

RELIGIOSITY AND MARITAL SATISFACTION OF CATHOLICS IN INDIA: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING

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Abstract

Religion holds a prominent place in the lives of millions of people worldwide, influencing their values, beliefs, and behaviors. In India, a religiously varied and culturally rich nation, Catholicism plays an integral role in molding the personal and social fabric of the community of believers. However, a nuanced exploration is necessary to completely comprehend the interplay between religiosity and marital satisfaction among Catholics in India. The current phenomenological study examines the experience of married Catholic individuals to gain a rich and detailed understanding of how religiosity has influenced their marriages. Five women and five men who had been married for more than seven years participated in the in-depth semi-structured interviews. From their lived experiences, employing interpretative phenomenological analysis, four overarching themes and 20 sub-themes emerged. Research results are discussed in the light of existing literature. Implications of the study and recommendations for further research are included.

Keywords: Religiosity, Marriage, Marital Satisfaction, Married Catholics, Catholics in India.

INTRODUCTION

In various cultures, religion is seen as a robust compact with marriage, and religious beliefs, values, norms, and rituals play a significant role in forming and sustaining marital relationships. Globally, several studies have established the connection between religion and various aspects of marriage, especially marital satisfaction (Fraser et al., 2021; Kelley et al., 2020; Klausli, 2020; Sauerheber et al., 2021). In the Indian scenario, only a scant number of studies have been conducted to examine the connection between religiosity and marital satisfaction (Dobrowolska et al., 2020; Khurana, 2017; Patel & Dhar, 2018). Even though these studies emphatically prove the connection between religiosity and marital satisfaction, they don't explain *how* this connection is established, which calls for a nuanced exploration of this interplay. Therefore, the current study aims to offer valuable insights into the intricate relationship between religiosity and marital satisfaction among Catholics in India. Moreover, this study is vital in the context of the growing number of divorce rates globally, with no exception to India, where, due to various reasons, the separation rate is three times larger than the divorce rate (Dixit & Ramachandran, 2019; Jacob & Chattopadhyay, 2016; Pitfalls, 2021).

Religiosity

To explain religiosity, we must first differentiate it from a closely connected term, religion. Religion remains a construct in academic language, while religiosity is a variable. In the spiritual realm, religion can be viewed as a system of attitudes, beliefs, values, norms, institutions, and rituals that evolve around worshipping the divine (Paul Victor & Treschuk, 2020). In contrast, religiosity refers to an individual's personal expression and engagement with beliefs and practices, or it is a measure of one's personal religious beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors (Iannello et al., 2019; Stolz, 2009).

In simple terms, religion can be defined as a belief system, and religiosity is a person's internalization and expression of that belief system.

Marital Satisfaction

A plethora of scholars have given definitions of marital satisfaction. According to Hawkins (1968), marital satisfaction is "the subjective feelings of happiness, satisfaction, and pleasure experienced by a spouse when considering all current aspects of his [or her] marriage" (p. 618). Idemudia and Ndlovu (2013) also defined marital satisfaction as "the degree to which an individual's needs, expectations, and desires are being satisfied in their marriage—a subjective condition which can only be described by the individual spouse, an individual's overall evaluation of his or her marriage" (p. 5487). In light of the above explanations, one may define marital satisfaction as an individual's positive assessment of his/her marital relationship.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theoretical understanding of religiosity was developed by Marks and Dollahite (2001), named three-dimensional construct, which says that religiosity is composed of three dimensions: religious beliefs, religious practices, and religious communities. Another theoretical basis for the combined conceptualization of religiosity and marital relationship is the psychological explanation of David's (1979) theory of triangles. To compile this theory, David adopted the concept of triangles given by Murry Bowen (as cited in David, 1979). He compared it with the Christian marital triangle comprising husband, wife, and Christ. A third theoretical basis for the current study is the psychological explanation of attachment theory adopted by Kaufman (1981). He said that an essential aspect of understanding attachment theory in the life of a believer is the concept of having a personal relationship with God, which may be equivalent to a relationship with human attachment. He continued that a believer may find comfort and safety in God as an infant view its primary caregiver as a secure base.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

We used qualitative research methods to explore the connection between religiosity and marital satisfaction, for qualitative research is an effective way to capture the meaning people attach to their lives (Parker, 2002). Qualitative research helps to provide "valuable insights into how people construct meaning in various social settings" (Neuman, 2006). Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used to focus on the lived experience of the participants. The significance of IPA is that it offers a platform for the detailed study of the participants' experiences and how they make sense of those experiences or interpret them (Mhatre & Mehta, 2023).

Participants

Participants in the study were married Catholic individuals living in Bangalore, India. Ten participants were selected using the purposive sampling strategy and were interviewed based on the semi-structured interview. The theoretical saturation was reached (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). The participants aged between 29 and 59 were five men and five women (Table 1).

Table 1: Demographic Details of the Participants

Participant Code	Age in Years	Gender	Education Level	Years in Marriage	Number of Children
P.01	48	Male	Post-graduate	16	02
P.02	39	Female	Post-graduate	12	04
P.03	59	Male	Post-graduate	30	02
P.04	36	Female	Post-graduate	14	02
P.05	38	Female	Post-graduate	14	02
P.06	39	Male	Post-graduate	11	02
P.07	29	Female	Graduate	08	01
P.08	32	Male	Graduate	08	03
P.09	42	Male	Post-graduate	20	02
P.10	30	Female	Graduate	09	02

Participants were selected based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria are: (a) married individuals and still in the relationship, (b) Catholic, (c) settled in Bangalore, (d) working knowledge of English, and (e) at least seven years in marriage, which was recommended for the longer-lived experiences (Brimhall & Butler, 2007; Carstensen et al., 1996) and the reduction of socially desirable responses (Brimhall & Butler, 2007). The exclusion criteria are: (a) having been diagnosed with psychological problems and (b) serious health issues preventing full marital commitment.

Data Collection Tool

A semi-structured interview schedule was used to gather data despite the demographic questionnaire. The researcher developed this schedule, keeping in mind the line of inquiry and the technical strategies based on (Smith & Osborn, 2007) the procedure. The schedule was validated by five experts in the field: independent researchers, academics, and counseling professionals. The interview schedule consisted of eight open-ended questions and some appropriate probes. Based on the study's objective, the questions aimed to explore how religious aspects influence the participants in their married lives. A few examples are: "What impact of faith do you see in your marriage?", "Can you please give me some examples of where religious beliefs and experiences have helped you strengthen your marital bond? Also, some examples where did not help you?"

Procedure

For recruiting participants, after obtaining permission from the Institutional Review Board, the researcher distributed handouts in three Catholic communities, describing the purpose of the study and asking their willingness to participate. Thirty-five individuals (17 males and 18 females) responded to it positively, ten of whom were randomly selected and contacted over the phone. According to their convenience, after explaining the ethical considerations and the confidentiality, their informed consent was obtained, and face-to-face interviews were carried out. Each interview lasted around 60 minutes and was audio recorded. The obtained data was stored in a password-protected system, accessible only to the researchers, and was analyzed.

Data Analysis

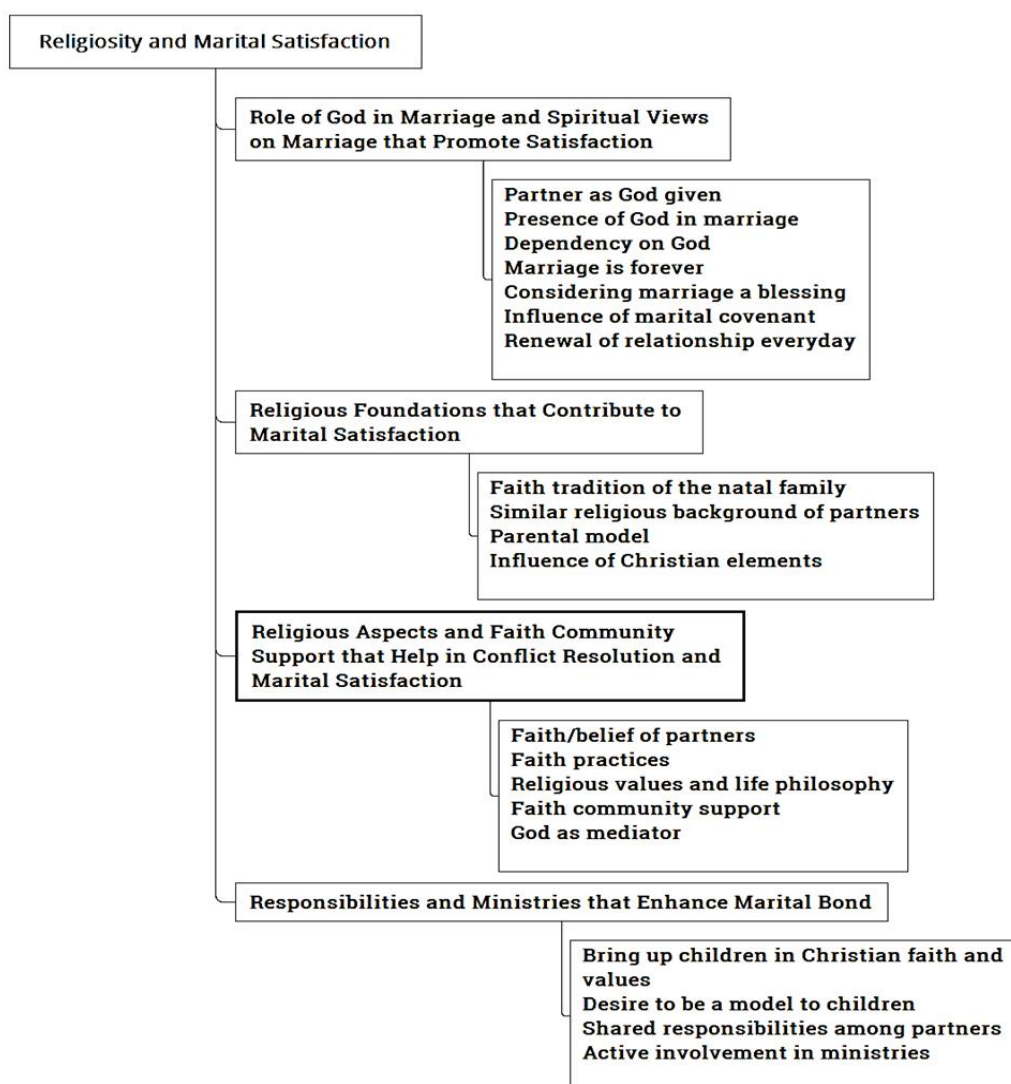
We transcribed the responses, and the data was manually coded. We adopted the IPA steps prescribed by Storey (2016), which involved several phases such as initial reading of the transcript, identifying and labeling themes, linking themes and

identifying thematic clusters, and finally producing a summary table of superordinate themes. The transcribed responses, with no identification of the participant, were independently coded by a second coder (after signing confidentiality), and consensus was reached on codes in case of differences. At the end of the analysis, the respondent validation was carried out, making the result of the study available to the participants to verify and confirm.

FINDINGS

The data analysis helped to understand and establish the connection between religiosity and marital satisfaction of Catholics. The findings are divided into four overarching themes and 20 sub-themes (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Themes and Sub-themes Flow Chart



The strength of each of the four overarching themes is indicated in Table 2. Strength is viewed in terms of the frequency of appearance of each sub-theme in participants.

Table 2: Themes Derived and Their Strength

Themes	Sub-themes	Frequency of Occurrence
Role of God in Marriage and Spiritual Views on Marriage that Promote Satisfaction	Partner as God-given	8
	Presence of God in marriage	6
	Dependency on God	6
	Marriage is forever	8
	Considering marriage, a blessing	3
	Influence of marital covenant	5
	Renewal of relationship every day	2
Religious Foundations that Contribute to Marital Satisfaction	Faith tradition of the natal family	9
	Similar religious background of partners	6
	Parental model	10
	Influence of Christian elements	8
Religious Aspects and Faith Community Support that Help in Conflict Resolution and Marital Satisfaction	Faith/belief of partners	6
	Faith practices	10
	Religious values and life philosophy	10
	Faith community support	9
	God as mediator	8
Responsibilities and Ministries that Enhance Marital Bond	Bring up children in Christian faith and values	8
	Desire to be a model to children	7
	Shared responsibilities among partners	7
	Active involvement in ministries	10

Role of God in Marriage and Spiritual Views on Marriage Promote Satisfaction

Married Catholics in India consider that the role of God and spiritual views on marriage enhance their satisfaction. Seven sub-themes emerged under this major theme.

Partner as God-given. Participants spoke about partners as God-given. Participant P.05 stated that her life was blessed because of her partner. She said, "Every day I thank God, and every day I pray that this person should be there with me till my end. So that much God has blessed me." Participant P.04 said about it in a way that was slightly different from the other participants, that it is by God's grace that she and her partner are from similar backgrounds. She said, "Its God's grace only that we both are from the same caste, same religion." Participant P.01 viewed this differently as he stated, "I have to adjust with the partner God has given."

Presence of God in marriage. Some participants felt the presence of God right at the beginning of their marriage, and some felt it at different moments of their lives. Participant P.05 said, "Basically, the matrimony is actually between three people; Jesus is also there." Participant P.02 said, "As years passed, as we attended retreats, once we grew, as I started coming closer to God and we had our regular family prayer, our relationship also improved."

Dependency on God. Dependence on God was basically mentioned by the participants in relation to the problems they faced in their lives. Participant P.05 stated, "Whenever there is some misunderstanding, I always take it to the Lord." Similarly, Participant P.06 said, "I always have a belief that even if there is a problem, there is a solution through God."

Marriage is forever. Participants felt that marriage is forever and that, under no circumstances this relationship can be broken. Participant P.06 said, "For a married man without a wife, your marriage is incomplete. So, there is no situation that you

should break that relationship." The permanence of marriage was also stressed. Participant P.01 stated, "The marriage is done only once, done in heavens forever."

Considering marriage a blessing. A few participants spoke about marriage as a blessing. Participant P.05 said, "I think it has been a blessing." Participant 09 stated, "God has blessed me abundantly through my marriage."

Influence of marital covenant. Some participants felt that their marital covenant greatly influenced them in their life situations. Participant P.01 said the following:

In the marriage, we make a promise, right, so until death, we should be part of that when in case of goodness as well as in the worst conditions. So that is one of the key things we always should, I will always remember it.

Similarly, participant 09 stated, "Marital covenant is the key in reminding me to remain faithful in life."

Renewal of relationship every day. A few participants who spoke about it stressed the importance and the ways of renewing the marital relationship every day. Participant P.06 stated, "If this relationship doesn't get renewed, I mean, at least every day through small forms; it could be discussions, it could be having food together, then there could be a problem and we get those indications very early." Similarly, participant P.08 stated, "we remind each other that we are married for a purpose designed by God and need to keep it renewed every day."

Religious Foundations that Contribute to Marital Satisfaction

The participants' responses constitute a major theme that their religious foundations contribute to their marital satisfaction. They narrated their religious background when they were growing up and how it contributed to their marital life. Four sub-themes were identified under this major theme.

Faith tradition of the natal family. Some participants spoke either of the faith traditions of their family or their partner's family, and a few described the faith traditions of both their families. Their description included the elements of their faith, church attendance, and their faith practices at home. Participant P.01 said the following:

One thing I can say is that my parents were very strict. So, I grew up in a very strict environment and in a strong Christian faith. Ok. I see that my mother, most of the time she, used to go to Church, and we had even the regular prayers at home. They also forced me to go to Church and to attend the prayers.

Participant P.05 stated:

My husband comes from a very traditional family. His parents have brought him up in such a way that they make it a point that he, you know, he does everything according to the Church, the laws and rules, and everything they will be following.

Similar religious background of partners. Participants said that similar beliefs and faith practices helped them in their lives. Participant P.01 said, "We both are in the same category, the Catholic belief. It is very easy because our religious prayers are the same, and religious thoughts are the same, and our religious services are the same." Participant P.02 said, "My husband also came from a very religious background." In a similar way, participant P.04 said, "Same background, that has helped us a lot."

Parental model. Participants spoke of their parents' influence on various areas of their lives, like discipline, faith practices, and values. Participant P.01 said, "My parents are also the model for my marriage life." Participant P.02 said, "[My mother-in-law] is good in everything. She prays, and she prays well. She is, she does everything very fast, then she is very loving." Participant P.03 said, "This kind of values, you know, what we have imbibed out of our religious life, are what my parents taught me." Participant P.04 said, "What father and mother were telling, what they showed that only we are doing in our marriage life." Participant P.07 stated, "My father-in-law is very much, you know, he is a person who always stays very close to the Church. He used to encourage me to teach catechism, and so did my husband."

Influence of Christian elements. This sub-theme included the effect of Christian institutions, organizations, priests, nuns, and friends. The participants explained how these aspects had an impact on their lives. Participant P.06 said, "Once I started being actively involved in the Catholic Youth Movement, that gave me a little bit of patience, how to approach in a much amiable way, not like the attacking mode. So that has really helped me." Participant P.03 spoke about the influence of priests in his life. Describing it, he said, "We were so close. You can never imagine that kind of a relationship because it is more than a brotherly relationship." Participant P.05, speaking about the influence of Christian institutions and nuns, said, "I had my education in convent schools, and the sisters out there have influenced me a lot."

Religious Aspects and Faith Community Support that Help in Conflict Resolution and Marital Satisfaction

The participants responded about the religious aspects and faith community support that enabled them to resolve their conflicts and gain marital satisfaction. From their responses, five sub-themes were derived.

Faith/belief of partners. This sub-theme covers the responses of participants on their own faith or belief and that of their spouses. They spoke of how strong and effective their faith is. Participant P.01 said, "I am one of the strong believers of religious faith." Participant P.06 said, "In marital life, faith is really helping us." Another participant, P.05, said that her husband's faith is stronger than her own faith. She said, "My husband told me that He [God] will only take care of it; you don't have to worry. So that was the moment I realized when real storms come, I am nowhere." Regarding faith, participant P.10 said, "We may not get what we ask for, but definitely we will get things of higher value."

Faith practices. The faith practices described by the participants related to their conflict resolution and marital satisfaction are Holy Eucharist, confession, Bible, rosary, personal prayer, family prayer, adoration, lent, fasting, religious services, reconciliation, and renewal programs. The renewal programs are mainly retreats, preaching, teaching, pre-marriage, and post-marriage courses. Most of the participants spoke about these faith practices. Participant P.02 said, "Mainly, it is Holy Eucharist; second, it is the family prayer; third, it is personal prayer, and then, how frequently do you go for confession?" She also acknowledged that she had difficulties in the early years of her married life but managed them through different means, as she said:

There were lots of issues between both of us. Then, slowly, as the years passed by, as we attended retreats and had our regular family prayers, we grew, and I started

to come closer to God. Our relationship also improved. So, in that way I feel that religion plays a big role in our family life.

Participant P.05 said the following:

Whenever there is any trouble in our marriage or anything like that, with God's grace very few times, but whenever we have had that, I usually go and pray and read the Bible. That basically anything, anything troublesome happens I read the Bible. I just go to God and say that you have to talk to me this time, and I really need to speak to you, and I want to hear your voice. Most of the time, it has helped me.

Religious values and life philosophy. Religious values and life philosophy mentioned by the participants were love, forgiveness, tolerance, acceptance of mistakes, marital adjustment/compromise, patience, positive outlook, spending time with family, non-judgemental attitude, religious greeting of each other, mutual respect, and discussion. The participants spoke about one or more of these values and life philosophies. Participant P.01 said, "Christian fundamentals like forgiveness, love, these are the fundamental things. Any dispute or anything we are within, by the end of the day or before the next holy mass, we should reconcile." Participant P.03 opined, "The values of our religion bind our family together." In speaking about how the religious aspects help partners in times of conflict, participant P.08 said the following:

At times, when we have different opinions, we can have differences in opinion, right? When that happens, we follow our family rule of reconciling with each other before sunset. Also, at the end of our evening family prayer, we need to greet each other "peace," for which we definitely need to be reconciled first.

Faith community support. Participants spoke of the support they get from the faith community, namely the parish, prayer groups, family get-togethers, and support from priests, nuns, friends, and companions. Participant P.01 said the following:

Christian faith can grow only in a community life. Though I am a Christian, without associating with a community or a parish I cannot, I cannot express, or I cannot share my faith. Not only that, but a parish always gives a lot of support.

Participant P.02 said, "Ward prayer meetings are really helpful; they are like a family." Participant P.09 described, "Some nuns and teachers have really given some support for our marriage life."

God as mediator. Some participants believed that bringing God as a mediator amid conflicts between partners helped them handle the situation. For some, improvement in their relationship with God was a step forward in their relationship with their partner. Participant P.02 said, "As, from my experience, as my relationship with God improved, there is surely an improvement in my relationship with my spouse." Participant P.06 said, "I specifically always believe that even if there is a problem, there is a solution through God." In the same line, participant P.07 said, "Whenever there is some misunderstanding, I always take it to the Lord." Partners, through prayer, invite God to intervene in their problems. Participant P.04 said, "I sit and pray to God that time, then sometimes God will speak, not sometimes, always He will speak, but that time we will listen to more His words."

Responsibilities and Ministries that Enhance Marital Bond

This major theme constitutes the response from the participants on how their responsibilities and ministries strengthen their marital relationship. Four sub-themes were identified under this theme.

Bring up children in Christian faith and values. Participants spoke about this aspect and their responsibility in their children's faith and value formation. Participant P.10 said, "I am able to bring two children in Christian faith." Similarly, participant P.04 said, "We want our children to follow the faith and values we showed them." Participant P.05 stressed the importance of both faith and values as she said the following:

What I look forward to is that it's about my children. I am not looking at what they will be becoming, like huge success in life, but I want them to be faithful people in life. I want them always to have that root in them. If they become good people, faithful people, and people who help others, then my expectation is fulfilled.

Desire to be a model to children. Many participants expressed their desire to be models for their children and explained the impact of this desire on their marital life. Participant P.01 said, "I wanted to be a good model for [my children]. Show them the model. So, it is a check for me that I cannot go wrong. I need to be good and lead a good marriage life." Participant P.04 spoke of the example she wants to set for the children. She said, "They will take it as an example of how to live together." Similarly, participant P.05 said, "I think as a couple and as parents, we have always made it a point that first of all, we will be models to our children." Participant P.06 described his desire to be a model, which forces him to make behavioral modifications that help him and his family. He said, "If you don't bring down your anger or negative thoughts, then immediately it will start affecting your kids. Therefore, I try to control my anger and change a certain behavior."

Shared responsibilities among partners. Few participants explained how they share their responsibilities in everyday life and how it helps them. Participant P.01 said, "Helping or sharing the work at home is very important for marital satisfaction. We do it and make our children part of it." Participant P.06 gave hints about sharing responsibilities and planning for the future. He said, "A little bit of planning is required, like what should be the future or what we will do. In that, my wife also is helping me, rather than just leaving the way as it comes."

Active involvement in ministries. Most of the participants were involved in one or the other ministries. The ministries they mentioned were catechism, making some donations, helping other families, and being part of various small groups like Happy Families, Evening with Jesus, and Women of God. These activities give the participants satisfaction in their lives. Participant P.03 said, "From our Church, we donate for the poor, the slum dwellers, the downtrodden, and the sick. These kinds of things give me immense satisfaction and pleasure." Participant P.02 explained the ministry she was involved in as she said, "I am part of a ministry called Happy Families." Participant P.01 said, "My church invited me to be part of some church-centered activities and to teach catechism." The above-mentioned themes are derived from the experiences of participants regarding the aspects of religiosity and marital satisfaction. While no single aspect of religiosity can be pinpointed as an influencing factor for the marital satisfaction of these individuals, four major themes and multiple sub-themes have been identified as contributing factors. They are all interrelated, which is discussed below, linking to the theories and existing research studies.

DISCUSSION

Previous studies (Bjarnason, 2007; Goddard et al., 2012; Orathinkal & Vansteenwegen, 2006) suggested a broader understanding of religiosity and further exploration of some of the findings (Acosta, 2020; Antonsen, 2003). Therefore, the present study is an in-depth exploration conducted on ten married Catholic individuals to learn from their life experiences and how the Catholic faith influenced their marital relationships.

Role of God in Marriage and Spiritual Views on Marriage Promote Satisfaction

One of the major aspects of religiosity that bring marital satisfaction to married Catholic individuals is their belief in the role of God in marriage and their spiritual views on marriage. In the psychological explanation of the theory of triangles, David (1979) proposed a Christian marital triangle of God, wife, and husband. The psychological explanation of attachment theory explained by Kaufman (1981) revealed that an important aspect of understanding the attachment theory in the life of a believer would be the concept of having a personal relationship with God, which may be equivalent to human attachment relationships. An investigation (David & Stafford, 2013)(P. David & Stafford, 2013) showed that the individual relationship with God helps the religious communication between partners and improves marital quality. A study done by Antonsen (2003) pointed to the spiritual understanding of the origin and design of marriage and the spiritual experience of God being an active participant in the marriage as part of the marital triangle. Expression of gratitude for the partner (Antonsen, 2003), the concept of the presence of God (Antonsen, 2003; Davis et al., 2018), and dependency on God (Lambert & Dollahite, 2008; Marsh & Dallos, 2001) also seen facilitating marital commitment and relationship. The belief that marriage is forever (Baker et al., 2009; Jacob, 2005; Klausli, 2020) and considering marriage a blessing has helped the partners. Viewing the importance of marital covenant (Antonsen, 2003; Baker et al., 2009; Mahoney, 2005) and its daily renewal was considered a vital part of marital satisfaction. In tune with the theories and previous studies, the present study has revealed that the participants could identify the role of God in their marriage, which, along with their spiritual views, has enabled them to experience marital satisfaction.

Religious Foundations that Contribute to Marital Satisfaction

The religious foundations of the partners facilitate their marital satisfaction. Antonsen highlighted that partners' shared spiritual foundations enabled them to form values and life philosophy. Similarly, it was noticed that a person's childhood religious experiences, lessons from the parents and the family of origin (Myers, 1996), denominational homogamy, and religiosity homogamy (Fraser et al., 2021; Schramm et al., 2012) influence the present life. In line with these previous studies, the participants revealed that their childhood religious experiences, lessons from the parents and the family of origin, and similar religious backgrounds of the partners helped them commit to their spouse and marriage, leading to marital satisfaction. Some narrated that Christian elements such as institutions, organizations, priests, nuns, and friends impacted their religious and marital lives.

Religious Aspects and Faith Community Support that Help in Conflict Resolution and Marital Satisfaction

Religious teachings and practices on marriage play a role in forming attitudes and subsequent marital behavior (Fincham & Beach, 2010; Kelley et al., 2020; Mahoney, 2010). It was observed that religious and spiritual people have better relationships with their spouses (Fraser et al., 2021; Mahoney, 2010; Schramm et al., 2012). Consistent with these observations, the participants in the current study spoke about their experiences of religious aspects and faith community support that helped them in their conflict resolution and marital satisfaction. The personal beliefs of a partner influence the marital satisfaction of couples (Kelley et al., 2020; Khurana, 2017; Sauerheber et al., 2021). A similar result was derived in the current study as well.

Faith practices are the outward observable expressions of a person's faith (Marks & Dollahite, 2001). There are ample studies that connect various aspects of faith practices with marital satisfaction (Goddard et al., 2012; Kyambi et al., 2017; Lambert & Dollahite, 2008; Marsh & Dallos, 2001). Some studies establish faith practices as an instrument of conflict resolution, which eventually leads to marital satisfaction (Kelley et al., 2020; Khurana, 2017; Lambert & Dollahite, 2006; Perry, 2016). The faith practices that facilitated the marital satisfaction mentioned by the participants were various, namely, Holy Eucharist, confession, Bible, rosary, personal prayer, family prayer, adoration, lent, fasting, religious services, reconciliation, and renewal programs. The renewal programs they mentioned were mainly retreats, preaching, teaching, pre-marriage, and post-marriage courses.

Various studies (David & Stafford, 2013; Ellison et al., 2010; Kyambi et al., 2017) noted that religiosity promotes values and virtues like forgiveness, generosity, compromise, commitment, maturity, and sacrifice, which in turn assist couples to keep their marriages stable. A similar result was seen in the present study as well. The three-dimensional construct (Marks & Dollahite, 2001) describes the faith community support in maintaining family ties. Several other studies also highlighted this aspect (Kelley et al., 2020; Mahoney, 2010; Olson et al., 2013). In line with the studies, participants spoke about the support from the faith community, namely the parish, prayer groups, family get-togethers, and support from priests, nuns, friends, and companions. Describing the support, participants said that the faith community was "like a family" for them and were "much attached," which gave them the support they needed, even in times of difficulties.

The psychological explanation of the theory of triangles (David, 1979) describes the presence of Christ reduces marital conflicts, and the psychological explanation of attachment theory (Kaufman, 1981) explains the comfort and safety a believer finds in God. Consistent with these literature claims, many of the participants opined that the mediation of God amid conflicts with their partners had been a helping factor for them to handle the situation smoothly. Some participants said that as their relationship with God improved, their relationship with their partner also improved. Some said, "Even if there is a problem, there is a solution through God." A few described that when there is a problem, they invite God to intervene and "listen more to His words."

Responsibilities and Ministries that Enhance Marital Bond

One of the aspects of religiosity that likely enhances the marital satisfaction of the partners is their positive attitude in taking up the responsibility of bringing up their children in faith and values. It was seen that religious parents used suitable child

supervision and proper methods to educate their children in values (Kelley et al., 2020; Mahoney, 2010). It was established through the individual accounts that most participants had taken their responsibility for their children's faith and value formation seriously. Some said that they are looking forward to their children being "good" and "faithful" in life, and they want their "children to follow the faith and values" they were taught. In that way, the parents want to be models for their children, as one participant rightly pointed out, "I cannot go wrong. I need to be good and lead a good marriage life." The parents wanted to be examples of "how to live together" as partners and to make certain behavioral modifications for that.

Shared responsibilities among partners tell us how their daily divided responsibilities help them in their marital life (Antonsen, 2003; Davis et al., 2018; Mahoney, 2005). In line with this, the participants who described sharing the work at home also mentioned how important it is for their marital satisfaction. Religious duties and spiritual commitments helped the partners to have better marital relationships (Lambert & Dollahite, 2006; Perry, 2016). Most participants mentioned their involvement in ministries or activities and how these activities gave them satisfaction in their lives; as one rightly said, "Those kinds of things give me immense satisfaction and pleasure."

The current study has brought out a breadth of findings. It also brings some new results that give fresh insight into marriage research. They are the following: Consideration of marriage a blessing, Renewal of relationship every day, Influence of Christian elements, and Desire to be a model to children. Finally, the uniqueness of his study is that it specifically examined married Catholics in India and sought to learn about the influence of religiosity on their marital satisfaction.

Implications of the Study

In general, other than contributing to the existing literature on religiosity and marital satisfaction, the current study has multiple implications for professional therapists, counselors, pastoral caregivers, and researchers. It enables them to integrate religiosity into counseling sessions and studies. For those in the counseling field, the results of this study will help to understand how religiosity influences their clients' marriage. The knowledge of this research is beneficial in the individual, pre-marital, and marital counseling. It is helpful to get a deeper and richer understanding of how Catholic marriage's psychological and spiritual dynamics interact, the benefits and challenges of Catholic marriages, and use resources to deal with marital conflicts. This study is beneficial for non-Christian counselors to understand Catholics' faith and unique world and help their practicing Christian clients.

In particular, the findings of this research will help the Catholic Church and the clergy to deepen their understanding of the influence of religiosity on marital commitment. They may use this study's findings to strengthen the marriage bond of their community members. The result of this study can help the Church to be informed of the aspects of religiosity that need to be concentrated in marriage preparation and in strengthening marital intimacy. In this way, the current study benefits married individuals, the Catholic Church, and a whole spectrum of professionals who deal with marriage-related matters.

Limitations and Future Studies

A limitation of this study is related to the selection method employed for the participants. All the participants were self-selected, which means they volunteered for

the study. It may have caused some bias in the findings. Different values, self-reflection, self-awareness, desire to portray a positive experience of marriage, reluctance to admit the struggles in marriage, and emotions during the interview may have influenced the research findings.

The second limitation is related to the demographic aspect. All the participants in the study were from Bangalore, Karnataka, which is not a proportionate representation in the Indian context. Therefore, including more participants from other parts of India might help to have a more comprehensive understanding of the areas of study. Third, all the participants in the interview were in seemingly stable, healthy, and happy marriages, though they have referred to past struggles and conflicts.

The results would have been slightly different if it had included some participants with intense marital conflicts during the interview. Lastly, though all the possible steps have been taken to reduce the researcher bias, including bracketing, conscious ignorance, delineating position, respondent validation, and co-validation, the researcher bias may have crept in due to human limitations and errors.

Future studies can be conducted to investigate any derived themes, helping the Catholic communities in India in the areas of religiosity and marital satisfaction. It may be interesting to conduct future studies to explore the understanding of religiosity and marital satisfaction of Catholics from different parts of the country, with diverse socio-economic and demographic backgrounds. Future studies can also be conducted on separated Catholics to have a broader picture of the effect of religiosity on marital satisfaction. There are also possibilities for extending the outcome of the current study, such as finding the areas of religiosity causing conflicts, finding a model for solving common marital conflicts and developing scales to measure some of the findings of the present study.

CONCLUSION

The current study was conducted to understand the influence of religiosity on marital satisfaction of Married Catholics in India. In the problem context of the increasing rate of marital distress and divorce in India, this study is an attempt to see the role religiosity plays in the marital satisfaction of married Catholics and to recommend its findings to be used to help the individuals.

The need for this study was the necessity of building stronger marriages, the shortage of studies dealing with religiosity and marital satisfaction in India, and the role of religiosity in the marital satisfaction of married Catholics. The research questions focused on the influence of religiosity on married Catholics. The in-depth study on participants' experience brought out an all-encompassing rich result, and it recommends using its findings to strengthen the marital commitment and intimacy of married Catholics.

Author Declaration Form

The authors, hereby declare that the work titled 'Religiosity and Marital Satisfaction of Catholics in India: A Phenomenological Understanding' is an original work, and it has not been published in any form prior to submitting with Community Practitioner Journal and the work has not been submitted elsewhere concurrently. The authors don't have any conflicts of interest and the corresponding author has the permission of co-authors for submitting the work with Community Practitioner Journal.

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