

Interpersonal Dominance in Marital Relationships and Its Relation with Marital Satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

The concept of *Dominance* has always carried a conflict within itself, of whether it is a trait, or a behavioral characteristic. Dunbar (1998) postulates his “*Interactionist Perspective*”, which suggests that dominance is neither just a result of genetic predisposition, nor only a dynamic behaviour, but an interaction between the two. Thus, *interpersonal dominance* in relationships is the product of actor characteristics and situational factors. The present study aimed to understand the concept and expression of this interpersonal dominance in marital relationships and its relation with *marital satisfaction*, within the Indian context. For the same, 20 heterosexual Indian married couples were chosen, and the study followed a *Mixed Method Design*. For the quantitative analysis, a *correlational design* was followed, whereas the qualitative data was subject to *Thematic Analysis*. The results showed that there was a low negative correlation between interpersonal dominance and marital satisfaction, while the following themes emerged from qualitative analysis the dataset-A) Perception of Dominance, B) Indicators of Dominance, C) Process of Decision Making, D) Experiencing Marital Satisfaction, E) Relation of Dominance with Marital Satisfaction.

Keywords: *Interpersonal Dominance, Marital Relationships, Marital Satisfaction*

Across disciplines, the concept of Dominance has been explored through various perspectives and lenses. Traces of research on dominance have been seen in the medical sciences, genetics, anthropology, sociology, evolutionary studies, and psychology. Each domain presents the concept in a different light, focusing on the different possibilities of its meaning.

In the field of psychology, research in dominance became crucial as a part of understanding personality and interpersonal relationships that individuals form with each other. Dominance, and its associated term- Submissiveness, has been a central variable in studying human behaviour, since as early as the 1930s (eg. Maslow. 1937; Flanagan, 1935; Maslow, 1935).

Early researchers found themselves inspired by a series of dominance studies on infra human primates- monkeys (Observation at Vilas Park Zoo, 1936), and approached experimental study to further the concept onto dominance of human beings.

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Since then, under the domain of psychology, dominance has been included in the scope of various sub- divisions, such as personality psychology, social psychology, group dynamics, organisational psychology, amongst others.

1. Theoretical Considerations

1.1. Dominance

Dominance, in the simplest of terms, has been defined as having influence or authority over other people. In the English language, dominance has been widely associated with various words such as power, control, command, influence, authority, and so on.

Another understanding of the word comes from genetics, where dominance refers to the characters that are transmitted to the offspring in an unchanged manner (Mendel, 1865). Kaufmann (1983) defined dominance- submissiveness as a relationship between two individuals in which one defers to the other in a contest situation. Dominance "shows constant realistic adjustment to the individual's success and failure, health or sickness, capacities or disabilities, and the relative outside forces", said Cattell (1970).

Some theorists took to explaining dominance as being better than the other in competitive life situations, and overpowering or even at times, controlling the other person (Hak, 1994), describing it as being superior, giving orders, or the characteristic of having power over another at any given point.

"Dominance behaviors in humans have also been said to not be confined to competitive behaviors; they also include behaviors aimed at ingratiating oneself to authorities, coalition building, and assertiveness" (Mazur & Booth, 1998). Shaver, Segev, and Mikulincer (2011) incorporated behaviors such as asserting one's dominance, authority, rights, or competence; expressing confidence in one's strengths, values, and opinions; deterring others from competing for or exerting control over one's resources; and verbally or physically attacking (or threatening to attack) others until power is restored.

From a psychological perspective, the concept of dominance, although defined vigorously, carries a conflict. As the newer Biopsychosocial models support the integration of the physiological, biological, and social factors that influence a human being (Engel, 1977), yet dominance has been referred to as either a genetic trait, or a behavioural characteristic.

As a personality trait, "dominance designates an actor's characteristic temperament or behavioral predisposition, an inherent part of an individual's make-up caused by genetic, hormonal, physical, and environmental predisposing factors" (e.g. Cattell, Eber, & Tatsuoka, 1970; Ridgeway, 1987). Meaning that dominance is a result of an individual's genetic predisposition to be a certain way, which is accentuated in situations where they are able to portray these behaviours. Looking at dominance this way, deems it a stable trait as Valencic, Beatty, Rudd, Dobos, & Heisel (1998) similarly argue in their "*Communibiological perspective*" that inborn individual traits, or temperament, produce stable behavioral tendencies across various kinds of situations. Another way of understanding dominance, guided by the work of Lewin (1935), has been that "dominance should be understood as residing in the exchange between two or more individuals rather than either individual alone" (Mitchell & Maple, 1985). This perspective, often referred to as "*Social Dominance*" suggests that dominance is a result of a person's interactions with other people and the society, meaning that dominance is present and expressed when the person is exposed to

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certain appropriate situations, wherein they become capable of showcasing dominant behaviours over others.

Dunbar (1998) recently developed, what he called the “*Interactionist perspective*”, which holds that “dominance-submission patterns result not just from (a) actor characteristics that lead to stable behavioral tendencies and (b) situational factors that elicit differential dominance and submission patterns but also (c) the interaction between the two”.

This means that an individual might be genetically predisposed to show stable dominance characteristics, but might require the ideal situation and/or relationship in order to practice that dominance. Rather than treat personality and situation as two separate and additive components, the interactionist perspective views them as inextricably linked, contributing a further, nonadditive element to the equation (Burgoon & Dunbar, 2000).

1.2. Dominance as an Agonistic Behaviour

Dominance has been further differentiated from similar words used in the English language, such as dominance versus dominating, where dominance refers to the characteristic or the condition of being able to influence others, and dominating refers to the act of being dominant towards somebody. Existing definitions also describe dominance as an “agonistic” behaviour, and concentration on aggression (Drews, 1993). Due to its relation with the “pursuit of power”, dominance has been regarded as a threatening and an aggressive behaviour system to possess (eg. Bernstein, 1980; Dunbar, 1998). Dominance in the past has been majorly associated with a negative connotation. It has been conceptualised in several studies as “the need to control others” (eg. Rogers-Millar & Millar, 1979) and as an “exertion of power” (Huston, 1983). This understanding of dominance as a negative concept has led laymen to believe that having the dominant characteristic is not a good thing and that dominant individuals are “bad” for them and their groups (Maner, 2017). The construct suffers from ambiguity and conflicting characterizations because researchers have frequently side-stepped formal definitions and relied instead on implicit understandings of the construct. For example, related concepts, such as power and status, are often used interchangeably with dominance. The problem is compounded by the fact that dominance is frequently equated with aggressiveness and threat. For example, Ridgeway (1987) defines dominance as “behavior directed toward the control of another through implied or actual threat”, and describes dominance relations as ones in which an aggressive act is followed by a submissive one. From this perspective, dominance is an undesirable communication style to be tempered or eschewed (Burgoon, Johnson, & Koch, 1998).

1.3 Interpersonal Dominance

Earlier, when the term ‘dominance’ was mentioned in the field of psychology, it had more to do with the primal instincts of human beings. The ‘Dominance Theory’ (Cummins, 1996) suggests that “social cognition was shaped by the continual need to survive within dominance hierarchies, the social organization that is ubiquitous in the societies of humans and nonhuman animals throughout evolutionary time. High-status individuals are essentially authorities in this type of social organization, monitoring and controlling the behavior of subordinates in order to maintain priority of access to competitive resources”. Dominance was typically thought of as a purposive act in which one utilizes resources for the exertion of power (Dunbar & Burgoon, 2005).

As dominance- submissiveness came to be studied through various perspectives, the importance of these constructs was highlighted, especially in order to understand their role in

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human interactions and relationships that people form with each other (eg. Burgoon, 1984; Kelley, 1978). This led to the emergence of what is called “Interpersonal Dominance”, defined as “the outcome of an interaction of events depending on the interactors and not on the focal individual alone” (Mitchell & Maple, 1985). It means that the “nature and quality of the relationship between any two people exerts unique influence on behavioral displays relative to what each actor might display with other interaction partners. In that respect, relationship features, like situational features, introduce variability in individual performance”. Hence, an interactionist theory of dominance assumes that “dominance-submission is a nonadditive function of both the characteristics of individual actors and the situations and relationships in which they find themselves” (Burgoon, 2000). In retrospect, Interpersonal dominance suggests the roles people take in their relationships and emerges as the mode through which people define their relationships.

Hamby (1996) offers a new conceptualisation of Interpersonal Dominance, defining it as “any attempts that a life partner makes to take control over the other partner”. They further provide three different forms of this dominance in relationships –

- 1) Authority, 2) Restrictiveness, and 3) Disparagement.

Authority, here, refers to monopoly in the decision making power. Instead of both partners in a relationship being equally responsible for taking decisions, the dominant partner demands majority over decision making, and becomes “in charge” of the relationship. Restrictiveness means that the dominant partner often feels the need to limit their significant other, and feel that they possess the right to fully intrude upon the others behaviours, even in situations which do not directly involve them. Examples would be stopping their partner from meeting particular people, or keeping them from visiting certain places. Disparagement, says Hamby (1996), occurs when one partner fails to equally value the other and has an overall negative appraisal of their partners' worth. This may involve feeling that their partner is not equipped enough to do certain things on their own and needs the other in order to persist.

1.4. Marital Satisfaction

Marital satisfaction is often defined as the attitude an individual has toward his or her marital relationship (Fincham and Beach, 2010). King (2016) says that “For researchers, understanding the workings of relationships that contribute to higher satisfaction remains a worthy goal. Identifying contributing factors to satisfaction allows married couples and those in marital counseling and marriage education and enrichment to employ strategies that may contribute to a more satisfying marriage, and likewise avoid other behaviors that may contribute to a decrease in marital satisfaction.” In simpler terms, marital satisfaction refers to the satisfaction one derives out of their marriage, an intimate relationship, with their partner. It ponders upon the married persons own appraisal of their marriage and how much they are appeased in their relationship. Warren, (2000) has indicated that, there no theory of marital satisfaction is consistent and this is due to the dynamic and changing nature of the concept. Yet, Huston et al (2001) find that marital satisfaction of partners is fairly consistent, and marital satisfaction at an early stage may predict it at a later stage. Mackey & O'Brien (1995) found “5 vital components of marital satisfaction - level of conflict, decision making, intimacy, communication, and relational values”. Marital Satisfaction as a concept, since its inception, has been a controversial one. As in the past, it has been called Marital Adjustment, and even Marital Happiness, or Marital Quality of a couple (Gottman, 1990), marking that researchers believed that these concepts were synonymous and all pursued the general idea involving how the marriage is and what has been the outcome of the marriage yet.

1.5. Marital Satisfaction vs Marital Adjustment

Even though Marital Adjustment has been a vague concept from a theoretical standpoint (eg. Fincham & Bradbury, 1987), Adjustment measures have proven to provide a better understanding of Marital Satisfaction amongst couples. Spanier (1976) believes that this might be so due to the dual nature of the term adjustment, which takes into consideration, both the nature of the marriage and the resultant outcome perceived by the couples. This suggests that the two concepts of marital satisfaction and marital adjustment are similar, in terms of what they measure, which is the couples perception of their marriage, their experience of its quality, and the subsequent overall assessment of the marriage by them.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. Dominance and Related Personality Characteristics

Existing literature on Dominance suggests that the characteristic is associated with several other personality traits and behavioural orientations of individuals (eg. Dunbar & Burgoon, 2005, Burgoon, 2000. Moeller, Lee, & Robinson (2011) consider that dominance and submissiveness are related to the response individuals have to others emotions, where Dominance in a person means their tendency of “relative ignorance” of others emotions, whereas how Submissive a person is reflects them “noticing” others emotions.

Another study explores the relationship between dominance and persuasion (Stefansson, 2010), where it was found that the two variables share a linear relationship and that one’s dominance, as perceived by others, does increase the possibility of them persuading others in communication. Buss & Craik (1980) add that Dominance is usually related with the behavioural characteristics of assertiveness, force, and self-assurance. Research further suggests that individuals possessing the dominance trait, are far more prone to attain influence and lead others (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009).

2.2 Dominance and Power

A ton of research has also tried to establish the distinction between the concepts of power and dominance. Power, defined as the “the capacity to produce intended effects, and in particular, the ability to influence the behavior of another person” (eg. Bachrach, 1981; Burgoon et al, 1988), is mostly latent, says Komter (1989), whereas dominance is usually manifest. This makes the bifurcation between power and dominance clearer, yet there is some sort of association between the two. This association is apparent as dominant individuals, often heavily involved in decision making and taking the lead, form increased perceptions of their own power, as compared to other people they may interact with, a theory known as the “Dyadic Theory of Power” (Rollins & Bahr, 1976; Dunbar, 2000,2004). This power that individuals perceive to possess further exaggerates the dominance behaviour, as it motivates the individual to use “control attempts” in the interaction. The “Dyadic Theory of Power” additionally indicates the impact of dominance on interpersonal relationships, as when the dominant individual, perceive themselves as having greater power over the other and start making “control attempts” over the other, the other irrevocably begins to assume the position as the powerless, or the submissive, scared that retaliating may lead to violence, or the end of the relationship (Rollins & Bahr, 1976).

2.3. Dominance in Intimate Relationships

Examining the effect of dominance on romantic and intimate heterosexual relationships in particular, research suggests that dominance of one often leads to the “victimization” of the other (Edalati, 2010). Feminist literature indicates that it is the man in a patriarchal society, who exerts dominance, leading to victimisation and violence of women.

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In intimate relationships, especially in the context of marriage, Sarookhani (2005) says that dominance is usually understood as authority in decision making, meaning that whoever out of the two partners is more authoritative when it comes to making decisions for the family, is considered to be the more dominant. This, Hamby (1996) points out, leads to the initial victimization and the subsequent aggression by the submissive partner, which research has suggested is usually the female (eg. Hamby, 1996; Mignon, Larson, & Holmes, 2002).

Yet, Dunbar (2004) believes that dominance is an essential and unavoidable part of an intimate relationship, due to the inevitability of mutual decisions and interdependence the couple experiences. Additionally, when partners are different from each other and have varying characteristics, the dominant partner emerges and naturally begins to take control over the decision making process, making their partner feel subsided, says Burgoon (1995).

This dominant individual has been found to be the male counterpart usually, as even when their female partners believe that they share an equal relationship, the men believe themselves to be in charge (Sprecher & Felmlee, 1997).

2.4. Indicators of Dominance

In order to understand this better, it is essential to look at the different indicators of dominance, meaning how dominance is manifested and expressed by individuals in intimate relationships. Researchers suggest that these indicators are of two types- Verbal and Non-Verbal (eg. Higginbotham, 1982). While verbal indicators showcase an outward and clear portrayal of dominance, non-verbal cues might be subtle and may go unnoticed. Non verbal indicators of dominance might include posture (Burgoon, 2002), eye gaze (Burgoon, 1984), direct eye contact (Aguinis, 1998), higher voice (Lamb, 1981), amongst others. But, other times, non-verbal cues could be more direct and aggressive, such as violence or physical force (Fitzpatrick & Winke, 1979). Sometimes physical attributes can also present as an indicator of dominance, as suggested by Pisanski & Feinberg (2013), who found that factors such as body size, muscles, height are also suggestive of a higher dominance level in the society, especially in men.

2.5. Dominance and Marital Satisfaction

Although limited, research on dominance and marital satisfaction discusses the impact dominance might have on the quality of marriage.

Some believe that dominance over familial matters may lead to a betterment of family overall functioning and ultimately, increase marital satisfaction as familial situations are handled well and looked after (eg. Haley, 1962). Yet, some suggest otherwise. In a study by Edalati (2010), it is highlighted that dominance by one, usually the male, often leads to “female aggression”, which in turn impacts the marital satisfaction in a negative way. Dominance, he says, causes a divide amongst couples, which might give rise to hostility and might result in the couple having intense negative feelings towards each other, even hatred or resentment. Thus, research still finds itself in a crossroads between whether marital satisfaction is dependent on dominance in a positive or a negative way. Some question if dominance influences marital satisfaction at all (eg. Vanover, 2016), who believe other factors such as support, attachment, time together, and sexuality, are better and often more reliable predictors of marital satisfaction. Billingsley et al (2005) found that the most common indicators of marital satisfaction and marital success include “permanence of relationship, love, sex, compatibility in personality, common interests, communication, decision-making, intimacy, and religion”.

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In the Indian context, however, where marriage is viewed as a sacred ritual, as opposed to a contract like the West, marital satisfaction is dependent on shared values and traditions (Chowdhry, 2007). But, Amato & Rogers (1997) indicate that marital disagreements related to dominance of partners are very much prevalent in India as well.

THE PRESENT STUDY

The present study addresses the gap in dominance literature in the Indian context of only a few studies indicating how Indian couples experience dominance, how it is indicated in marriage and how dominance is handled by both partners; and acknowledges limited study in the area of understanding the concept and expression of interpersonal dominance in Indian marriages.

India has been a historically patriarchal society since the early ages and the societal principles of patriarchy have trickled down onto the institution of marriage in a way that the husband has assumed a more traditionally dominant role in the society and the marriage, while the wife has remained subordinate (eg. Khurana, 2018). This presents a more observable form of dominance which has been seen widespreadly in marital relationships upto the last generation. But, since the establishment of the Feminist Movement and the the era of empowerment and equality, women have refused to be second to men, bringing marriage to a more equitable standard. Thus, it becomes necessary to understand the different expressions of dominance in varied Indian couples, and understand the changing, or similar trends in the practice and expression of dominance across married couples. Alongside, the present study also aims to study the relationship between Dominance and Marital Satisfaction, so as to understand whether dominance has a substantial impact on the level of satisfaction one derives from their marriage. It is important to explore the impact of expression of dominance and its ability or disability to influence the perception of both partners in a married couple.

Objective of the study

To understand the concept and expression of Interpersonal Dominance in Marital Relationships, and its relation with Marital Satisfaction, in the Indian context.

Hypotheses

The present study aims to understand the concept and expression of dominance in marital relationships, and its relation with marital satisfaction, using a sample of 20 Indian married couples.

On the basis of review of literature, following hypotheses were framed for the present study-

- H1: There will be a negative correlation between Dominance and Marital Satisfaction.
- H2: There will be positive correlation between the 3 types of Dominance of Authority, Disparagement, and Restrictiveness.
- H3: There will be positive correlation between Marital Satisfaction and the Authority subtype of Dominance, as compared to the other subtypes of Disparagement and Restrictiveness.

METHOD

The objective of the present study was to understand the concept and expression of Interpersonal Dominance in Marital Relationships, in the Indian context, and its relation with Marital Satisfaction. For the same, the Mixed Methods design was used, consisting of the correlational design to measure the relationship between interpersonal dominance and marital satisfaction, and an qualitative semi structured interview to support the quantitative data

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acquired. The sample for the study consisted of 20 Indian couples, married for at least 5 years and living together. Two standardised scales- The Dominance Scale, and the Locke- Wallace Relationship Adjustment Test, were used, along with a qualitative interview, for the data collection.

Research Design

A Mixed Methods design was used in the study to understand the concept and expression of dominance in married relationships, and the relation between interpersonal dominance and marital satisfaction.

Mixed Methods design is defined as a kind of “research in which the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the endings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or a program of inquiry” (Creswell & Clarke, 2007). This method was chosen for the present study as it was deemed necessary to understand interpersonal dominance from the perspective of an Indian married couple, before correlating dominance with any other variable. The independent variable was dominance, whereas the dependent variable was marital satisfaction; both of which were measured using standardized scales. The Correlation design was employed for quantitative representation, and correlation was found between dominance and marital satisfaction, as well as, internal correlation between the subtypes of Dominance, were found. King & Minium (2014) define correlation refers to “a measure of the degree of relationship between two variables”. The degree of correlation between these two variables is denoted using the coefficient of correlation. The direction of the correlation between variables suggests whether their association is positive, negative or whether there is no association at all - no correlation. Positive correlation means that the variables share a linear relationship, wherein if one increases, so does the other, and vice versa. Negative correlation, on the other hand, means that the variables have a relationship where if one increases, the other decreases, and vice versa. Finally, no correlation suggests that there is no association between the two variables (King & Minium, 2014).

Additionally, to study the concept of dominance in greater detail, a semi structured qualitative interview schedule was used to ascertain how married couples describe and relate with dominance, how they or their partner express it, and what effect it has on their marital satisfaction. A qualitative interview is used to gather information about the experiences, beliefs, and values, of a participant, with respect to a specific area of interest (Lambert & Loiselle, 2007) Interviews are used to collect information in a detailed manner on a particular subject, where instant clarification and elaboration can be sought. The semi structured interview schedule provides an even more flexible process, as they allow open ended questioning and probing (eg. Todd, 2006; Frances. Coughlan, & Patricia, 2009). In the semi structured interview, it becomes easier to have the participant share their own journey and be open in highlighting their personal experiences, rather than just answering set, predetermined questions.

The Mixed Method design was found to be the most appropriate so as to be able to conduct a complete and more meaningful study.

Sample for the study

For the present study, 20 Indian, heterosexual, married couples were chosen using the purposive sampling technique. The purposive sampling technique involves identifying and selecting those individuals who possess a certain requirement which is of interest (Creswell,

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2012), It is a non- probability sampling technique, also referred to as judgement sampling, where the researcher decides what knowledge is to be gained, and selects those participants who may have the appropriate information and would be willing to share it (Bernand, 2002; Patton,2002). The total number of participants were 40, including 20 females and 20 males, all between the age range of 30- 56 years. 9 couples fell in the age range of 40-56 years, while the other 11 couples were in the age range of 30-40 years.

Out of these 20 couples, 10 were living in a joint family and 10 were living in a nuclear family. 17 couples out of the total 20, had at least 1 child, while 3 couples had yet to be parents. Out of the 17 couples with children, 10 had 2 children, and the remaining had 1 child. The age range of the couples children was from 1- 24 years.

Before the final sample was selected, 2 couples fulfilling the sampling criteria were used for the Pilot phase of the study. Out of the 20 couples, data was collected from 15 through visitation and face to face conduction, while 5 couples participated through online video calls via Skype due to the sudden Covid-19 virus outbreak and the subsequent lockdown.

Table 1.1. Age Range of Participants (In years)

AGE RANGE	NO. OF COUPLES
40-56	9
30-40	11

Table 1.2. Demographic Details of Participants

	NO. OF COUPLES
Living in Joint Family	10
Living in Nuclear Family	10
Have Children	17
No Children	3
At Least 1 Child	10
1 Child	7

Inclusion Criteria-

To be included in the study, the couple had to be married for at least a period of 5 years, in a joint or a nuclear family, and had to be educated, at least with a Graduation degree. The participants were to be living in an urban area, within the middle class socio-economic strata.

Measures for Data Collection

- A. The Dominance Scale (Hamby,1996) was used to measure dominance in marital relationships. The scale consists of a total of 37 items, measuring the 3 subtypes of Dominance, as given by Hamby (1996) - i) Authority, ii) Restrictiveness, and iii) Disparagement. Of the 37 items, 14 assessed Authority, Restrictiveness is assessed while Disparagement is measured using 11 items. All items were scored on a 5 point Likert scale, with reverse scoring on the following items (10)- 1, 10, 12, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28, and 37. The total score on the Dominance Scale is 148. Each subscale is scored first, then all subscales are added to obtain the total score on Dominance of the individual. The higher the score, the higher the dominance level, and vice versa.
- B. The Locke-Wallace Relationship Adjustment Test (Locke & Wallace, 1959) was used to measure marital satisfaction. It is a 15 item scale, used to assess the marital adjustment of married and cohabiting couples. The scale yields the total possible scores, ranging from

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2-158 points and consists of 3 kinds of items - a continuum of happiness, a table of the degree of agreement and disagreement, and 6 multiple choice items. Each item is scored separately using the Lock and Wallace Test Manual (1959). The scale has high reliability at 0.90, and has validity.

- C. A semi-structured interview schedule was constructed and used to understand the concept and expression of dominance in marriages, and validate the answers of the tests. The qualitative semi structured questionnaire schedule consisted of nine prepared questions, based on the review of the concept of dominance, on varied themes such as their understanding of the term, its expression by them and their partner, verbal and non verbal indicators of dominance, decision making, and marital satisfaction. The qualitative interview lasted for around 15-20 minutes, per person,

Procedure

Foremost, once the objective of the study was decided, due review of literature was done. Upon the basis of which, the scales for the variables were selected. Subsequently, a qualitative semi- structured interview schedule was constructed so as to create a framework of the questions to be answered by the participants. Initially, a pilot was conducted with 2 couples, P1 and P2. The Pilot study is defined as a “small scale version, or trial run, done in preparation for the major study” (Polit et al, 2001). The pilot study provides an idea as to where the planned research protocol might be disrupted and acts as a buffer to the main study, in order to better equip the researcher. After the pilot phase, the required and relevant changes were made to the interview schedule and the 20 couple participants to be included in the sample were selected using the Purposive sampling technique. The two scales- The Dominance Scale (Hamby, 1996) and the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test (Locke & Wallace, 1959) were printed out for each of the 40 participants. For the 15 couples who were physically visited, the following procedure was used- Firstly, confirmation was taken over a phone call, where the objective of the study was briefly discussed. Upon their approval, the couple was visited and briefed, during which they were told that the scales and the interview schedule were to assess their journey as a married couple. It was also made clear that all information would remain confidential and they are free to opt out of the conduction at any time. Before beginning the administration, one partner was asked to leave and wait in the other room while the other was with the researcher, and vice versa. Each partner was first given the Dominance Scale (Hamby, 1996) and was given due instructions on how to take the test. The participant was free to ask any questions and the researcher addressed all doubts.

After the Dominance Scale was filled, the participant was then given the Marital Adjustment Test (Locke and Wallace, 1959) and was asked to fill it. After both the scales were administered on the participant, permission was sought to go on with the interview schedule and record it. After consent was taken, the interview took place for a duration of about 15-20 mins. After which the participants were thanked and debriefed about the objective of the study, The same was repeated with the other partner, and subsequently all 20 couples, alike. For the 5 couples who participated through online video calls via Skype, the same procedure was followed with minimal interference of technical difficulties.

Thereafter, data analysis was done. For quantitative analysis, Pearson Correlation was computed using the IBM SPSS version 20.0 software. Whereas, for the qualitative analysis, Thematic Analysis was used. The results are discussed in the next chapter.

RESULTS

For the quantitative analysis to understand the relation between Interpersonal Dominance and Marital Satisfaction, the correlation design was used, Results were derived by computing the Pearson Correlation using the IBM SPSS version 20.0 software.

H1: There will be a negative correlation between Dominance and Marital Satisfaction.

Table 2.1 shows the Pearson Correlation between Dominance and Marital Satisfaction, as computed by the SPSS software. The results show that there is a significant weak negative correlation between dominance and marital satisfaction with a value of -0.355 ($p < 0.05$), indicating that as the level of dominance increases, level of marital satisfaction decreases, and vice versa. Thus, the aforementioned hypothesis, that there will be a negative correlation between dominance and marital satisfaction, has been accepted.

Table 2.1: Correlation between Interpersonal Dominance and Marital Satisfaction

		Dominance	Marital Adjustment
Dominance	Pearson Correlation	1	-.355*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.024
	N	40	40
Marital Adjustment	Pearson Correlation	-.355*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.024	
	N	40	40

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

H2: There will be positive correlation between the 3 types of Dominance of Authority, Disparagement, and Restrictiveness.

The following table, Table 2.2, shows the Pearson Correlation between the 3 subtypes of Dominance, measured in the Dominance Scale (Hamby, 1996), Authority, Disparagement, and Restrictiveness. The computed results indicate that there is a significant yet weak positive correlation of 0.398 ($p < 0.05$) between the subtypes of Authority and Disparagement. This suggests that as the level of authority increases, the level of disparagement also increases. However, the correlation between authority and restrictiveness, as well as restrictiveness and disparagement, are found to be not significant, indicating that no such relation between the other two subtypes was found in the current sample. Thus, the hypothesis that there will be positive correlation between the 3 types of dominance of authority, disparagement, and restrictiveness, has been failed to be accepted.

Table 2. 2 Internal Correlation of the Dominance Scale (Hamby, 1996) between the three subtypes of dominance- Authority, Disparagement, and Restrictiveness.

		Authority	Rest	Disp
Authority	Pearson Correlation	1	.174	.398*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.284	.011
	N	40	40	40
Rest	Pearson Correlation	.174	1	-.130
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.284		.423
	N	40	40	40
Disp	Pearson Correlation	.398*	-.130	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	.423	
	N	40	40	40

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

H3: There will be positive correlation between Marital Satisfaction and the Authority subtype of Dominance, as compared to the other subtypes of Disparagement and Restrictiveness.

In the Table 2.3, the Pearson correlation between Marital Satisfaction and the 3 subtypes of Dominance- Authority, Disparagement, and Restrictiveness. The table shows that there is a significant and strong negative correlation of the value 0.596 ($p < 0.01$) between marital satisfaction and disparagement, implying that as the level of marital satisfaction increases, disparagement decreases. The results also show that there is a negative correlation between marital satisfaction and authority, whereas a positive correlation exists between marital satisfaction and restrictiveness. Thus, the hypothesis that there will be positive correlation between marital satisfaction and the authority subtype of dominance, as compared to the other subtypes of disparagement and restrictiveness, has been failed to be accepted.

Table 2.3 : Correlation between Marital Satisfaction and the 3 subtypes of Dominance of Authority, Disparagement, and Restrictiveness.

		Authority	Disparagement	Restrictiveness	Marital Adjustment
Authority	Pearson Correlation	1	.398*	.174	-.190
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.011	.284	.241
	N	40	40	40	40
Disparagement	Pearson Correlation	.398*	1	-.130	-.596**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011		.423	.000
	N	40	40	40	40
Restrictiveness	Pearson Correlation	.174	-.130	1	.107
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.284	.423		.513
	N	40	40	40	40
Marital Adjustment	Pearson Correlation	-.190	-.596**	.107	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.241	.000	.513	
	N	40	40	40	40

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

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

DISCUSSION

The objective of the present study was to understand the concept and expression of interpersonal dominance in marital relationships, and its relation with marital satisfaction, in the Indian context. The purpose was to understand how Indian couples perceive the concept of dominance and experience it, and whether interpersonal dominance in the relationship has an effect on their marital satisfaction. For the same, 20 Indian married, heterosexual couples were selected, who had been married for at least 5 years, and were living together in an urban environment. A mixed method design was followed and it was hypothesized that there would exist a negative correlation between interpersonal dominance and marital satisfaction; that all three subtypes of dominance would be positively correlated; and that marital satisfaction and the subtype of authority would be positively correlated, as compared to the other subtypes of disparagement and restrictiveness. As the mixed method design was used, while the quantitative analysis was done using the Correlation design, a qualitative interview was conducted, which was then subject to Thematic Analysis. Using the IBM SPSS 20.0, the correlation amongst the variables was computed.

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As for the **first hypothesis**, that there will be a negative correlation between Interpersonal Dominance and Marital Satisfaction, was accepted. The results of the present study suggested that there is a negative relationship between dominance and marital satisfaction, indicating that they are inversely related and as one increases, the other decreases. These findings are supported by several findings in the area of dominance research (eg. Edalati, 2010; Dunbar & Burgoon, 2005) which also observe the negative impact interpersonal dominance is likely to have on a marriage. The relation appears to be such that when one partner begins to exert dominance over the other, the quality of the marriage is impacted. This might be due to the control felt by the non-dominant member of the relationship, who is prone to become silent and subdue themselves in order to avoid verbal and physical forms of confrontation, which in worst cases might even lead to termination of the marriage. This perceived inequality in the relationship might lead to a negative appraisal of one's worth, eventually leading to a lower level of satisfaction derived from the marriage. The Dyadic Power Theory (Rollins & Bahr, 1976; Dunbar, 2000, 2004) also predicts that this difference in power in the relation might lead to further "control attempts" by the dominant partner, while the observer partner experiences the "chilling effect", wherein they begin to calculate the losses that might be incurred by them if they were to speak against the others dominance. Although, each couple forms a relationship unique to them, beyond such extraordinary characteristics, difference in the dominance levels might make the partners uncooperative towards each other, therefore, making reducing the satisfaction level. While, in a more power balanced marriage, couples may begin to acknowledge their partner's value to them, making the relationship more meaningful, adjusting, and thus, satisfactory.

Secondly, it was hypothesised that all three subtypes of Dominance, as given by Hamby (1996) - Authority, Disparagement and Restrictiveness, would be positively correlated with each other. The results, although, showed that this could not be supported in the current sample, as only a significant positive correlation was found between the subtypes of Authority and Disparagement. This was also found in the original study of Hamby (1996) as well that Authority and Disparagement had the highest intercorrelation, while the other two variables were "moderately and not correlated", meaning that the negative perception one has of their partner, suggests their tendency to feel and be in charge of the relationship. These results highlight that even though all three are subtypes of dominance, the relativity between the three remains on the lower side due to the vast concept of dominance and the multifold attributes which underlie it. For instance, while explaining dominance, researchers find various sub concepts associated with it, such as the spirit of territoriality (eg. Kaufmann, 1983); power and persuasion (eg. Mast & Cousin, 2013); communication patterns (eg. Dunbar & Burgoon, 2005), decision making (eg. Hamby, 1996), amongst various others. These indicate that since dominance is characteristic of several other traits that one might show, it might be difficult for all understandings of dominance to be related with one another. Thus, Hamby (1996), with a special regard to intimate relationships, identifies dominance as three further sub-categories of Authority (related to decision making power wherein one partner hold the majority in making decisions for the couple), Restrictiveness (related to putting restrictions onto the partner and limiting them), and Disparagement (related to forming an overall negative appraisal of ones partner). These attempt to measure very diverse influences of dominance in a relationship, and determine to study the various aspects in which this dominance might be portrayed between two partners, and what kind of dominance is being showcased by whom.

A significant yet weak positive correlation between Authority and Disparagement, on the other hand, might be the result of how the dominant partner views their counterpart.

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Disparagement, or having a negative appraisal of one's partner's worth, means that one views their partner in a bad light and believes that there are several things which they cannot do on their own, and thus helping them or doing the task on their behalf is required. Authority dwells on this perception as well, as the dominant one obtains a majority in the decision making for the couple, due to their regard of the inability of their partner to take important decisions. Thus, both correlate with each other in the way that disparagement might lead to authority, or vice versa.

The **third and final hypothesis** stated that there will be a positive correlation between the subtype of Authority and Marital Satisfaction, as compared to the other two subtypes of Disparagement, and Restrictiveness. This hypothesis has also failed to be accepted, as there was a strong negative correlation found between marital satisfaction and authority, as well as with disparagement (of value $p < 0.01$). Although a positive correlation was found between marital satisfaction and restrictiveness, it was found to be not significant. This shows that the level of marital satisfaction increases when the levels of authority and disparagement decline, which is suggestive of a presence of an equal marriage where both partners are able to view each other in a positive light, presenting an assured appraisal of each other's worth (Hamby, 1996).

The results are suggestive of the egalitarian basis of a marriage, as in they indicate that couples report a higher level of satisfaction in their marriage, even when they believe that they are both equally placed and valued in the relationship. Authority and Disparagement, which have been found positively correlated with each other in the second hypothesis, both correlate negatively with marital satisfaction; demonstrating that when there is a perception of a more balanced relationship, especially in terms of decision making and valuing each other, satisfaction derived is more than when the relationship is believed to be disequal.

To support the quantitative findings, a qualitative semi-structured interview was conducted alongside the standardised scales, which aimed to develop a deeper understanding of how Indian couples perceive dominance in their relationships, how such dominant behaviours are expressed within their context, and if they believe dominance has anything to do with marital satisfaction. The interview schedule, consisting of nine questions, explored how different couples experience dominance differently and how they relate the concept with their quality of marriage. The interviews of each couple were recorded, transcribed, and subject to the **Thematic Analysis** method (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Thematic analysis has been defined as the process of “identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns or themes within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Boyatzis, 1998). Thematic analysis was chosen for the present study to recognise the dominant features and highlight the commonalities found across the data set. This method made it possible to find a systematic way of organizing the experiences of different couples and analysing them in a way to relate with them with the objective of the present study.

The Thematic analysis was conducted in the following manner: Firstly, the data was familiarised with several times, and initial coding was done, which was a generation of codes in each interview and the addition of relevant data within the code. Next, the codes were grouped to form themes across interviews to organise the data set. Finally, each theme was clearly defined and analysed, and the following report was produced. The following Superordinate Themes emerged : A) Perception of Dominance, B) Indicators of Dominance,

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C) Process of Decision Making, D) Experiencing Marital Satisfaction, E) Relation of Dominance with Marital Satisfaction.

Table 3.1. Themes derived from qualitative Thematic analysis of the dataset.

S. No.	SUPERORDINATE THEMES	SUB THEMES	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE
1.	Perception of Dominance	a. Exercising Control b. Taking Charge	The theme signifies how different Indian married couples define dominance, and what does it mean with reference to marriage.	Eg. <i>“Dominance means having complete power over the other.”</i> <i>“Dominance gives our marriage the direction we need.”</i>
2.	Indicators of Dominance	a. Situational Influences b. Common Indicators in males and females	The theme looks into how dominance is expressed, which verbal and non verbal cues are most often identified, and the response to these expressions.	Eg. <i>“If my opinion is different, she gets angry.”</i> <i>“Yelling, using verbal abuses is frequent.”</i>
3.	Process of Decision Making	a. As a power struggle b. Collaborative efforts	This theme explores how and why one partner may assume a more dominant role in the process of decision making in the marriage.	Eg. <i>“She handles the home, while I take care of our needs”</i> <i>“Our decision making is totally based on discussion and what we both agree on.”</i>
4.	Experiencing Marital Satisfaction	a. Marital Satisfaction across genders b. Factors influencing Marital Satisfaction	This theme enquires what it means to be satisfied in a marriage and what other factors influence it.	Eg. <i>“I think I am fully satisfied in my marriage because my husband is like my friend”</i> <i>“Respect is very important in deciding if you're satisfied or not.”</i>
5.	Relation of Dominance with Marital Satisfaction	a. Negative Relation b. No Relation	This theme extends to if participants believed dominance had any effect on their marital relationship.	Eg. <i>“If one becomes too dominant, other feels oppressed”</i> <i>“Dominance does not matter as much in my marriage.”</i>

Superordinate themes indicate that the themes have been derived on the basis of the questions asked to the participants by the researcher. These superordinate themes have been divided

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into several sub themes, according to the responses of the participants after the realisation of commonalities and differences identified amongst them. Each of these are discussed below.

A. The superordinate theme of **Perception of Dominance**, signifies how different Indian married couples define dominance, and in layman words, what they think it means. Additionally, it also includes what they think are the possible reasons for dominance in relationships, and how they respond to dominance in their marriage. The theme carries those instances where the participants emphasize their understanding and their portrayal of intimate dominance, and what it takes for them to handle it or work with it.

1) When asked participants what dominance might mean to them, the majority of them identified dominance as being controlling, exercising control over the other and having power over them- thus, leading to the emergence of the sub theme of **‘Exercising Control’**, which most understood as a negative characteristic and believed to be an unwanted behaviour, especially in a marriage, as also suggested by Rollins & Bahr (1976), who found that control and dominance are often mistook for each other and perceived as synonyms. This tendency of mistaking power and control with the characteristic of dominance, makes the non dominant or the lesser dominant partner of the pair to feel that every attempt of the dominant partner to share their viewpoint, might be an attempt to control or subdue the other. Most participants, 27 out of 40, suggested that dominance, to them, means when one attempts to control the marriage by getting the couple to do as they wish. This suggested that dominance in marriage, by most, was defined as the habit to control and the practice of having the upper hand in most situations.

As quoted by CW1 (Couple Wife-1), who believed dominance in marriage looks like- *“Doing what I say, and fulfilling all my demands, whatever I say, goes”*.

This clearly states that the dominant partner is assumed to have things their way, with often, little or no regard for the other. Wiggins (1991) also found that dominant partners in an intimate relationship strive for control, influence, and power over the other.

This is also validated by the response of CW3, who said-

“He is dominating because i have to try and convince him a lot of times to listen to what I say and even then, he ends up disagreeing with what I say”.

Meaning that dominance to her, is when her partner is fixed on his stance and tries to make her submit to his recommendations, which might be referred to as orders given. Items in the Dominance Scale (Hamby, 1996) further gave a glance onto the common perceptions of dominance in marriage, such as - *“Things are easier if I am in charge”*. A statement on which, most of the higher scorers of dominance, resonated and strongly agreed with. The plausible reasons for dominance as a controlling behaviour were recollected by CW4 who quoted-

“husband ko ghar sambhaalna hai, aur me housewife hoon toh mera ye karam hai ki me uski saari baat sunoon” ,

meaning that her husband has to take care of the household and she, as a housewife, has the duty to put her husband first. When asked how she deals with this dominance in the relationship, she replied that over the years, she has accepted the fact that he has to have control and while she does intervene, she leaves it up to him. Research also suggests that the roles couples occupy in their families, especially men, is highly influenced by the social constructs of masculinity and femininity (eg. Silvia, 1999). Furthermore, the idea that dominance has to do with attempting to control one's partner might also be attached to media references and culture, wherein individuals grasp onto what they witness around

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them. The expressions of dominance by their parents, might also influence the performance of similar behaviours by couples now.

2) Yet, few couples stated that they thought dominance was an essential part of a marriage and sometimes, does help. This led to the sub theme of **'Taking Charge'**, implying that it is also a belief among some participants that dominance often provides marriage with a direction and takes things forward. 12 participants viewed the concept of dominance in a somewhat positive manner and described it using favourable terms. It was a belief amongst them that dominance is something which is necessary in order to move forward and boost the relationship.

Regarding this, CH5 said-

"Sometimes you have to see the natural leadership of a person, and see that it is their personality to take the lead, foresee challenges and have the skill to persuade".

CH20 also believed that -

"My wife is more dominant as she is just that way, she is a fast action taker, very assertive, and handles and organizes things in the marriage in the way that it gives us the direction we need to move ahead".

This view of the dominant partner as a natural leader, who gives direction and takes charge of the relationship, in order to strengthen it and handle it better, provides a positive appraisal of dominance in marital relationships. To these participants, the dominant partner is regarded as a strong person, able to lead the couple and provide direction and motivation. This presents with a refreshing and little used view of interpersonal dominance, which recognises that even though its association with being agnostic remains intact, sometimes it becomes a motivator for the couple to engage in activities. This account brought into light a more positive connotation of dominance. This might be due to the regard some couples have for each other and the acknowledgement towards their differences, creating a more balanced way of living together and being accepting of one another's distinct personalities.

Two participants from the 40 spoken to, had ideas on dominance which deferred from the rest. One, CH11, believed that -

"The person with the most knowledge in an area, is the most dominant, might not matter if it's the wife or the husband, it depends on the situation at hand that who is going to be more dominant".

CH11 reveals that dominance is something which the situation brings out in the person, rather than a constant state help by either one of the partners, highlighting the flexibility of dominance- submissive behaviours, wherein the existing condition determines who will emerge as the dominant on the basis of their skills, experience, and knowledge, and who will have to adhere.

Another participant, CW17 believed that -

"Dominance is in decision making only, as you know you are being dominated when you feel that you can't make your own decisions".

What this means is that it is believed that dominance is most overtly visible in marriage when a decision is to be taken and it is felt that weightage in being able to make the decision is unequal and imbalanced and that is how one finds out that they are being dominated or being dominant.

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B. On the theme of **Indicators of Dominance**, the researcher aimed to look into how dominance was being expressed and made clear in the marital relationship, and what kind of verbal and non verbal cues of dominance were being showcased amongst Indian couples. A further classification of gender differences in indicators of dominance was also attempted.

Amongst the verbal and nonverbal cues expressed, says Dunbar (2014), are changes in voice modulation, facial expression, and even physical or verbal instances of violence; a stiff posture, direct and intense eye contact, not looking away are cues also confirmed by Burgoon et al (1988) and Lamb (1981). While a loud voice, shouting and physical manifestations of anger (such as reddening of face, faster heart beat) were the most common indicators, non verbal cues such as facial expressions and eye gaze were also experienced by non or lesser dominant partners.

1) These seemingly universal and cross cultural cues, present themselves in varying and unique situations, letting the theme of **'Situational Influences'** emerge. It refers to the specific situations and happenings in which certain non-verbal and verbal cues are expressed and experienced. This theme aims to understand the different conditions that make the dominant partner express their dominance and showcase the related indicators in the relationship.

One such condition is when the pair find themselves in a disagreement, which 10 of the 20 couples appertain to the reason for expression of dominance. This means that these are the events where the dominant partner felt that their spouse was not agreeing with them or had gone against something they expected or wanted. As CH1 described-

"If my opinion is different from hers, she gets angry at me when I don't agree and eventually most times i have to give up just to end the fight".

Responses like these indicate that dominant persons may find themselves being affected by the disagreement or retaliation of their partners.

Another participant, CH11 reported that-

"We only ever argue when she disagrees with me. In that case, I may get angry, and raise my voice at her but only because I think she does not support my decision and that I don't like".

This further suggests that it is important for the dominant partner to feel in control and be under the impression that importance is being given to them and their ideas and opinions. Findings of Frieze & McHugh (1992) propose that these situations could be viewed as power attempts by the dominant partners. The degree of dominance is presented when one partner decides and directs the behaviour of the other, by creating such an environment where disagreement results in adverse actions (Millar & Rogers, 1987). Here, expression of dominance not only takes an overt form, but also results in a confrontation between the two individuals.

Secondly, most couples, 6 out of 20, felt that dominance was witnessed in the case where the submissive partner was viewed as deficient and not able to perform upto the mark set by the dominant partner. These conditions are seen to occur in the case where the Disparagement level is very high (Hamby, 1996).

Such was the case with CH4, who also obtained a very high score on the Disparagement subtype of dominance on the Dominance Scale, who claimed that -

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“I am forced to be dominant in the relationship because my wife is always confused as to what to do and i have to guide her all the time as she is not logical enough to handle things”.

The negative appraisal of their partners' worth and value, also leads to an overt expression of dominance in the marriage. Not only this, but the kind of language and wording used to denote the lack of worth perceived, further indicates that it is deemed the fault of the submissive partner. The submissive partner is looked down upon and the dominant one acts as if it is because of their incapacity. This although represents a very apathetic display of the relationship, might not always turn into a confrontation due to the agreeableness of the lesser dominant.

CW2 also described her situation along these lines, as she quoted-

“I have to take control as my husband is not able to understand any situation, he does not want to connect with me, simply does not understand me”.

These context specific indicators of dominance might be so due to a number of individual and familial factors. As an individual, age of the partner as well as the duration of the marriage may influence the way one begins to showcase their dominance in their marriage. For instance, an older couple, having been married for a long time, could be well aware of the personality and the behaviours of each other in a way which might make conditions predictable and thus, more appropriate expressions. Another factor which might influence the intensity of showing dominance, might be the type of family one has, whether they are living in a joint family or a nuclear family. With a joint family, with other members having access to the couples lives, extreme indicators of dominance might be suppressed and kept on the down low, as compared to couples living alone. Having children might also influence the way dominance is experienced in the marriage, in the aim of doing what's best for the child and playing the role model. Demographic factors such as the living conditions and the affluence of couples may also be responsible, with couples feeling freer to behave as they wish, with no one around to hear them, as in the case of couples living in their own houses and bungalows, as opposed to couples living in flats or apartments where self-expression might have to be monitored for the sake of social acceptance and liking.

It was also noted that 4 couples reported very calm environments and very few expressions of interpersonal dominance in their marriage and reported that even in the face of disagreements and arguments, neither of the partners indicated any kind of dominance. This was supported by the couples' scores on the Dominant Scale, and these couples - C7,C10,C11,C19- scored very closely, implying similar levels of dominance, that too on the lesser side.

2) The subtheme of **‘Common Indicators in Males and Females’** saw how males and females are prone to showcase their dominance in similar ways. It emphasises that while past research indicated that gender differences in the expression of dominance might be present (eg. Ansell, 2008), such was not found in the present study, where couples reported somewhat similar expressions and experiences of dominance, regardless of whether the wife or the husband took on the dominant role. As claimed CW1, stating the account of her husband, who she believed to be more dominant-

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“My husband, when upset, raises his voice to an extent where I get scared and wish for him to calm down, sometimes he gets so angry that I myself can not foresee what might happen”

Women found to be more dominant in the marriage, showcased raising of the voice and being loud as well, as said by CH3 -

“ She gets very upset and starts yelling and I have to leave the room just to give her the space and take mine as well”.

According to the recorded observations, it was found that dominant partners, regardless of gender, expressed their dominance with similar kinds of indicators. Out of which the most common were yelling, raising their voices, and angry expressions. Although, in couples where husbands were perceived as more dominant, 9 out of 20, few wives also reported more aggressive behaviours such as verbal violence, use of abusive words, raising their voice in public settings, and even physical violence in extreme cases.

These responses suggest that even though no such gender difference is reported, men are observed to have more intense and aggressive expressions. (eg. Campbell, 1992; Hamby, 1996). This may be due to the social construct of masculinity, which promotes a certain kind of “image” that men are supposed to have, especially in relationships, where they are expected to be stronger and more powerful, as compared to their female counterparts.

C. Another broad theme which emerged in the interviews, was of the **Process of Decision Making**. The process of decision making is central in identifying who takes the more dominant position in an intimate relationship, especially as monopoly of decision making results in authority of one over the other (e.g. Hamby, 1996).

1) Decision making was either understood as ‘**As a Power Struggle**’ between couples with both partners being different from each other, having clashes in opinions, beliefs, and values. As a power struggle, decision making becomes a task where both partners have their own viewpoints and aim to influence each other to get the other to agree. Such was witnessed with regard to 5 couples, one of them being CW4, who stated-

“When we have to take a joint decision, it becomes impossible to reach a conclusion, as we disagree a lot and when neither is ready to budge from their positions, I do what I want and then deal with the consequences later”.

This response demonstrates that decision making becomes a hostile process as either is unwilling to give up their position and therefore, such a situation might occur where scope of a fight is increased and both try to overpower each other. Here, unity between partners, which leads to growth in a relationship is missing. Rather, both partners in their attempts are seen to be following their personal and selfish endeavours.

2) Whereas, for most, decision making took place as ‘**Collaborative Efforts**’, suggesting that the person with the expertise pertaining to the area of the decision might end up taking it, with due discussion and recommendation. Majority of the couples, 13 out of 20, believed that the best way to make a collective decision is to discuss and engage with each other. CW8 said-

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“Since it is just the two of us in our family now, we have to make our own choices and decide what is best for the both of us. I have been blessed in this way as we both always want the other to be happy, so all our decisions are mutually taken, which we both think is right. And in case, we go wrong, we both take it as a lesson and move on from it together”.

CH5 also replied that -

“Decisions in our marriage are taken on the basis of who has more knowledge about the certain thing, like if it is related to the kids, I leave it completely up to her, but if decision is financial or related to what car we will buy, what house we will live in, etc, that is all me”

Many such other accounts reflect on the decision making process as a positive process, which makes their relationship stronger. As said by CW20-

“How we make our decisions makes our marriage better, and stronger, because if you take a stand and say, I am not doing this, this is not happening, then you would lose out”.

It is clearly stated that a discussion based, collaborative form of decision making, results in the perception of a fairer, more equal, and uniform relationship.

Whether decision making is a power struggle or a discussion based on relevant experience of the pair, is dependent on various factors.

Kenny & Acitelli (1989) proposed that different couples have different strategies of decision making as “Couples frequently make discretionary decisions. They have to decide how much money to spend on a car, how long a vacation to take, how many years to wait to have children, and how many persons to invite to a party. These decisions differ from those in laboratory research because the correct answers are not known and often cannot be known”, thus making it difficult to differentiate which way of arriving to a conclusion is the most appropriate.

Another factor might be the kind and the nature of the decisions to be taken by the couple. For instance, couples with children might be faced with more crucial decisions, as compared to couples without children pursuing their personal interests and desires. In joint families, the process of decision making also changes as it is not just two people but a family to look after and care for, which might influence the way decisions are being made.

Decision Making could also be influenced by the duration of the marriage, as a few participants reported as well, that initially decision making felt like a war and both wanted to win over the other, but later as couples grow together, they find that making decisions together keeping in the mind the best for both of them, is what matters the most.

This indicates that dominance varies according to the situation and the context, inferring that dominance in the marital relationship could be more dynamic than static and could shift from one partner to the other, or lie with both.

D. On “**Experiencing Marital Satisfaction**”, it was understood how different individuals defined marital satisfaction and what criteria, according to them, helped them decide whether they are satisfied in their relationship or not. The subjective experiences of couples in their marriages were explored and paid attention to. How they themselves described their

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relationships and how their description indicated what their marriage meant to them. Participants were asked to rate how satisfied they are in their marriage on a scale of 1-5 with 1 being the least and 5 being the highest, after which they were asked what satisfaction meant to them and why did they give it the score they did.

1) **‘Marital Satisfaction Across Genders’** - There was observed a typicality in the answers given by the wives versus by the husbands, in this particular theme, consistent with the findings of Ayub (2012). Women tended to equate satisfaction with how comfortable they felt in their marriages and how much of a “friend” their partner was to them. CW2 was found reflecting on her marriage and discovering that having had an arranged marriage, she felt satisfied as her husband had become her closest friend, someone she could share things with and enjoy residing with. To her, satisfaction was them being friendly, supporting each other and confiding in one another. Whereas, almost all (18 out of 20) husbands found satisfaction in whether their wives fulfilled their needs.

As quoted by CH5,

“I am fully satisfied in my marriage because my wife fulfils all my needs- she cooks for me, looks after me, and is just always there for me”.

It was also observed that most wives reported to be less satisfied in their marriage, than their husbands. 12 out of 20 wives, reported a lesser level of marital satisfaction, than their husbands. When asked why so, replies ranged from wives wanting their husband to be more understanding, to them helping around the house more”.

CW3 stated-

“I just want him to be more receptive to my needs and understand what I need from the relationship too, it doesn't work one way, if i fulfil his needs, he also should take care of me”.

Several family researchers also suggest that women report lesser marital satisfaction (Connides, 2001) as men are historically proven to benefit more from marriage than females due to the subordinate roles that females still play in the familial settings (Bernard, 1972). Women have to take care of the house, family, and children, which burdens them more. This combined with negligible or little help from their husbands might make wives feel overworked and responsible.

2) A further theme of **‘Factors influencing Marital Satisfaction’** also emerged where the different factors, as suggested by the participants were understood. It was observed that marital satisfaction of participants was determined by respect and love they received from their partner, adjustment to each other, being friendly, understanding each other, and the degree to which needs are fulfilled. Sexual relations, friendships outside the marriage, and engaging in activities together were also explained to be contributing factors.

3)

Gender differences were found here as well, where women assumed predictors of marital satisfaction to be how much their partner understood them (19 out of 20), whether they acknowledged their efforts (5 out of 20), how much their husbands contributed in the housework (9 out of 20), and whether the pair indulged in outside interests together (15 out of 20). Whereas men were more likely to derive marital satisfaction from how available their partners were to them (10 out of 20) and how much their wives cared about them (17 out of 20). Ayub & Iqbal (2012) found that gender differences were found here as well when females were more satisfied when

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their partner was understanding and adjusting, whereas males would be more satisfied in their marriage when their partner was educated, understanding and sexually responsive.

E. Finally, to dig deeper into the relation between interpersonal dominance and marital satisfaction, the interview extended the question as to if participants believed dominance had any effect on their marital relationship. Hence, the theme of **Relation of Dominance with Marital Satisfaction** emerged.

1) **‘Negative Relation’**- Most participants (15 out of 20 couples) , supported the findings of the present study of there existing a negative correlation between the two, meaning decrease in one leads to an increase in the other and vice versa. Several participants claimed that an individual's dominance would be the the worst thing than could happen to a marriage, as according to them, if one partner is too dominant, it would lead to the other feeling oppressed and not as important, which would eventually lead to a breaking point, where the relationship could be even terminated. This idea finds itself connected to the Dyadic Theory of Power (Rollins & Bahr, 1976; Dunbar, 2000,2004), suggesting that when powerless partners perceive losses more than profits in the relationship, they consider termination. Other participants, in gentler tones, also believed that dominance impacts marital satisfaction as both want to be balanced and equal in the marriage and would refuse to be “taken for granted”.This impression found amongst the participants made the researcher acknowledge the importance of interpersonal dominance in predicting the marital satisfaction of couples. Most couples reflected on their marriages and perceived that dominance was to have a negative influence on marital satisfaction. CH17 said-

“No doubt that dominance would decrease my satisfaction as if we both do not feel equal to each other and do not have equal say, this marriage will mess up and an aura of hatred might develop” .

CW15 claimed-

“If one is too dominant, the other might feel suffocated in the marriage and the relationship, so definitely dominance by one influences satisfaction because if you don't get the space to be open and share your feelings, then how will you live with the person for the rest of your life?”

A negative relation between dominance and marital satisfaction, is reported by the participants. Sadikaj et al (2016) found that higher dominance is related to the negative affect of the submissive partner, which ultimately, decreases the satisfaction they get from their marriage. They say that as dominance is experienced in a relationship, the person begins to question their autonomy and importance. This association of being dominated and a negative sense of self, results in questioning of the quality of the relationship, thus, lowering satisfaction.

Furthermore, it was interesting to find that participants who had been found more dominant were also the ones to believe that dominance shared a negative relation with marital satisfaction.

2) **‘No Relation’**- A few couples, 5 out of 20, indicated that dominance does not matter as there are more important factors in deciding satisfaction. Supporting this claim was CW11, who said-

“Dominance does not affect me as much as other things, such as what kind of relationship are we having and what are we doing to make each other happy, that is how i decide my satisfaction” . Research is also indicative of several other attributes

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influencing marital satisfaction, such as philosophy of life, sex and affection, and personality (eg. Locke & Wallace, 1959). Yet, the marital satisfaction referenced in the present study was asked to be just in terms of dominance and its effect.

It was noted that no participants described the relation between dominance and marital satisfaction as a positive one.

As per the qualitative findings of the present study, most participants suggested that a negative relation exists between interpersonal dominance and marital satisfaction. These results support the quantitative finding which concludes that there exists a negative correlation between interpersonal dominance and marital satisfaction.

The present study generates 5 superordinate themes, which indicate and additionally, support the quantitative findings computed. Yet, it is to be kept in mind that these themes might not be generalizable due to the researchers' interpretation of the participants' narrative. The themes derived are a product of the researchers own data, interview skills and probing, values and beliefs, and depict a singular view of the phenomenon. It is also to be recognised that the participants' responses were heavily influenced by the researcher's presence and way of conduction. Thus, it is viable to reach different conclusions and findings while attempting a similar study as there is no one reality, which is able to explain the complex and dynamic concept of dominance.

CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to understand the concept and expression of interpersonal dominance in marital relationships and its relation with marital satisfaction, in the Indian context. While existing literature highlights the importance of understanding dominance in intimate relationships, research in India has found to be limited in terms of studying dominance in the context of marriage. Being a historically patriarchal country, Indian marriages experience dominance as an expectation. Yet, with each generation, couples begin their own journeys and face what comes their way. The results of the present study indicated the negative relation between interpersonal dominance and marital relationships, and the concept and expression of dominance as realised by Indian married couples, was observed to be consistent with the finding.

Limitations of the Present Study

- Despite the contribution of the study in understanding interpersonal dominance in marital relationships, the study was subject to certain limitations.
- The sample size of the study remained limited, a result of which could be non-generalizability of the results obtained.
- As the study attempted to understand a sensitive concept of dominance, which might not be comfortable with everyone to be open about, the phenomenon of social desirability intervenes and impacts the quality of the responses in the study.
- Furthermore, a Correlational research design was followed, and due to the lack of control of the environment, a cause and effect relationship amongst interpersonal dominance and marital satisfaction could not be established.
- A time constraint was observed, without which, a much deeper understanding could be derived and a richer study could be produced.
- Finally, due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown, all participants could not be met face to face, and 5 out of the 20 couples had to be interviewed through online video calls, via Skype. This made non verbal observations

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by the researcher difficult and the body language of the participants could not be distinguished.

Future Implications

- The present study allows for various opportunities for future research. Further research would be necessary to advance literature in the area of Interpersonal Dominance, both as a concept and as a practice amongst individuals. Further development of the concept would also result in elaborating the results and findings of this study.
- Firstly, the expression of dominance could be studied in the context of comparison in terms of younger and older couples. As the inclusion criteria for the present study included married Indian couples for a period of 5 and more years, experiences in the earlier and later years of the marriage differ in terms of the need to showcase dominance over the other. A comparison on how newly married couples and older couples understand and express dominance, would lead to the further exploration of interpersonal dominance as a dynamic behaviour.
- Second, interpersonal dominance in marital relationships could also be studied in the perspectives of males and females, to generate knowledge on how gender plays a role in the expression of dominance, if any.
- The present study could also be extended in longitudinal ways, where changes in the expression of dominance in intimate relationships could be studied over a long period of time, so as to observe whether dominance varies with spending more time together and getting to know one's partner better.
- An Experimental study could be conducted to further study the relation between Interpersonal Dominance and Marital Satisfaction by controlling variables in a laboratory setting, so as to establish a cause and effect relationship amongst the two. Demographic variables, such as financial status, living conditions, and family type could be controlled, in order to reach a generalisable conclusion.
- Lastly, the three types of Dominance, as given by Hamby (1996) could be studied further so as to study the change in these concepts with time.

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Conflict of Interest

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