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RESEARCH ARTICLE

EMOTIONAL REGULATION AND MARITAL SATISFACTION AMONG MARRIED MALES

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between emotional regulation and marital satisfaction among married males in south Kerala. Using a quantitative research design, descriptive correlational research design is used to select 100 participants. The Convenience Sampling technique is used for this study. It's a non-probability sampling technique in which the sample is composed of the unites that are most conveniently available in the area. The sample Participants were categorized on the bases of their age between 40-50 and who is married more than five years. The Revised Marital Satisfaction Scale (MSS) created by Roach, Frazier, and Bowden (1981) (1.000) and the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) created by Gross and John (2003) (.142), which measures cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression, were used to gather data. For better understanding, the questionnaires were given out in Malayalam. Findings of the study revealed that there is no significant difference between emotional regulation and marital satisfaction among married males but there is relationship between cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression among married males. These findings show that there are other factors that affect married men's emotional regulation and marital satisfaction.

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Introduction:-

Introduction to Marital Context:-

Marriage is one of the most important social institutions that provides companionship, support, and stability in an individual's life. The quality of this relationship is often reflected through the level of marital satisfaction experienced by partners. Marital satisfaction refers to the extent to which individuals feel content, fulfilled, and positive about their relationship with their spouse. High marital satisfaction is associated with better emotional well-being, effective communication, and relational stability, whereas low marital satisfaction may result in frequent conflicts, emotional detachment, or separation (Fowers & Owenz, 2010). Several factors contribute to this satisfaction, including communication, trust, intimacy, and the ability to manage challenges together.

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Among these factors, emotional regulation plays a central role, as it determines how partners handle both positive and negative emotions within the marriage.

Men in Marriage:-

Men play a vital role in shaping marital dynamics through their communication patterns, emotional responses, and coping strategies. In marriage, men are often expected to fulfill multiple roles such as provider, partner, and parent, which can influence their emotional experiences and relationship behaviors. The way men perceive and manage their emotions directly affects how they engage with their spouses, resolve conflicts, and contribute to relationship satisfaction.

Cultural and Contextual Influence:-

Cultural and contextual factors substantially shape emotional expression and regulation in marital relationships. In collectivist societies, men may be expected to maintain emotional composure to ensure family harmony, whereas in individualistic cultures, expressing emotions may be valued as a form of authenticity and relational engagement (Butler et al., 2007). Factors such as socioeconomic status, educational background, and duration of marriage can also influence men's emotional experiences and perceptions of regulation. Examining these dynamics within specific cultural contexts allows for a more nuanced understanding of how emotional regulation interacts with marital satisfaction.

Challenges Faced by Men in Marriage:-

This study seeks to fill this research gap by exploring married men's perceptions of their emotional regulation and examining its relationship with marital satisfaction. Focusing on men allows for the identification of specific emotional strategies, levels of confidence in emotion management, and their effect on relationship quality. The insights gained can inform marital counseling, interventions, and educational programs aimed at improving emotional regulation skills and relationship satisfaction. Additionally, understanding men's perceptions can help identify gender-specific challenges in marital dynamics and promote healthier communication and emotional intimacy. Men experience particular difficulties in marriage, despite playing a significant role in marital partnerships. Men are frequently encouraged to appear powerful, emotionally controlled, and less expressive by social standards and traditional gender roles. Relational expectations for emotional openness and sharing may clash with the discouragement of vulnerability, grief, or fear (Levant, 2020). Men's emotional functioning inside marriage is further complicated by additional constraints relating to work commitments, financial obligations, parenting roles, and societal expectations. These issues could lead to miscommunication, emotional distance, and misunderstandings, which would ultimately lower marital happiness.

Marital Satisfaction of Men in Marriage:-

Marital satisfaction refers to an individual's subjective evaluation of contentment, fulfilment, and overall relationship quality. High marital satisfaction is associated with greater emotional well-being, improved communication, and stronger relational stability, whereas low satisfaction may contribute to frequent conflicts, emotional detachment, or even separation (Fowers & Owenz, 2010). Emotional regulation plays a pivotal role in determining marital satisfaction, as it shapes conflict resolution, empathy, and mutual understanding between partners. Married men who regulate their emotions effectively are more likely to engage in constructive communication, manage disagreements calmly, and respond sensitively to their spouse's needs, thereby enhancing overall relationship satisfaction (Bloch et al., 2014).

Emotional Regulation as a Challenge faced by Men in Marriage:-

Emotional regulation involves the processes through which individuals influence the type, intensity, duration, and expression of their emotions in response to internal experiences and external circumstances. It is a key component of emotional intelligence, affecting how people manage stress, navigate conflicts, and maintain healthy interpersonal interactions. Within marital relationships, emotional regulation is particularly critical, as marriages often require negotiation, compromise, and frequent emotional exchanges that can either strengthen or undermine the bond between partners. By effectively regulating emotions, spouses can manage negative feelings such as anger, frustration, or jealousy, while enhancing the expression of positive emotions like love, empathy, and affection. (Yildirim & Demir, 2020). Within marriage, emotional regulation is particularly critical, as spouses must manage both positive and negative emotions during frequent interactions. Married men who regulate their emotions effectively are more likely to engage in constructive communication, manage disagreements calmly, and respond sensitively to their spouse's needs, thereby enhancing marital satisfaction (Bloch et al., 2014).

However, Men commonly employ techniques such as suppression, cognitive reappraisal, or avoidance, which influence how emotions are communicated within marriage (Gross & John, 2003). Suppression, or withholding emotional expression, may reduce short-term conflict but can negatively affect intimacy and emotional connection over time. Cognitive reappraisal reframing a situation to change its emotional impact is typically linked to better relational outcomes (McRae & Gross, 2020). Understanding married men's perceptions of their emotional regulation strategies is critical because these perceptions influence how they approach marital challenges and interpret satisfaction within their relationships. The perception of emotional regulation among married males is also influenced by cultural, social, and personal factors. Men from families or communities that encourage emotional openness may find it easier to express themselves, while others raised in stricter environments may rely on suppression or avoidance. Work pressures, financial responsibilities, and family roles also affect how men experience and regulate emotions within marriage. These differences highlight the importance of understanding emotional regulation not just as a general skill, but as one shaped by lived experiences and personal perceptions.

Theoretical Framework:-

Emotional regulation theory and frameworks for marital satisfaction, which highlight the influence of emotional processes on relationship quality, serve as the foundation for this study. According to the theory of emotional regulation, people's capacity to control their emotions affects their capacity to interact with others, resolve conflicts, and maintain healthy relationships. Men's emotional regulation abilities have an impact on communication styles, emotional reactivity, and conflict resolution in marriage, all of which have an impact on marital pleasure. According to the study's theoretical framework, married men's experiences and levels of marital happiness are greatly influenced by their assessments of their capacity for emotional regulation. Emotional control techniques and marriage outcomes are influenced by moderating cultural, social, and personal factors. This study intends to fill a significant gap in the literature and aid in the creation of gender-sensitive marital counseling and intervention programs by investigating married men's opinions of emotional control and its connection to marital satisfaction.

Review of Literature:-

Bloch, L., et al. (2014) conducted a longitudinal study to investigate the relationship between middle-aged and older couples' marital happiness and the downregulation of negative emotions during marital conflict. The Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) and a 13-year, three-wave design were used in the study, which discovered that both spouses' marital happiness increased when negative emotional experiences and behaviors during conflict were effectively reduced. These effects were found to be mediated by constructive communication, underlining the importance of emotion regulation for promoting long-term marital satisfaction. In research of 200 married couples, Shahid, H., and Kazmi, S. F. (2016) examined the connection between emotional control and marital satisfaction. Regression analysis confirmed that emotional regulation is a major predictor of marital satisfaction, and the results showed an important beneficial relationship between emotional regulation and marital satisfaction. Gender differences were also noted, showing that male spouses exhibited better emotional control in their marriages than female spouses.

In an exploratory study of 304 married people, Roslan, S. B., et al (2023) investigated the connection between marital satisfaction and emotional control. The results showed that emotional regulation—especially emotional awareness—and marital satisfaction were positively and significantly correlated, highlighting the essential function that emotional regulation plays in improving marital well-being and overall relationship satisfaction. Scott, R. M. (2009) investigated the connection between 112 married couples' marital satisfaction and reducing emotionality. The results showed an important connection between men's-controlled emotionality and their wives' and their own marital satisfaction. In addition, marital satisfaction was positively correlated with spouses perceived emotional similarity, highlighting the critical role that shared emotional understanding and emotional expression play in maintaining successful marriages.

Need and Significance of the Study:-

Examining married males' perceptions of emotional regulation and its influence on marital satisfaction is crucial, as the ability to manage emotions significantly affects conflict resolution, communication, and overall relationship quality. Although previous research emphasizes the role of emotional intelligence and regulation in marital functioning, there is a lack of focus on how men perceive and implement these skills in their own marriages. Investigating these perceptions can reveal key factors that enhance marital satisfaction, highlight potential emotional challenges, and guide interventions aimed at improving relationship quality. This study is therefore important to fill the gap in understanding men's perspectives on emotional regulation and its contribution to marital well-being,

offering valuable insights for couples, therapists, and family counselors. Although the link between emotional regulation and marital satisfaction is well recognized, most research focuses either on women or on couples collectively, leaving the male perspective underexplored. Furthermore, studies often rely on objective measures of emotional regulation without considering men's subjective perceptions of their skills and their effects on marital satisfaction. Understanding men's viewpoints is vital, as perception influences behavior, coping strategies, and relational interactions. There is a pressing need for research that examines married men's experiences of emotional regulation and its contribution to marital satisfaction. Studying the connection between men's perceptions of emotional regulation and their marital satisfaction is important for both research and practice. It can provide insights into the strengths and difficulties men face in managing emotions within marriage, offering guidance for relationship counseling and support programs. By highlighting the role of emotional regulation, such studies can also encourage men to develop healthier coping strategies and communication patterns. Ultimately, a deeper understanding of this topic can help promote stronger marriages, healthier emotional well-being, and more balanced family relationships.

Method:-

The methodical and theoretical examination of the approaches used in a field of study is referred to as methodology. It is the overarching strategy and justification for the research's methodology. It includes the philosophical presuppositions that guide the study, the choice of suitable methodologies, and the rationale for their application. Research methodology is essential for carrying out studies in a systematic manner. The information concerning the tools and techniques utilized for the systematic gathering of data will be provided by methodology. This section describes the steps that must be taken in order to carry out the study, including the objectives of the study, the methods and techniques that must be employed for data collecting, processing, analysis, and research design.

Aim of the Study:-

To study the emotional regulation and marital satisfaction among married males.

Objectives of The Study:-

- To assess the level of emotional regulation among married male men
- Examine the relationship between emotional regulation and marital satisfaction
- Assess the level of Marital Satisfaction among Married male

Hypotheses:-

H₀: There is no significant relationship between emotional regulation and marital satisfaction among married males.

H₁: There is a significant relationship between emotional regulation and marital satisfaction among married males.

Research Design:-

Descriptive correlational research design was used for the study.

Population and Sample:-

In India, an estimated 45% of the male population is currently married as of 2025. Based on available statistics, Kerala has approximately 8–9 million married men. In South Kerala (including districts such as Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, and Pathanamthitta), a significant proportion of the male population is married, forming the target population for this study. Using a convenience sampling method, 100 married working men aged 40–50 years who had been married for more than five years were selected for the study. Likert-scale questionnaires were used to assess their perceptions of emotional regulation and marital satisfaction. Participants below 40 or above 50 years, those divorced or separated, and individuals from outside Kerala were excluded.

Tools:-

Emotional Regulation and Marital Satisfaction:-

The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ), developed by James J. Gross and Oliver P. John (2003), measures individual differences in the use of two primary emotion regulation strategies—cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression—with a later cultural adaptation by Stefania Balzarotti et al. (2010). Marital satisfaction, on the other hand, is assessed using the Revised Marital Satisfaction Scale (MSS), developed by Roach, Frazier, and Bowden (1981), which evaluates overall satisfaction and adjustment in marital relationships across domains such as

emotional understanding, communication, conflict resolution, financial management, sexual relationship, role responsibilities, and family interactions.

Procedure:-

The study was conducted in three phases. In Phase I, participants were selected based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria using screening questions to determine eligibility; those who did not meet the criteria were excluded, and eligible participants were informed about the study’s purpose, procedures, and ethical considerations before providing consent. The questionnaire was translated into Malayalam for better comprehension. In Phase II, data were collected through physical administration of the Emotional Regulation Questionnaire and Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire, with clear instructions provided to ensure accurate completion of all items. In Phase III, the collected responses were systematically organized and subjected to statistical analysis to examine the relationship between emotional regulation and marital satisfaction among married males, and the findings were interpreted and compiled into a comprehensive research report.

Ethical Considerations:-

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and participants have the right to withdraw at any time without any penalty. All participants were provided with a clear explanation of the study’s purpose, procedures, and potential benefits before providing informed consent. The questionnaires were designed to avoid inappropriate or offensive language, and all responses remained anonymous and confidential, accessible only to the research team. The research was conducted with objectivity and integrity to ensure reliable results, and all sources used were properly cited in APA format. Participants’ autonomy, privacy, and comfort will be respected throughout the study.

Result and Discussion:-

Results:-

Figure 1. Level of Emotional Regulation Among Participants

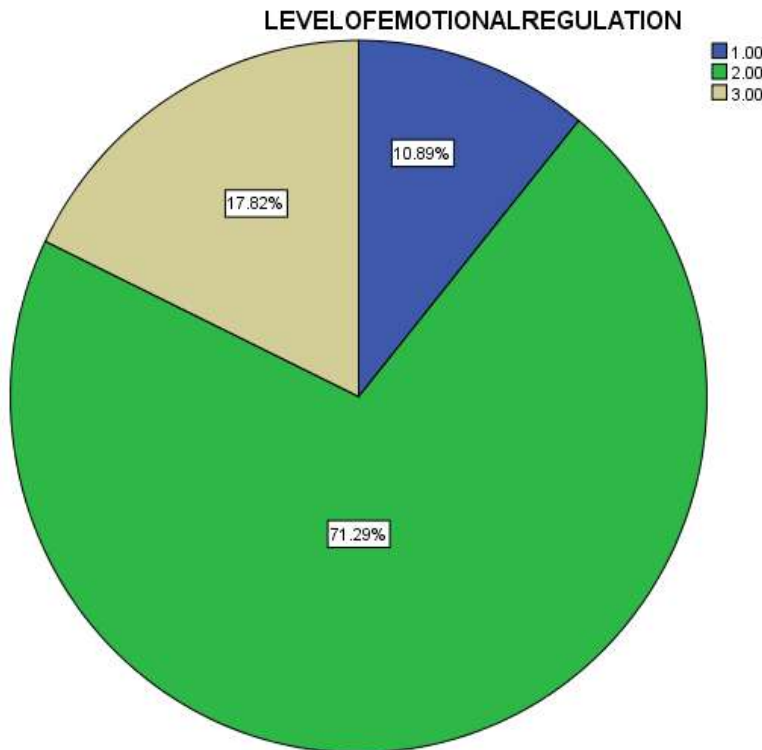


Figure2. Level Of Marital Satisfaction Among Participants

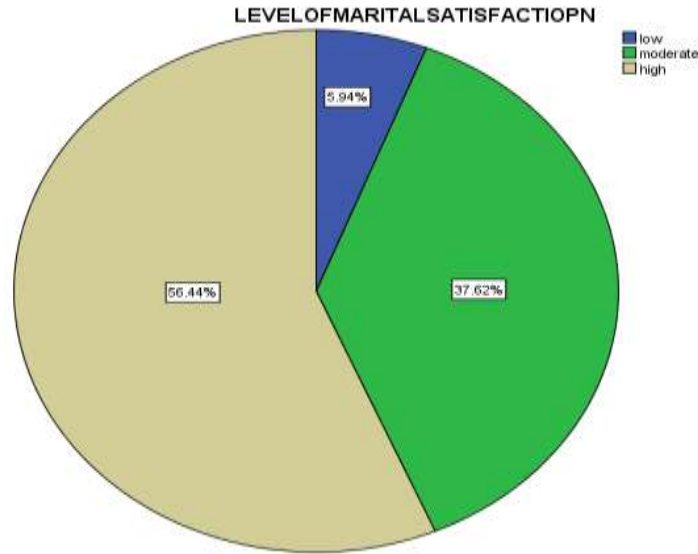


Table 1. Shapiro- Wilk test of Normality

Shapiro – Wilk Test			
Statistic	df	Sig.	
Emotional Regulation	.974	101	.047
Marital Satisfaction	.970	101	.022

*. This is a lower bound of the true sig
 *. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Table 2

Correlational Table			
Marital Satisfaction	Emotional Regulation		
Spearman’s rho Marital satisfaction	Correlation coefficient	1.000	.142
Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.156	
	N	101	101
Emotional Regulation	Correlation Coefficient	.142	1.000
Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.156	.
	N	101	101

Table 3

Correlational Table			
Marital Satisfaction	Expressive Suppression		
Spearman’s rho Marital satisfaction	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.214
Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.031	

	N	101	101
Cognitive reappraisal	Correlation Coefficient	-.101	.615**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.315	.000
	N	101	101

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2- tailed)

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

Discussion:-

According to the study's overall results, most married men (71.29%) exhibited a moderate degree of emotional regulation, indicating that they had an average capacity to control their emotions in marriage. While this degree of control might be sufficient in everyday situations, problems could occur at times of serious disagreement or stress, which could have an impact on partners' ability to communicate, empathize, and understand one another. However, just 5.94% of participants reported low marital happiness, whereas 37.62% expressed moderate marital satisfaction and the majority (56.44%) stated excellent marital satisfaction. This trend indicates that many participants have formed good communication patterns, adaptive coping mechanisms, and emotional adjustment within marriage despite having moderate emotional regulation abilities. The results highlight the significance of developing emotional and social abilities through training, counseling, and supportive interventions because improving emotional regulation abilities may further enhance conflict resolution, strengthen emotional intimacy, and foster long-term marital stability and satisfaction. (Figure 1 & 2) Non-parametric tests have been used for analysis since the results indicated that marital satisfaction and emotional control were not frequently distributed.

The results showed that marriage satisfaction and overall emotional regulation had a weak and non-significant connection, indicating that marital satisfaction is not significantly influenced by emotion management alone. This suggests that other aspects of marital pleasure, such as communication, mutual understanding, and coping mechanisms, might be more crucial. However, there was a negative correlation found between expressive suppression and marital satisfaction ($r = -.214, p < 0.05$), suggesting that males who hide or suppress their emotions typically have lower levels of marital pleasure. Despite having an important correlation with expressive suppression, cognitive reappraisal did not significantly correlate with satisfaction ($r = -0.101, p > 0.05$). In order to improve communication, offer emotional support, and successfully handle problems, marital counseling programs can concentrate on helping married men develop their emotional regulation abilities. This will increase marital satisfaction. To assist males in maintaining stable and healthy relationships, family welfare policies can also include marital counseling services and emotional intelligence training. In order to improve coping mechanisms, strengthen relationships with relatives, and boost emotional support between spouses, community awareness programs and seminars can also encourage married men to express their emotions in a healthy way.

Conclusion:-

The study examined the relationship between marital satisfaction and emotional regulation in married men in South Kerala between the ages of 40 and 50. The results indicated that there was no significant correlation between the two variables and that the majority of participants had good marital satisfaction and a moderate level of emotional regulation, but there is a significant relationship with the emotional regulation subscales which is cognitive reappraisal and emotional suppression. Only married women and couples were the subject of early research projects. This study was the first to be done on married men. Additionally, the research can take into consideration various additional subjects. This suggests that other interpersonal and sociocultural factors might also have an impact on marital satisfaction, highlighting the necessity of counselling interventions that support married men's relationship adjustment and healthy emotional expression.

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