Mobile Apps for Relationship Improvement: A Scoping Review

Stephen L. Hendrix[ID]

Department of Computing, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN, US
Email: hendrixs@etsu.edu

Abstract

Happiness in marital and long-term romantic relationships positively impacts physical health. However, almost half of first-time marriages end in divorce. In recent years, mobile applications have been developed to improve these relationships. This article conducts a scoping review to examine existing apps and review features related to marital and long-term relationship success factors. The study identified 38 apps in the Apple App Store and Google Play Store, focusing on relationship improvement. Next, apps were evaluated based on relationship factors identified in the literature. Finally, the study discusses the present features and the need to incorporate support for more of these features in future apps.

Keywords

Marriage, Relationships, Relationship Apps, Marriage Apps, Relationship Improvement Apps, Marriage Improvement Apps

1. Introduction

According to the 2022 Pew Research Center, 69% of US citizens report being married, living with a partner, or in a committed romantic relationship [1]. However, 41% of first-time marriages end in divorce [2]. Researchers agree that the degree of marital happiness relates to physical health [3]. One study notes that marital quality generally predicts poorer health and goes on to note that poor marital quality "increases the risk for mood and anxiety disorders and exacerbates and perpetuates substance-use disorders" [3]. To improve marital and relationship happiness, mobile applications have been developed to improve relationships. However, little research has been conducted to determine what apps are available and what features are present to positively impact marriages and long-term rela-

tionships. This study aims to conduct a scoping review to examine existing apps and review features related to marital and long-term relationship success factors identified in the literature.

2. Literature Review

Reviewing and summarizing relevant literature is essential when developing a study to determine current research and establish the research agenda. The initial section will look at long-term relationships, marriage, and health. Next, there will be a review of mobile apps for behavioral change. The literature review section will conclude with developing the research gap for this study.

2.1. Long-Term Relationships, Marriage, and Health

Several studies have noted the role that marital satisfaction plays in the role of health. Kiecolt-Glaser and Newton conducted a literature review of 64 articles related to marital satisfaction and health [4]. The researchers determined that negative marital functioning (a combination of marital quality and marital interaction) has both indirect and direct influences on health outcomes related to depression, health habits, and cardiovascular health.

Chung and Kim examined the benefits of marriage in East Asian populations [5]. The researchers utilized self-rated health survey data. They reviewed respondent information concerning their self-evaluation of their marriage as either satisfied or dissatisfied. Their research determined that marital satisfaction has a greater impact on self-rated health than marriage itself.

Robles explored how researchers measure marital quality and physical health [3]. Their review notes that a meta-analysis of the literature shows a small but consistent association between greater marital quality and better health. Their study concludes by noting the need to "oxygenate" a marriage by increasing the amount of time and energy invested in it. Further, the author notes that efforts to increase marital quality may also promote health.

2.2. Mobile Apps for Behavior Change

Mobile applications can play a positive role in behavioral change and positively impact well-being, both in terms of positive feelings and positive functions in life [6]. It is estimated that over 5 million lifestyle-related apps have been downloaded, with over 4 million related to health and fitness [7]. Apps geared towards behavioral change may implement behavioral change techniques such as goals and planning, feedback and monitoring, social support, and shaping knowledge [6]. Behavioral change apps have been used to improve physical activity [8], diet [9], reduction in consuming alcohol [10], and several other categories.

2.3. Research Gap

The above literature review notes the role that the quality of long-term relationships and marriage play concerning physical health. Further, the research high-

lighted the need to increase the amount of time and energy invested into long-term relationships and marriages to see potential positive health benefits. Further, the above literature review notes the role that mobile applications can play in behavioral change, citing examples of how mobile applications have been used for behavioral change.

While apps exist that focus on marriage and long-term relationship improvement, the researcher could find no current literature that discusses the current landscape of these apps and how they are utilized for relationship improvement. Therefore, this study is needed to expand research in relationship improvement apps.

3. Method

3.1. App Search

Figure 1 displays the methodology used in this study. This study reviewed paid, free, and freemium apps for Apple iPhones and Android-based phones in the official app stores. These two operating systems comprise over 99% of the market share [11]. The search terms "marriage" and "relationships" were used to identify potential apps. These two search terms were identified as key terms to identify apps in their respective app stores that can potentially be utilized in this study. The researcher searched for apps that contained the key terms in the title or the app's description.
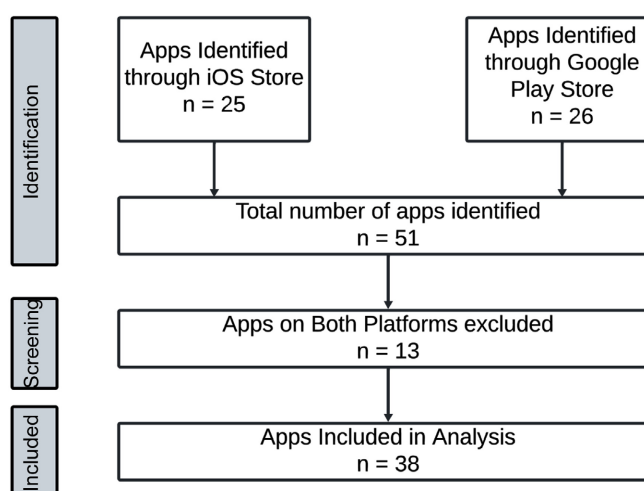

Figure 1. Flow diagram of study method.

3.2. App Selection

To ensure the apps used for this study meet the requirements, a set of criteria was established to evaluate apps. Apps were included in this study based on the following criteria extracted from the description:

- The app involved both people in the relationship engaging together
- The app discussed improving relationships

If an app was located on both platforms, the app counted only once for this

study.

3.3. Data Abstraction

To review each app, metadata elements were extracted into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. This includes the app store in which the app was identified, the app name, the app rating, and the number of reviews. Furthermore, the app description was added to the Excel spreadsheet for review.

3.4. Relationship Areas of Focus for Evaluation

To aid in evaluating the apps, the author reviewed relevant literature on factors influencing a marriage. While several factors were identified, the author narrowed the list to factors that could be implemented in current technologies. Those factors are finance [12], making decisions together [12], setting and tracking goals together [12], religion [12] [14], expressing love [13], sex and intimacy [13] [14], communication [14], and conflict resolution [14].

3.5. AI Analysis

The descriptions of all the apps identified were analyzed using generative AI to complete the analysis. Vo, Chen, Aquino, Carter, Do, and Woode note that generative AI "holds significant value in qualitative research for the purpose of identification and categorization of recurring concepts, and eventually theme identification" [15]. Claude.AI (Sonnet 3.5) was used for the analysis. Claude.AI was selected for this study as Uppalapati and Nag note, "Claude AI's dominance in relevance and completeness, suggesting its superior ability to generate contextually pertinent and thorough responses" [16].

For this study, the researcher asked Claude.AI to summarize the article based on the eight factors identified. Further, the research asked Claude.AI to identify factors that were featured in the apps that were missed in the analysis. The first prompt that was provided to Claude.AI stated:

> For my first paper in this research project, I have identified eight factors that can impact a marriage or long-term relationship through literature. Those factors are finances, making decisions together, setting goals together, religion, expressing love to each other, sex/intimacy, communication, and conflict resolution.
>
> For this paper, I have identified a series of mobile apps on the iOS app and Google Play Store. Attached is the description of each of the apps identified. Based on the app description and identified factors, please provide me a summary.

After reviewing the feedback provided by Claude.AI, the second prompt was asked:

> Are there factors mentioned in the description that I missed in my analysis.

4. Results

4.1. Summary of Search Results and General App Characteristics

Searching both app stores in January 2025 yielded 51 apps before combining apps featured on both platforms. The average rating for the apps was 4.5 stars, with a total of over 631,000 reviews. In reviewing each platform, iOS-specific and Android-specific apps received a 4.5 rating, with iOS apps having over 460,000 reviews and Android apps having over 160,000 reviews. Table 1 highlights the apps that were reviewed for this study, the App Store in which they were located, the star rating for the app store, and the number of reviews provided.

4.2. Assessment and Discussion of Features

Figure 2 highlights the number of times each identified factor is implemented in the reviewed apps. Communication (36/38), Sex/Intimacy (23/38), and Expressions of Love (21/23) were the most common features of the reviewed apps that aided in the factors that impact marital satisfaction. Religion (1/38) was the factor that was addressed least in the reviewed apps. However, Karimi, Bakhtiyari, and Masjedi Arani note religion's critical importance in marital happiness [14]. The authors note that religion is a "…coping strategies that give couples commitment, capability to accept adversity, and a sense of family community and stability."

Figure 3 highlights the number of factors addressed by apps. The majority of the apps evaluated address 2 (14 apps), 3 (10 apps), or 5 (6 apps) of the factors of marital happiness. Only one app evaluated supported 6 of the 8 factors identified (Finance, Goal Setting, Religion, Expression of Love, Sex/Intimacy, and Communication).

The importance of this study is noted in the analysis performed by Claude.AI. In the concluding section of Claude.AI's response to the first prompt, the generative AI engine stated the following:

The analysis reveals that while relationship apps extensively cover communication, expression of love, and intimacy, there are significant gaps in addressing finances, decision-making, and religious aspects of relationships. This suggests opportunities for new apps or existing apps to expand their coverage of these underserved areas while maintaining the engaging and user-friendly approaches that characterize successful relationship apps.

The analysis notes that the factors identified as important in relationship growth, there are features needed that could enhance current apps or provide opportunities for new apps to be developed to address the identified gap.

The features identified above impact categories and factors that positively impact marriages and long-term relationships. Through a review of the literature, Asoodeh *et al.* [12] identified several categories that predict a strong marriage, including the ones included in this study. Dey and Ghosh [13] noted in their study on factors of successful marriages that "the importance of this study lies in recommendations for reducing marital stress and enhancing marital satisfaction."

Table 1. Apps identified for the study.

App Name	App Store	Rating		No. of Reviews	
		Apple	Google	Apple	Google
Ally Couples & Relationships	Google	NA	3.9	NA	41
Anatomy of Marriage	Apple	4.4	NA	36	NA
Between, The App Couples Love	Apple	4.8	NA	20,500	NA
Blueheart: Relationship Health	Google	NA	4.2	NA	469
Couple Game: Relationship Quiz	Both	4.5	4.0	5600	16,300
Couple Joy - Relationship App	Both	4.9	4.9	2400	1730
CoupleGrow: Build Together	Both	4.7	4.4	6400	1790
CoupleMind: Relationship App	Google	NA	4.2	NA	37
Couples - Better Relationships	Both	4.7	4.1	2900	1020
Couples Games: Desire for Love	Apple	3.8	NA	19	NA
Couples Guide BondBeyond	Google	NA	4.7	NA	571
Couples Questions by LoveCardz	Apple	4.3	NA	6	NA
Couply: The App for Couples	Google	NA	4.5	NA	1780
Cozy Couples: Relationship App	Both	4.9	4.8	14,600	2800
Deeper Talks: Relationships	Google	NA	4.1	NA	752
Evergreen: Relationship Growth	Both	4.8	4.7	47,500	8490
Happy Couple	Google	NA	4.6	NA	2120
Intimately Us for Couples	Apple	4.9	NA	3000	NA
JustUS: Couples & Relationships	Google	NA	4.4	NA	281
Kuddl: Couples & Relationships	Google	NA	4.3	NA	671
Lasting: Marriage & Couples	Both	4.7	4.4	24,700	8400
Love Nudge	Both	4.6	4.4	17,800	11,000
Love8 - App for Couples	Google	NA	4.7	NA	18,300
LoveSync: Better Intimacy	Apple	4.0	NA	167	NA
Lovewick: Relationship Tracker	Both	4.8	3.8	1900	353
Lovify: Fun Couple Games	Google	NA	4.5	NA	10,900
Luvy - App for Couples	Google	NA	4.4	NA	394
Marriage 365: Couples Therapy	Both	4.9	4.5	479	266
Marriage Growth & Counseling	Apple	4.7	NA	724	NA
Memory Tree: For Relationships	Both	4.8	4.6	1600	31,700
MoodMe: Relationship Mood App	Google	NA	3.9	NA	968
Official: Relationship Tracker	Both	4.7	4.5	24,700	8110
Paired: Couples & Relationships	Apple	4.7	NA	140,500	NA
Relish: Relationship & Couples	Apple	4.5	NA	2300	NA
Sex Games for Couple: Naughty!	Apple	4.8	NA	14,400	NA
Sex Roulette: Couples Games	Apple	4.5	NA	10,200	NA
SumOne: For Relationships	Both	4.9	4.7	16,300	141,000
Ultimate Intimacy	Apple	4.8	NA	2100	NA

Frequency of Features in Reviewed Apps

Series1	Communication	Sex Intimacy	Expression of love	Conflict Resolution	Finance	Setting Goals Together	Making Decision Together	Religion
	36	23	21	11	8	7	3	1
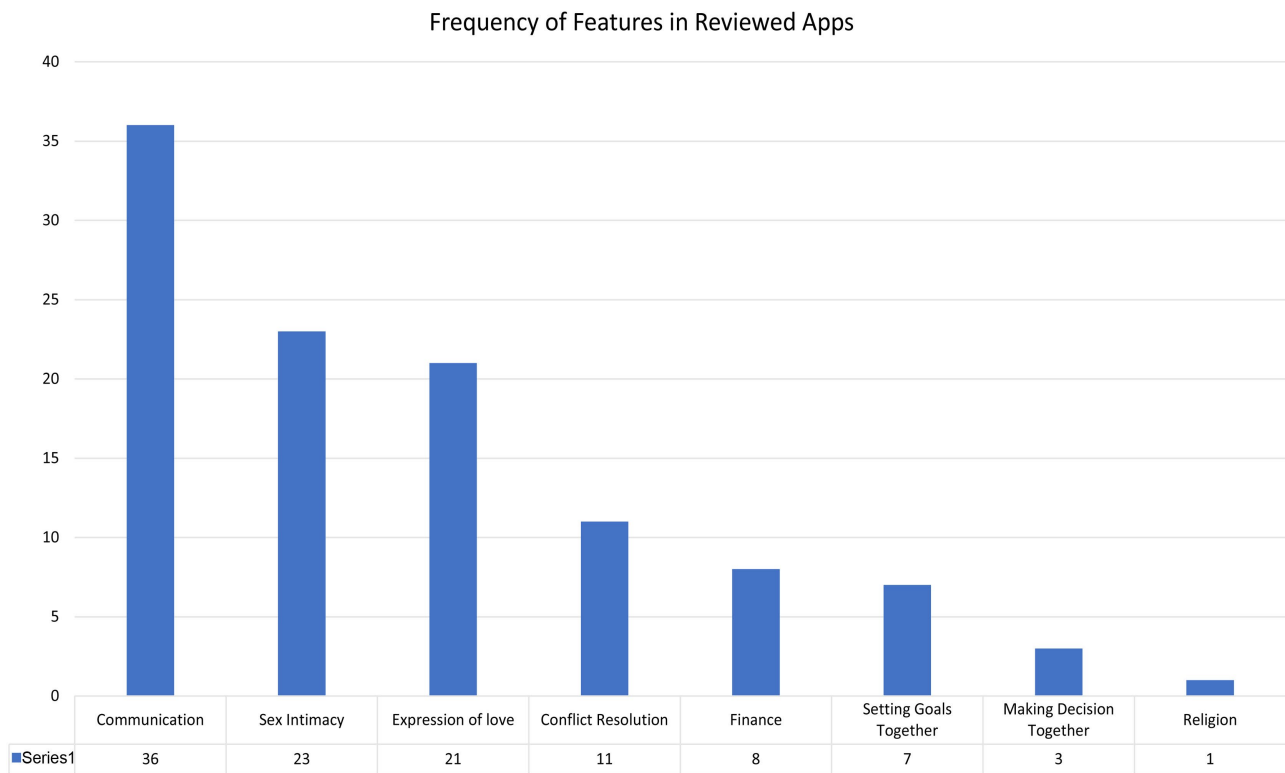
Figure 2. Frequency of factors featured in reviewed apps.

Apps with Number of Identified Features

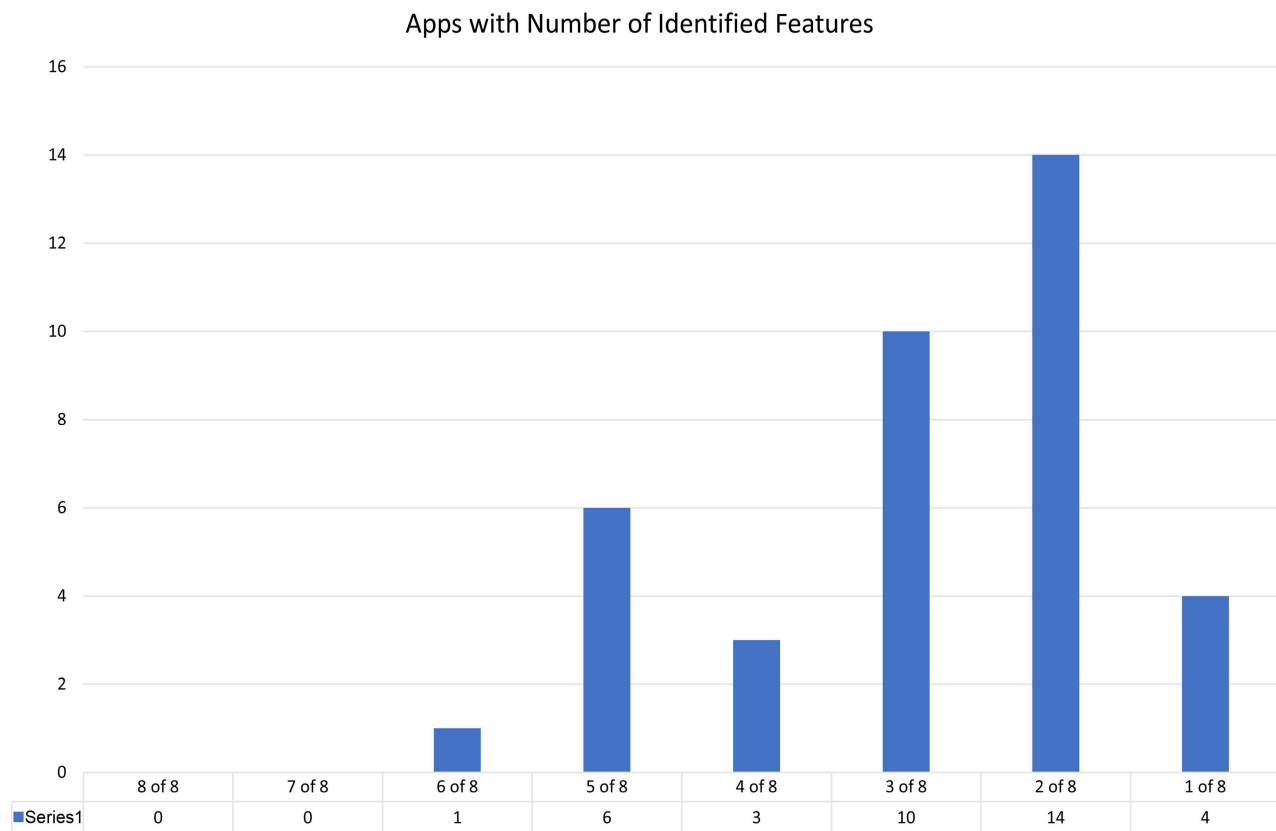| Series1	8 of 8	7 of 8	6 of 8	5 of 8	4 of 8	3 of 8	2 of 8	1 of 8
	0	0	1	6	3	10	14	4

Figure 3. Number of factors addressed by apps.

Table 2. Featured identified by Claude.AI not included in study.

Relationship Factor Addressed by App	Covers
Trust and Security	Building and maintaining trust Emotional security Attachment styles Vulnerability Privacy concerns in relationship
Family and Social Relationships	Extended family relationships In-law relationships Social circle management Friend relationships Work-life balance
Physical/Geographic Distance Management	Long-distance relationship management Location sharing Distance countdown Virtual togetherness Synchronized activities
Mental Health and Well-Being	Stress management Anxiety in relationships Depression impact Self-care within relationship Emotional regulation
Shared Activities and Quality Time	Date planning Shared hobbies Joint activities Virtual pet raising Game playing together
Personal Growth and Development	Individual self-improvement Personal development Career support Learning and growth Identity within relationship
Memory Creation and Documentation	Photo sharing Milestone tracking Journal keeping Memory archiving Anniversary celebrations
Cultural and Value Alignment	Shared values Cultural differences Life philosophy Future vision alignment Belief systems
Time Management and Scheduling	Shared calendars Event planning Daily routines Schedule coordination Important date reminders

Continued

Emotional Intelligence and Understanding	Emotional awareness Empathy development Mood tracking Emotional expression Partner understanding

Finally, Karimi *et al.* [14] discuss the importance of sexual satisfaction and how it is necessary for marital stability that correlates with a positive impact on mental health.

Finally, when the app descriptions were loaded into Claude.AI, the generative AI tool identified several factors that the apps addressed that were not identified in this study. These success factors in marriage included Trust and Security, Family and Social Relationships, Mental Health and Well-Being, Personal Growth and Development, and Emotional Intelligence and Understanding. Table 2 highlights each relationship factor the app addresses that are not featured in the study design. Further, the table notes what is covered in that factor.

5. Conclusion

Mobile apps are vital tools in behavioral change and impacting health-related outcomes. Several apps in the iOS and Android ecosystem promote the potential to improve relationships with one's partner. Improving one's relationship can positively influence one's health. This study evaluated 38 apps based on eight factors influencing the success of marriages and long-term relationships and provided a list of features not widely utilized in relationship improvement apps. While these features were identified as necessary and included in the apps evaluated, additional features can enhance relationships. Future studies will provide the opportunity to identify additional app features that impact these factors. In addition, future studies will be needed to measure the impact of these apps on improving marriages and long-term relationships. Finally, future studies can explore the factors that lead to the adoption and continued use of these apps in relationship improvement.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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