

Impact of Parental Status on the Effectiveness of Online The Gottman Method in Improvement in Relationship Quality: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

As the use of digital technologies grows, mental health resources have become more and more available. A comparative analysis, depending on parental status, was essential to comprehend the effectiveness of particular practices in couple therapy, especially The Gottman Method that was implemented through an online mode. The researchers particularly compared the results of the couples with children and the couples without children. The sample size was 100 people, and it was split into two equal groups: couples with children ($n = 50$) and couples without children ($n = 50$). Participation in the workshop did not require both partners to attend the workshop. The Quality of Marital Relationship Scale (QMRS) was given twice. The first assessment was done before the intervention, and the second assessment was done after 1 month of the intervention. The Gottman Method was provided in a fully online form. The findings showed that both groups showed a great improvement in the quality of relationships after attending the online Gottman workshop. Couples that did not have children showed statistically greater improvement as compared to Couples that had children. The results indicate that digital interventions are very useful in administering workshop-based couple therapy interventions. The rates of improvement were different, which points to parental status as a significant factor in the speed of relationship education absorption and application..

Keywords Gottman Method, Relationship quality, online intervention, Parental status, Couples therapy, Digital mental health.

Introduction

Digital technology has been introduced in psychological practice, transforming mental health care access. In the case of someone who is currently suffering in a relationship, the frequent logistical obstacles of time and commuting, as well as childcare, tend to block people from accessing the services of the traditional clinical realm. Consequently, these structural access problems lead to the failure of many needy couples to regularly receive community-based relationship education (Urganci et al., 2024). Online interventions become a critical solution since they can deliver scientifically based therapies to the home setting.

The Gottman Method is a rigorously researched and scientifically proven way to enhance relationship dynamics. It is based on decades of observational research, and it is geared towards the development of friendship, constructive conflict management, and shared meaning. Although the overall success of the Gottman Method has been sufficiently proven, scholars need to explore the impact of demographic variables on its overall success when administered online. It is also imperative to provide such tools in convenient formats to create healthy relationships and ensure their long-term efficacy (Barden et al., 2024).

Parental status is one of the most influential variables in relationship dynamics. The shift to parenthood brings about special stressors that radically change the way couples interact (Leth Nissen et al., 2023). The purpose of this study is to examine the overlap between parental status and online therapy. Through a comparative analysis of the results of an online Gottman Method workshop between individuals with children and those without, this

study aims to identify the effectiveness of digital mental health instruments and how family structure influences therapeutic success and long-term sustainability.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Gottman Method Framework

The Gottman Method is based on a systematic model referred to as the Sound Relationship House. Interventions concern actionable skills, including softening argument startups, accepting influence, and practicing physiological self-soothing. Relationship education programs based on these elements have been proven to be effective in reducing relationship aggression (Karantzas et al., 2023). These programs also change relationship issues to give desirable results in overall satisfaction (Kanter et al., 2023). Knowledge of how certain elements of the program affect romantic relationship education can guide clinicians to more effectively adapt their methods for diverse demographic groups (Kantor et al., 2023).

2.2 Parental Status as a Modifying Variable

There are vastly different environments in which couples with children and couples without children coexist. High-risk couples, which can frequently include highly stressed parents, have various baseline vulnerabilities compared to low-risk couples without children (Conradi et al., 2023). Parents often go through periods of extreme sleep deprivation, financial distress, and coparenting conflicts. These circumstances greatly restrict the time and energy available to practice new relationship skills. On the other hand, couples who do not have children tend to have more time and cognitive bandwidth to concentrate on the development of intimacy.

Moreover, relationship education outcomes are strongly predicted by a perceived common need to change (Crapo et al., 2023). When only one of the partners participates in a workshop, the other partner can be opposed to the application of the new skills. This process can be additionally complicated by the fact that children are always present and demanding in the family.

2.3 Effectiveness of Digital Mental Health Interventions

Empirical support of the use of the digital platform to provide psychological interventions has become ubiquitous. The latest evaluation of Gottman Seven Principles Couple Enhancement Program showed that the online versions are very effective and the results can be achieved like in a face-to-face setting (Zahl Olsen et al., 2024). Digital workshops are an easy access to relationship education. These allow the participants to engage with clinical material without the logistical problems of having to go to traditional therapy offices.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Participants

The research design used in this study was comparative longitudinal. A total of 100 participants were picked through online communication and community sampling. The sample of the study was stratified in two equal groups based on their parental status. The workshop was optional and did not require both partners in a relationship to participate in it; each partner was free to participate in the workshop and apply the learned frameworks in his or her relationship.

Table 1: Baseline Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Characteristic	Group 1 Couples With Children	Group 2 Couples Without Children	Total Sample
Total Participants	50	50	100
Average Age	35.4 Years	31.2 Years	33.3 Years
Average Relationship Length	7.2 Years	4.5 Years	5.8 Years
Gender Breakdown	30 Female, 20 Male	28 Female, 22 Male	58 Female, 42 Male
Partner Also Attended	12 Participants	15 Participants	27 Participants

3.2 Intervention Procedure

The intervention itself involved Gottman Method, which was delivered in the form of an online structured workshop. The training included basic Gottman concepts within a given time frame. These principles included Love Map creation, facing into connection bids and responding appropriately to the Four Horsemen (criticism, defensiveness, contempt and stonewalling). The sessions were completely online, and participants could attend via their PCs or mobile devices.

3.3 Measures

Quality of Marital Relationship Scale (QMRS) was the most important outcome measure. It is a standardized measure assessing various domains of relationship functioning. The scale measures general satisfaction and particular areas like communication and conflict resolution.

The Quality of Marital Relationship Scale was given twice to measure the improvement and the statistical differences across time:

1. **Prior to Intervention:** Administered just before the online workshop commenced to establish a baseline score.
2. **One Month Post-Intervention:** Administered one month after the workshop's completion to evaluate the retention, practical usage of the material, and short-term intervention efficacy.

4. Results

The scores of the QMRS were statistically analyzed to compare the two groups and detect any effect of the online workshop on the two groups. Analysis was carried out using formal statistical testing software (JASP Team, 2023).

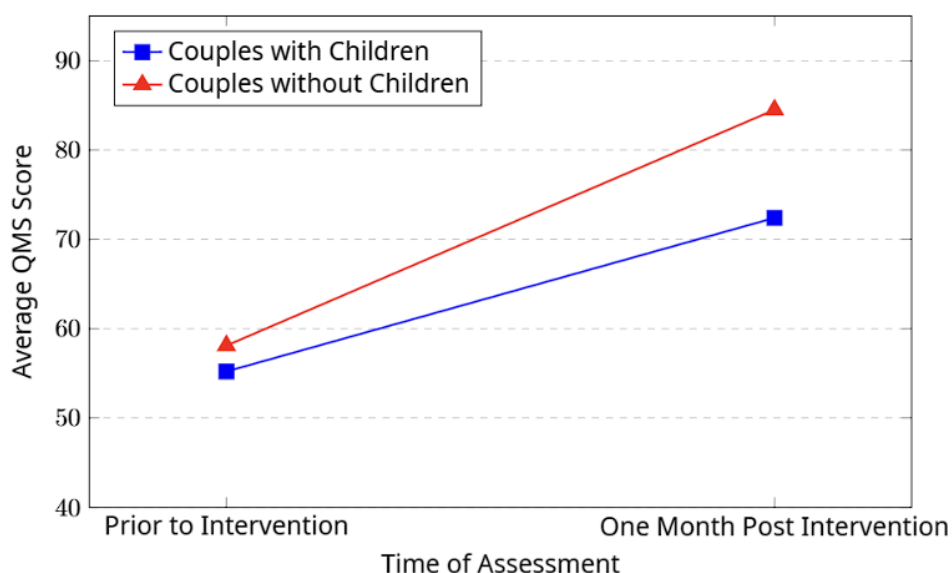
4.1 Overall Improvement in Relationship Quality

A repeated measures analysis of the QMRS scores showed a statistically significant main effect of time in the overall sample, suggesting a general significant increase in the quality of the relationship from baseline to follow-up at one month. There was a significant rise in the aggregate mean scores for both the childless and childbearing couples. This lends a powerful statistical support for the efficacy of the online delivery of couple therapy based in a workshop.

Table 2: Pre and Post Intervention Quality of Marital Relationship Scale Scores

Participant Group	Prior Intervention Score	to One Month Post Intervention Score	Net Improvement
Couples with Children	55.2	72.4	+ 17.2 Points
Couples without Children	58.1	84.5	+ 26.4 Points

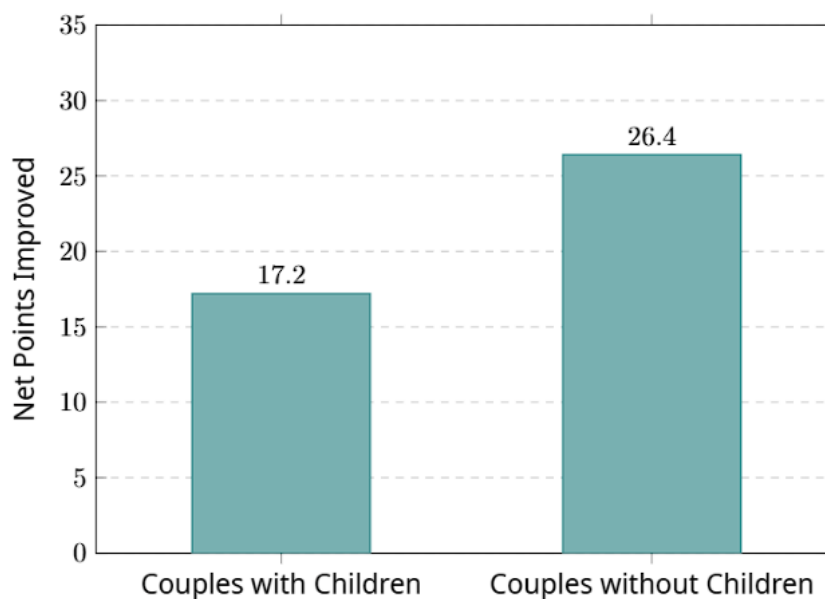
(Note: Scores represent the aggregate mean for the respective groups. Higher scores indicate greater relationship quality).



Graph 1: Line chart displaying the trajectory of relationship quality scores from the initial baseline to one month after the workshop completion. Both groups show statistically significant upward trajectories.

4.2 Comparative Analysis by Parental Status

Positive results were found for both groups, and an independent samples comparison of change scores (post-intervention minus baseline) showed a significant interaction effect between time and parental status. The gap for couples with no children was significantly greater with a net gain of 26.4 points. Net gains were more moderate for couples with children (+17.2 points). The wide effect size difference suggests that the lack of child care responsibilities could contribute to a better assimilation and long-term maintenance of the instructional content.



Graph 2: Bar chart visualizing the difference in total points gained between the two groups. Couples without children experienced a statistically sharper increase in relationship satisfaction.

4.3 Subdomain Analysis

To better understand the nuances of the improvements, the QMRS was broken down into specific relational domains for targeted statistical evaluation.

Table 3: Improvement Across Specific Relationship Domains

Relational Domain	Improvement for Couples With Children	Improvement for Couples Without Children
Conflict Resolution	+ 8.1 Points	+ 9.2 Points
Emotional Closeness	+ 4.5 Points	+ 10.1 Points
Daily Communication	+ 4.6 Points	+ 7.1 Points

The improvements in the Conflict Resolution domain were similar and significant for both cohorts as shown in Table 3. Differential effects, however, were very strong on the domains of Emotional Closeness and Daily Communication. The effect sizes were significantly larger for couples who had no children (+10.1 in Emotional Closeness and +7.1 in Daily Communication points compared to those who had children, +4.5 and +4.6 points, respectively).

5. Discussion

In this study, the statistics presented provide strong empirical evidence of the high effectiveness of digital mental health tools in the field of relationship education. This large positive difference between the 100 participants is consistent with existing literature, which has found online Gottman interventions to be effective (Zahl Olsen et al., 2024). This was a well-structured online workshop, which was able to overcome the traditional barriers to care and enhance relationship education even when one partner was not attending.

The most important is that the difference between parental and non-parental children is statistically significant in terms of rate and magnitude of improvement. This amounted to a significant increase for couples with no children. This is well aligned with the structural reality of parenting that has been identified (Leth Nissen et al., 2023). Parents of children have higher cognitive demands, physical fatigue and less leisure time. Thus, despite having access to better therapeutic resources through a more accessible platform, parents have fewer resources to integrate and practice the skills they have acquired in their lives.

This idea is reinforced by the subdomain analysis. Parents were able to use conflict resolution strategies to defuse conflicts. Although they had a statistically diminished ability to devote the time and effort required to restore emotional closeness. In contrast, non-parents had the freedom to immediately practice both conflict management and intimacy-building exercises, resulting in much higher QMRS scores at 1 month.

5.1 Implications for Long-Term Outcomes

The one month follow-up shows that the online Gottman Method is effective immediately, but the differences in growth between the two groups has important questions around the sustainability of the interventions. The lesser amount of improvement that was observed for couples with children indicates the strain and time demands of parenting might hinder long-term retention of new relational abilities. When deliberate practice does not occur on a regular basis, the very first enhancements in conflict resolution and communication are very vulnerable to erosion, especially in high-stress coparenting contexts.

Couples who do not have children were much faster and complete with integration of intimacy-engaging exercises signifying higher chances of having sustained, fulfilling relationships. Longer longitudinal studies (6 months, 1 year or longer) in the future, however, are needed to translate the findings at one month to longer-term relational stability among all demographics. Moreover, these results indicate that the incorporation of "booster sessions" or frequent digital check-ins may be very useful and even needed for parents. Such long term and long term support systems would provide the continuous reinforcement of the therapeutic skills necessary to keep them during the shift and stress of parenting.

6. Conclusion

This comparative study provides solid evidence on the success of the Gottman Method (delivered through a properly designed online workshop) as a treatment to enhance the quality of relationships. Digital mental health delivery is able to effectively connect distressed people with quality evidence-based education. Importantly, the data highlight parental status as an important moderating factor in therapeutic outcomes. The size and the rate of improvement is greater among couples with no children compared to couples with children. In addition, these disparate results highlight the need to consider issues of relationship education over the long-term. Being aware of these differences can assist mental health professionals to customize the digital interventions with longer follow-ups and more targeted booster modules to ensure that every individual, despite their family set-up, could achieve the optimal pacing and support to build and sustain healthy, lifelong relationships..

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