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Marital Satisfaction and Conflict: A Cross Cultural Comparison Between China and Australia

Lauren Gabelich
Edith Cowan University

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LAUREN GABELICH
**SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIAL
SCIENCE**
SUPERVISOR: KEN GREENWOOD

Introduction



Previous research on Marital Satisfaction has found:

- Rhyne (1981) found in her review that one of the few consistent findings is that men tend to be more satisfied with their marriages than women.

Previous research on Relational Conflict has found:

- Canary and Cupach (1988) are prominent researchers in the area of relational conflict and have been consistent in stating that conflict is the most testing of all communication styles for a relationship.

Previous research on Cultural Comparisons between East & West found:

- Cheung (2005) said that Chinese women argued more than Caucasian counterparts
- Cheung (2005) states that much of her marriage research findings about eastern culture reported that on the whole men had a higher level of satisfaction in marriage than their wives although western men reported less marital satisfaction than their eastern counterparts.

However, cross cultural comparisons regarding marital satisfaction and conflict has not occurred between Australian and Chinese cultures before .

Therefore the primary aim of my study was:

1. Ascertain if there differences in marital satisfaction between Australians and Chinese
2. Ascertain if there are differences in aspects of conflict which correlate with marital satisfaction for each culture
3. To ascertain the extend to which marital satisfaction is predicted by conflict style in bobth genders and cultures

Research Design



Methodology -

- Emails sent to participants inviting them to participate in an online survey (Qualtrics)
- China (Peking University) distributed hard copies of their survey to couples

Participants -

The present study involved a sample of 157 Australian/NZ community members. Satisfaction score for $n= 100$ females and $n = 48$ males were analysed (once missing values removed)

China shared their data of $n= 321$ females and $n = 321$ males (once missing values removed)

Research Design



Procedures....

Participants were recruited by email to click on a link to Qualtrics ECU's online survey program and also online data collection via a NZ website called "Get Participants." Participants completed an online survey which was piloted and assessed as being able to be completed in 30 minutes.

Participants completed questions concerning conflict style, attachment style, personality type and general areas which can affect satisfaction. However only the **Romantic Conflict Scale And Marital satisfaction were** analysed for this project. Subscales within the Romantic Conflict Scale were Domination, Submission, Interactional Reactivity, Compromise and Separation.

Findings



Data were analysed using independent samples *t*-tests (to determine marital satisfaction between gender and also culture. Correlation coefficients were calculated to determine if there was a relationship between marital satisfaction and conflict styles. Multiple regression was employed to determine if any of the conflict styles were predictors of marital satisfaction.

The following hypothesis are being proposed:

H1, that Chinese are more maritally satisfied than Australians based on Australia's higher divorce rates.

H2, that men are more satisfied than women with their relationships based on consistent findings reported in the literature

H3, that there will be differences in conflict styles between the two cultures based on findings reported in the literature

H4, that conflict is a significant predictor and is strongly correlated with marital satisfaction.

Findings



Marital Satisfaction

How happy are you in your current marriage/relationship on a scale of 1 to 100 with 1 being very unhappy and 100 being very happy –

	<i>M</i>		<i>M</i>
Females overall	83.32	Males overall	81.43
Australian/NZ overall	84.22	Chinese overall	81.87
Australian/NZ females	85.03	Chinese females	80.31
Australian/NZ males	82.54	Chinese males	83.43

Findings



Satisfaction predictors for conflict styles -

- Australian Females - the main predictors for satisfaction is “compromise” (+)
- Australian Males - main predictor is “compromise” (+)
- Chinese females - main predictor is “separation” (-) followed closely by “interactional reactivity” (+)
- Chinese males - main predictor is “submission” (-) and compromise followed by dom (+)

Findings



Satisfaction is correlated with the following conflict subscales for gender and culture -

- Australian females – “compromise” (+) then “interactional reactivity” (-) then “domination” (-)
- Chinese females – “interactional reactivity” (+)
- Australian males – “compromise” (+) then “avoidance” (-)
- Chinese males – “submission” (-) then “domination” (+)

Findings



Some other interesting statistics –

- The lowest satisfaction score for Australians was “2/100”
- Common age group for Australians was 31 years to 50 years
- Most participants were university educated and employed
- The range of relationship longevity for Australians was 1 year to 51 years
- Most Australian participants had 1 to 2 children
- Australian First born, middle child and youngest were evenly represented and most Australian participants had siblings
- 3% of Aussies had been married/defacto 3 or more times. This statistic was not represented in Chinese statistics with 95% being in only one relationship.

Conclusions



Overall the trial was successful, in particular for its contributions toward:

- Enhancing cross cultural knowledge between China & Australia
- Understanding what aspects of conflict impacts positively and negatively for males and females in relationships

Possible limitations include:

the representativeness of the sample (e.g., rural Chinese population could be quite different to urban & rural Australian/NZ population)

Future research should include – couples research, gay marriage, cohabiting vs formal marriage.

References



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And they lived happily ever after....

