3.4	1.08
Average	5.1%	18.0%	18.6%	42.7%	15.6%	3.5	1.10

Key: 1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Undecided, 4-Agree, 5-Strongly Agree

Table 2 illustrates data on the association between family communication patterns and mental well-being of married couples in Ongata Rongai Ward of Kajiado County, Kenya. Evidently, half (50.2%) of the respondents agreed that that they normally communicate their feelings, emotions, opinion, among others, to their partners. Likewise, most (46.6%) agreed that their partners normally communicate their feelings, emotions, opinions to them. Additionally, half (52.0%) agreed that they mind about the content of the message they give or receive from their partners. Majority (35.6%) agreed that their partners care about the content of the message they give them and receive from them. Similarly, most (35.9%) agreed that they normally pay attention to what they communicate to their partners. Many (39.5%) agreed that their partners care about what they communicate to them. Equally, most (37.4%) agreed that they make effort to convey and interpret information they give and receive from their partners. Likewise, majority (44.5%) agreed that their partners make effort to convey and interpret information they give them.

Overall, most (42.7%) agreed that family communication is important in the mental well-being of married couples. Family communication is the way in which information is exchanged between family members. It includes both verbal and nonverbal communication, and it can take place in a variety of settings, such as face-to-face, over the phone, or through text messages. From the study, it was evident that family communication can take many patterns, such as through messaging, not just verbally, but through other forms of communication. Effective and open communication can foster emotional support, enhance understanding, and promote healthy relationships among family members. The above information was corroborated by a married key informant who has been in marriage for a period over 25 years and happens to be a family counsellor who had the following to say:

“After 25 years of marriage and as a family life counselor, I have witnessed firsthand the transformative impact of positive family communication on individual mental well-being. Through my experiences, I have seen couples who prioritize open

and honest dialogue, active listening, and empathy thrive in their relationships. These couples not only experience greater emotional well-being but also build stronger connections and find lasting contentment in their lives.” (K.I. 1, 2023)

The excerpt above emphasizes the importance of positive family communication for an individual’s psychological well-being. It also highlights that couples who prefer open and honest dialogue, active listening, and empathy tend to experience higher levels of emotional well-being. This seems to suggest that promoting effective family communication may play an important role in fostering stronger relationships and overall life satisfaction. By facilitating a supportive environment of communication within a marriage, couples are more likely to experience lasting happiness and enhanced emotional well-being. The result from the verbatim resonates with Floyd, Mikkelson, and Seltzer (2019) who stressed that positive family communication is important for psychological well-being. Couples who are able to communicate effectively are more likely to experience higher levels of emotional well-being and lasting happiness.

Additionally, the verbatim underscores the importance of fostering an atmosphere of open and sincere conversation, attentive listening, and empathetic understanding within the family. This result resonates with the views of Frye *et al.* (2020) who affirmed that couples who engage in more positive communication and less negative communication during conflict are more likely to be satisfied with their marriages. The study also found that couples who are able to resolve conflict in a healthy way are more likely to be satisfied with their marriages. The quote further highlights that couples who prioritize transparent and genuine communication, actively engage in attentive listening, and demonstrate empathy towards one another tend to experience greater levels of individual mental well-being. This observation aligns with a study done by Lage *et al.* (2022) who emphasized that cultivating communication through listening and showing empathy within a marriage can significantly contribute to healthier relationships and overall emotional satisfaction.

In summary, Communication patterns demonstrates a moderately weak positive correlation ($r = 0.366^{**}$) with mental well-being, signifying that higher levels of effective communication within married couples are associated with better mental well-being as summarized in the Pearson Correlation analysis in Table 3. The correlation was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), further supporting the validity of the relationship.

Table 3
Correlation between Communication Patterns and Mental Well-Being

		Communication Patterns
Communication Patterns	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	N	281
Mental Wellbeing	Pearson Correlation	.366**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	281

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Results from Table 3 are relatable to the existing evidence by Krishna *et al.* (2022) who underscored the criticality of mindful communication in promoting psychological well-being in marital relationships. Their research shows that paying attention to the content of messages exchanged between partners, expressing emotions honestly, and listening actively improve the quality of communication and lead to healthier, more satisfied couples. This congruence further strengthens the idea that mindful communication practices are essential in promoting positive psychological well-being in couples.

Family Problem-Solving Techniques on the Mental Well-Being of Couples

This section presents data on the interplay between family problem solving techniques and mental well-being of married couples. The section analyzes qualitative data along quantitative data. First, quantitative data is summarized in Table 4.

Table 4

Family Problem-Solving Techniques on the Mental Well-Being of Couples

	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std. Dev
I am able to identify my problems in the family.	5.0%	30.2%	14.2%	38.4%	12.1%	3.2	1.15
As couples we are able to identify our problems.	1.8%	15.3%	18.5%	47.0%	17.4%	3.6	1.00
I feel free to communicate my problems to my partner.	10.7%	19.6%	24.9%	34.5%	10.3%	3.1	1.17
We feel free to communicate our problems as partners.	7.8%	23.5%	26.7%	34.9%	7.1%	3.1	1.08
Whenever I have problems, I develop alternative actions.	4.3%	18.5%	16.0%	47.3%	13.9%	3.5	1.08
As couple whenever we have problems, we develop alternative actions.	7.5%	26.7%	17.4%	32.0%	16.4%	3.2	1.22
When I develop problems, I take suitable actions.	2.1%	22.1%	26.0%	40.9%	8.9%	3.3	0.98
When we develop problems as couples, we take suitable actions.	4.6%	23.1%	26.7%	33.8%	11.7%	3.2	1.08
I monitor any action I take closely in the family.	6.4%	31.3%	30.6%	24.6%	7.1%	2.9	1.05
As couples' actions we take are monitored closely.	3.2%	26.3%	24.9%	33.8%	11.7%	3.2	1.07
I normally evaluate my actions in the family.	5.3%	23.5%	23.8%	36.3%	11.0%	3.2	1.09
As couples we normally evaluate our actions.	2.1%	21.0%	24.2%	46.6%	6.0%	3.3	0.95
Average	5.1%	23.4%	22.8%	37.5%	11.1%	3.3	1.08

Key: 1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Undecided, 4-Agree, 5-Strongly Agree

Table 4 illustrates various statements concerning family solving techniques. Evidently, most (38.4%) of the respondents agreed that they are able to identify their problems in the family. Nearly half (47.0%) agreed that as couples they are able to identify their problems as well as most (34.5%) who agreed that they feel free to communicate their problems to their partners. Additionally, majority (34.9%) agreed that they feel free to communicate their problems as partners in addition to most (47.3%) who affirmed that whenever they have problems, they develop alternative actions. Likewise, majority (32.0%) agreed that as couple whenever they have problems, they develop alternative actions. Besides, many (40.9%) agreed that when they develop problems, they take suitable actions. Similarly,

most (33.8%) agreed that when they develop problems as couples, they take suitable actions. In contrast, majority (31.3%) disagreed that they monitor any action they take closely in the family. Conversely, many (33.8%) agreed that as couples, actions they take are monitored closely. Equally, majority (36.3%) agreed that they normally evaluate their actions in the family. Notably, closer to half (46.6%) agreed that as couples they normally evaluate their actions.

Overall, majority (37.5%) agreed that family problem solving influences the mental well-being of married couples. Family problem solving is the process of identifying, addressing, and resolving problems and challenges within the family unit. It is about individuals working together to find solutions and make decisions that benefit the whole family. Solving family problems usually requires open communication, active listening, and shared decision-making. This includes discussing and resolving conflicts, resolving disagreements, setting goals, and implementing strategies to overcome obstacles. Effective family problem solving promotes understanding, cooperation, and the development of healthy coping mechanisms, ultimately contributing to improved family functioning and well-being.

“As a newly married couple, my spouse and I have realized the importance of family problem solving. It’s about coming together, communicating openly, and finding solutions to challenges that arise in our relationship and family life. We actively listen to each other’s perspectives, respecting our individual thoughts and feelings. When we work together, we effectively address conflicts, make decisions, and set goals that benefit our family’s well-being. Family problem solving strengthens our bond and allows us to grow and navigate life’s obstacles as a team.” (K.I. 4, 2023)

The above mention underlines the criticality of resolving family issues in the context of newlyweds. This emphasizes that couples recognize the need to unite, communicate openly, and find solutions to challenges that arise in relationships and family life. The verbatim further stresses active listening, respect for each other’s perspectives, the ability to effectively deal with conflict, make decisions, and set goals that promote family well-being. Evidence from the quote agrees with the perspective of Walsh (2016) who presented family problem solving as a means to strengthening bonds and promoting teamwork in overcoming life’s obstacles. This is also consistent with the views of Ybarra (2020) who stated that effective problem-solving skills contribute to relationship growth and resilience.

In summary, results in this section indicate that family problem-solving practices have significant implications for the mental well-being of married couples. The ability to identify problems, communicate openly, and develop alternative actions reflects a proactive and adaptive approach to challenges within the family. Couples who engage in these problem-solving strategies are more likely to experience positive mental well-being as they actively address issues and seek constructive solutions together. The inclination to monitor, evaluate, and take suitable actions further enhances the mental well-being of married couples. The Pearson Correlation analysis in Table 5 below summarizes the direction and strength of the relationship between family solving techniques and mental well-being of married couples.

Table 5

Relationship Between Family Solving Techniques and Mental Well-Being

		Problem Solving
Problem Solving	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	N	281
Mental Wellbeing	Pearson Correlation	.673**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	281

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As illustrated in Table 5, problem solving exhibited a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.673^{**}$) with mental well-being, indicating that couples who demonstrate proficient problem-solving skills tend to experience higher levels of mental well-being. This correlation was also statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). Results from the Pearson Correlation output is relatable to a study done by Carr (2023) who underscored the significance of developing alternative coping strategies in marital relationships. Carr emphasized that actively engaging in finding alternative solutions promotes resilience and enhances mental well-being. Additionally, Carr highlighted the importance of adopting a proactive problem-solving mindset, recognizing that relying on a single approach may impede effective problem resolution.

Family Affection on the Mental Well-Being of Married Couples

This section presents data on the interplay between family affection and mental well-being of married couples. The section analyzes qualitative data along quantitative data. First, quantitative data is summarized in Table 6.

Table 6

Family Affection on the Mental Well-Being of Married Couples

	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std. dev
I feel my partner is concerned about me.	4.3%	15.3%	23.1%	37.4%	19.9%	3.5	1.10
I am concerned about my partner.	3.2%	17.4%	17.8%	44.5%	17.1%	3.5	1.07
I love and value my partner.	2.8%	17.1%	17.4%	34.9%	27.8%	3.7	1.14
I feel loved and valued by my partner.	5.0%	16.7%	19.2%	34.9%	24.2%	3.6	1.17
I have interest in and value the activities of my partner.	2.5%	18.9%	22.1%	37.4%	19.2%	3.5	1.08
As partners we have interest in and value the activities of each other.	1.8%	21.0%	23.8%	36.3%	17.1%	3.5	1.06
Average	3.3%	17.7%	20.6%	37.6%	20.9%	3.6	1.10

Key: 1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Undecided, 4-Agree, 5-Strongly Agree

Table 6 illustrates various statements on the interconnectedness between family affection and mental well-being of married couples. From analyzed data, most (37.4%) of the respondents agreed that felt that their partners were concerned about them as well as many (44.5%) who stated that they were concerned about their partners. Additionally, majority (34.9%) stated that they loved and valued their partners and felt loved and valued by their partners. Similarly, most (37.4%) agreed that they had interest and valued the activities of their partners. Equally, majority (36.3%) agreed that as partners they and interest in and valued the activities of each other.

Overall, the result indicates that a majority of respondents (37.6%) agreed that family affection has an impact on the mental well-being of married couples. Additionally, a significant proportion (20.9%) strongly agreed with this statement. This suggests that there is a recognized and acknowledged link between family affection and the mental well-being of married couples. Family affection refers to

the presence of warm, loving, and supportive interactions within the family, such as expressions of love, care, and physical affection. When couples experience affection from their family members, it contributes to their all-round mental well-being by fostering emotional connection, happiness, and a sense of security within the marital relationship. The high agreement rate suggests that individuals recognize the importance of family affection in promoting and maintaining positive mental health outcomes for married couples. This information on family affection was corroborated by a key informant who had the following to say:

“As someone who has been married for several decades, I strongly believe that family affection plays a vital role in influencing the mental well-being of married couples. Throughout the years, my spouse and I have experienced firsthand the power of affection within our family. The love, care, and support we receive from our family members have brought us immeasurable joy, a sense of belonging, and emotional security. These acts of affection have consistently nurtured our mental well-being, fostered a deep connection and strengthened our bond.” (K.I. 7, 2023)

The above verbatim text describes the personal experience of a married person. Throughout their long marriage, they have seen the positive effects of family love, care and support. The presence of a loving relationship enhances their emotional well-being and gives them a sense of joy, belonging, and emotional security. Evidence from the verbatim aligns with the views of Lam and Bianchi (2019), who emphasized the significance of family affection in promoting the mental well-being of married couples. The quote highlights the positive impact of love, care, and support within the family, resonating with the perspective of Daines et al. (2021), who stated that emotional support and connectedness within marital relationships contribute to enhanced psychological well-being. The findings from the verbatim reinforce the existing literature, emphasizing the crucial role of family affection in fostering happiness, emotional security, and overall relationship satisfaction among married couples.

In summary, the results from under objective three highlight the positive impact of family affection on the mental well-being of married couples. The findings reveal that couples who feel their partners’ concern, express love and value, and show genuine interest in each other’s activities tend to experience greater emotional and psychological well-being. These aspects of family affection contribute to a strong sense of connection, support, and mutual appreciation, which in turn promote overall marital satisfaction and happiness. The results suggest that fostering a climate of warmth, care, and engagement within the family unit can have significant benefits for the mental well-being of married couples. As a way of concluding, Pearson Correlation analysis was undertaken to establish the strength and direction of the relationship between family affection and mental well-being of married couples. The results are presented in Table 7 below.

Table 7.
Relationship Between Family Affection and Mental Well-Being

		Family Affection
Family Affection	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	N	281
Mental Wellbeing	Pearson Correlation	.447**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	281

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As seen from Table 7, it is evident that family affection displayed a weak positive correlation ($r = 0.447^{**}$) with mental well-being, indicating that the presence of affectionate interactions within the family contributes to improved mental well-being. This correlation was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). This results also aligns with the views of Lysova *et al.* (2022) who emphasized the importance

of family affection in intimate relationships. Their study highlighted that relationships characterized by caring and consideration for each other's needs tend to be more satisfying and conducive to well-being. Together, the studies of Huston, McHale, and Crouter (2021) and Lysova et al. (2022) provide supporting evidence for the notion that partners' concern for each other contributes positively to the dynamics of marital relationships. To that end, evidence in this section underscores the significance of empathy, care, and attentiveness in fostering a healthy and fulfilling partnership.

Family Behavior Control on the Mental Well-Being of Married Couples

This section presents analysis of data on the interplay between family behaviour control and mental well-being of married couples. The section entails an analysis of qualitative data, which has been done along quantitative data. First, quantitative data is summarized in Table 8.

Table 8

Family Behavior Control on the Mental Well-Being of Married Couples

	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std dev.
I have control over physical dangerous situations in the family.	18.9%	37.0%	21.4%	18.9%	3.9%	2.5	1.12
My partner has control over physical dangerous situations in the family.	9.3%	31.3%	23.1%	29.5%	6.8%	2.9	1.12
I encourage meeting and express my psychobiological needs and drives.	5.7%	36.7%	19.2%	28.1%	10.3%	3.0	1.14
As partners we encourage meetings, expression of self especially about psychobiological need & drives.	13.5%	25.6%	26.0%	18.9%	16.0%	3.0	1.28
I socialize with my partner and neighbors.	13.9%	26.7%	19.2%	28.5%	11.7%	3.0	1.26
As couples we encourage socialization within and with neighbors also.	3.2%	14.6%	11.7%	39.5%	31.0%	3.8	1.12
Average	10.8%	28.7%	20.1%	27.2%	13.3%	3.0	1.17

Key: 1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Undecided, 4-Agree, 5-Strongly Agree

Table 8 presents various statements on the association between family behaviour control and the mental well-being of married couples. Analysis of data affirmed that most (37.0%) of the respondents disagreed that they have control over physical dangerous situations in the family as well as many (31.3%) who disagreed that their partners have control over physical dangerous situations in the family. Likewise, majority (36.7%) disagreed that they encourage meeting and express their psychobiological needs and drives. In contrast, most (26.0%) were undecided as to whether as partners they encourage meetings, expression of self especially about psychobiological need & drives. On the other hand, majority (28.5%) agreed that they socialize with their partners and neighbors in addition to the highest (39.5%) response of those who agreed that as couples they encourage socialization within and with neighbors also.

Overall, there were varied responses as indicated by most (28.7%) who disagreed on the family behavior control, closely followed by 27.2% of those who agreed and 20.1% who were neutral. Family behavior control refers to the degree of regulation and influence exerted by family members over each other’s behaviors within the family unit. The computed results show a range of responses, indicating diverse perspectives on this topic. It suggests that challenges may exist in controlling physical dangerous situations within the family and promoting the meeting and expression of psychobiological needs and drives. These challenges can potentially impact the overall well-being of married couples by causing increased stress or hindering the fulfillment of personal needs. However, the

findings also emphasize the positive impact of socialization within and with neighbors, which can contribute to the mental well-being of couples. A key informant had the following to say:

“There are different views when it comes to family behavior control. Some people may struggle to maintain control over physical dangerous situations within the family, and that can have a significant impact on our well-being. It's not always easy to meet and express our psychobiological needs and drives, and that can cause stress and affect our overall happiness. On the other hand, I believe that socializing within our family and with neighbors can bring positive benefits to our mental well-being.” (K.I. 9, 2023)

The above verbatim highlights the diverse perspectives on family behavior control. The participant acknowledges that different individuals hold varying views on this topic. They specifically mention the challenge of maintaining control over physical dangerous situations within the family, emphasizing that this difficulty can have a significant impact on their general mental well-being. Additionally, the participant acknowledges the struggle of meeting and expressing their psychobiological needs and drives, which can lead to stress and affect their happiness. On a positive note, the participant believes that socializing within their family and with neighbors can have positive effects on their mental well-being. Besides, it underscores the importance of understanding the complexities of family behavior control and its potential implications for the well-being of married couples.

In summary, the results in this section provide insights into the association between family behavior control and the mental well-being of married couples. The data reveal a range of responses, indicating diverse perspectives on this topic. The findings suggest that there may be challenges in exerting control over physical dangerous situations within the family and in promoting the meeting and expression of psychobiological needs and drives. These aspects may have implications for the overall well-being of married couples, potentially leading to increased stress or hindered fulfillment of personal needs. However, the results also highlight the importance of socialization within and with neighbors, which can contribute positively to the mental well-being of couples. Over and above, the findings underscore the significance of understanding and addressing family behavior control in promoting the mental well-being of married couples. To provide an overview of the strength and direction of the relationship between family behaviour and mental well-being of married couples, the study applied the Pearson Correlation analysis. Table 9 presents the summary of the results.

Table 9

Relationship Between Family Behaviour and Mental Well-Being

		Behaviour Control
Behaviour Control	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	N	281
Mental Wellbeing	Pearson Correlation	.685**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	281

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As seen Table 9, it is concise that behaviour control showed a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.685^{**}$) with mental well-being, highlighting the significance of self-regulation and discipline within the family unit for optimal mental well-being. The correlation was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). The Pearson Correlation results aligns with the findings from Diamond-Smith (2019) and Nomaguchi and Milkie (2020) who underscored the detrimental effects of unmet needs on mental well-being.

Multiple Linear Regression

The study employed Multiple linear regression to understand how predictor variables collectively predicted Mental well-being. These inferential statistical techniques were chosen to go beyond descriptive analysis, allowing the study to draw meaningful conclusions and make inferences about the associations and predictive power of the variables in relation to mental well-being in married couples. The study applied multiple linear regression in order to establish the relative influence of the predictor variables on the mental well-being of married couples. Table 4.9 highlights the model summary from multiple linear regression.

Table 10
Linear Regression Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.788 ^a	.621	.616	.60833

a. Dependent Variable: Mental Well-being

b. Predictors: (Constant), Family Affection, Communication Patterns, Problem Solving, Behaviour Control

The model summary for the multiple linear regression analysis in Table 10 indicates that the combination of Communication Patterns, Problem Solving, Behaviour Control, and Family Affection have a strong predictive ability for Mental well-being. The correlation coefficient (R) of 0.788 suggests a robust positive relationship between the predictor variables and Mental well-being. This means that as Communication Patterns, Problem Solving, Behaviour Control, and Family Affection increase, there is a corresponding increase in Mental well-being. The coefficient of determination (R Square) reveals that approximately 62.1% of the variance in mental well-being can be explained by the predictor variables. This indicates that the four predictors collectively account for a substantial portion of the variability in Mental well-being among married couples. Table 11 presents results on the analysis of variance, which was applied to test the goodness of the fit for the multiple linear regression.

Table 4.11
Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	167.465	4	41.866	113.130	.000 ^b
	Residual	102.140	276	.370		
	Total	269.605	280			

a. Dependent Variable: Mental Well-being

b. Predictors: (Constant), Family Affection, Communication Patterns, Problem Solving, Behaviour Control

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) in Table 11 provides valuable insights into the significance and effectiveness of the regression model in predicting the dependent variable, Mental well-being, using the predictor variables: Family Affection, Communication Patterns, Problem Solving, and Behaviour Control. The model has 4 degrees of freedom, which correspond to the number of predictor variables. The F-value is highly significant with a p-value of .000b, indicating that the regression model is statistically significant in predicting mental well-being. Table 4.14 presents data on the relative influence of the four predictor variables against mental well-being.

Table 4.14
Multiple Linear Regression

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.490	.174		2.810	.005

Communication Patterns	-.243	.052	-.228	-4.689	.000
Problem Solving	.497	.053	.459	9.411	.000
Behaviour Control	.475	.048	.508	9.964	.000
Family Affection	.109	.043	.108	2.538	.012

a. Dependent Variable: Mental well-being

The multiple linear regression analysis in Table 4.14 reveals notable insights into the relationship between the predictor variables (Communication Patterns, Problem Solving, Behaviour Control, and Family Affection) and the dependent variable (mental well-being). The constant term in the regression equation is 0.490, indicating that when all predictor variables are zero, the estimated mean value of mental well-being is 0.490. This constant term significantly contributes to the prediction of Mental well-being. Communication Patterns have a negative coefficient of -0.243, suggesting that a decrease in Communication Patterns is associated with a decrease in Mental well-being. This negative relationship is statistically significant, indicating that Communication

Patterns significantly impact Mental well-being. Problem Solving shows a positive coefficient of 0.497, indicating that an increase in Problem Solving is associated with an increase in Mental well-being. This positive relationship is highly significant, highlighting the strong positive impact of Problem Solving on Mental well-being. Behaviour Control also demonstrates a positive coefficient of 0.475, indicating that higher levels of Behaviour Control are associated with increased Mental well-being. This positive relationship is highly significant, emphasizing the significant contribution of Behaviour Control to Mental well-being. Family Affection exhibits a positive coefficient of 0.109, implying that higher levels of Family Affection are associated with improved Mental well-being. This positive relationship is statistically significant, suggesting that Family Affection has a positive impact on Mental well-being.

Conclusion

The study concludes that effective family communication patterns have a statistically significant impact on the mental well-being of married couples ($p < 0.05$). Open and honest communication, along with mutual value and care for message content, play a crucial role in promoting positive mental well-being within the family unit. The findings underscore the need for effective and positive communication in fostering healthier relationships and mental well-being. Based on the analysis of the data, the study concludes that family problem-solving techniques significantly influence the mental well-being of married couples ($p < 0.001$). Couples who adopt proactive problem-solving approaches, including recognizing problems, engaging in open communication, and generating alternative solutions, experience greater mental well-being. The ability to address challenges together and find constructive resolutions enhances the overall well-being of couples.

The study concludes that family affection has a statistically significant impact on the mental well-being of married couples ($p < 0.05$). Expressing care, love, and interest in each other’s lives contributes to higher levels of emotional and psychological well-being. Creating a warm and engaging family environment, where couples feel valued and supported, is essential for promoting their mental well-being. Based on the findings, the study concludes that family behavior control has statistically significant positive influence on the mental well-being of married couples ($p < 0.05$). Managing physical dangers within the family and meeting psychobiological needs can present challenges that impact the well-being of couples, potentially leading to increased stress and unmet personal needs. The results also highlight the positive influence of socialization with family and neighbors on mental well-being.

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