

Assessment of Marital Adjustment and Interpersonal Relationships Among Working Women

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ABSTRACT

Marital adjustment is an important dimension of family and personal well-being and refers to the manner in which spouses adapt to each other, manage differences, maintain emotional closeness, and develop satisfaction and cooperation within marriage. The increasing participation of women in professional employment has created new opportunities as well as additional demands associated with balancing occupational and family responsibilities. The present study examined marital adjustment among working women employed as teaching staff at Shrimathi Indira Gandhi College, Trichy. The study adopted a descriptive research approach and included 67 respondents selected from the teaching staff. Data were collected using a structured schedule and a standardized Dyadic Adjustment Scale. The study examined selected socio-demographic characteristics and aspects of marital interaction and employed chi-square and one-way analysis of variance to examine associations and differences in marital adjustment. The findings indicate that 59.7% of respondents reported a low level of overall marital adjustment, while 40.3% reported a high level. Educational qualification showed a statistically significant association with overall marital adjustment, whereas age, monthly income, family size and number of dependents did not show significant associations in the reported chi-square analysis. Significant relationships were also reported for selected dimensions of marital interaction, including frequency of kissing and responses concerning sexual tiredness. ANOVA results indicated significant variation in marital adjustment across age and educational qualification groups, while monthly income, family size, number of dependents and husband's income did not show significant variation. The findings highlight the importance of communication, emotional expression, shared family activities, supportive family environments and accessible counselling services for working women. The study concludes that marital adjustment among working women is influenced by a combination of personal, relational and socio-demographic factors and that institutional and community-based support can contribute to improved family well-being.

Keywords: marital adjustment, working women, marital satisfaction, teaching staff, family well-being, communication, Dyadic Adjustment Scale.

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is an important interpersonal and social relationship involving emotional commitment, companionship, responsibilities and shared decision-making. Successful marital life requires spouses to adapt continuously to changing circumstances and to negotiate differences in expectations, roles, finances, family responsibilities and emotional needs. Marital adjustment has therefore been an important subject in family research because it is closely related to marital quality and stability. The concept of marital adjustment has been defined in several ways. Burgess and Cottrell described adjustment as the integration of two personalities in a relationship in which the partners interact with and complement one another for mutual satisfaction and the achievement of common objectives. Subsequent research has used related concepts such as marital quality, marital satisfaction and marital happiness. Although these concepts overlap, marital adjustment can be understood more broadly as the process through which spouses manage

differences, maintain cohesion, experience satisfaction and develop mutually acceptable patterns of interaction.

Important components of marital adjustment include agreement, cohesion, satisfaction, affection and the management of tension. Agreement concerns the ability of spouses to reach understanding on important matters. Cohesion refers to commitment, companionship and shared activities. Satisfaction represents the individual's subjective evaluation of the marriage, while affection reflects emotional closeness and affectionate behaviour. A well-adjusted relationship is also generally characterized by lower levels of unresolved tension and more constructive approaches to conflict. Marital satisfaction is particularly important because it reflects the individual's perception of the quality of the marital relationship. The source literature distinguishes satisfaction from happiness by describing satisfaction as a more cognitive evaluation of the relationship, whereas happiness is more closely associated with an emotional state. Marital adjustment can therefore be viewed as a broader concept that includes satisfaction while also incorporating interpersonal and behavioural dimensions.

Working women experience marital life while simultaneously participating in occupational roles. Employment can provide income, self-esteem, social recognition, independence and opportunities for personal development. At the same time, employment may involve long working hours, commuting, occupational stress and competing responsibilities. When occupational and family roles require time and energy simultaneously, women may experience role strain. The distribution of household responsibilities, childcare, financial decision-making and emotional labour can consequently become important to marital adjustment. Previous studies summarized in the source indicate relationships between marital adjustment and several factors, including mental health, economic conditions, employment, education, communication, self-disclosure, emotional expression and family responsibilities. Nathawat and Mathur reported better marital adjustment and subjective well-being among working women than housewives in their Indian sample, whereas Hashmi, Khurshid and Hassan reported a significant relationship between marital adjustment, stress and depression among married women. Research by Sears and Galambos also suggested that women's work-related stress can influence perceptions of marital adjustment.

Communication and emotional disclosure are particularly relevant. Research summarized in the source indicates that self-disclosure is positively related to relationship quality and that discrepancies between partners in affective self-disclosure may be associated with poorer marital adjustment. Gottman's work emphasized positive interaction and friendship as important characteristics associated with marital satisfaction and stability.

Economic conditions may also influence marital relationships. Previous literature cited in the source links education and income with marital satisfaction and conflict, while economic stress has been associated with reduced satisfaction. However, the influence of economic factors cannot be considered independently of other aspects of family life because the meaning and impact of income may depend on expectations, responsibilities and the distribution of resources within the household.

The present study focuses specifically on working women employed as teaching staff at Shrimathi Indira Gandhi College, Trichy. The study seeks to understand their overall level of marital adjustment and to examine whether selected demographic and relationship characteristics are associated with adjustment.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- Research on marital adjustment has developed around several related concepts. Lewis and Spanier conceptualized marital quality as a subjective evaluation of a couple's relationship. Spanier and Cole subsequently emphasized marital adjustment as a process involving troublesome differences, interpersonal tension, personal anxiety, marital satisfaction, dyadic cohesion and consensus concerning important matters.
- Studies of working women have produced mixed findings. Nathawat and Mathur reported better marital adjustment and subjective well-being among working women, including higher general

health, life satisfaction and self-esteem. In contrast, Hashmi, Khurshid and Hassan found that working married women in their sample experienced more problems in married life than non-working married women, while also reporting a significant relationship between marital adjustment, depression and stress.

- Singh and colleagues examined families according to women's employment and educational status and reported differences in selected emotional dimensions of marital adjustment. Other research cited in the source suggests that employment may increase self-esteem, self-concept and self-worth among women.

Objectives of the Study

The study was undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To study the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the respondents.
2. To identify problems experienced by respondents in their marital life.
3. To assess the level of marital adjustment among the respondents.
4. To identify appropriate support services, including counselling and legal support, that may benefit working women.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a **descriptive research design** to assess marital adjustment among married women employed as teaching staff. A descriptive design was considered appropriate because the study aimed to describe the level of marital adjustment and examine its relationship with selected socio-demographic and marital variables without manipulating any variables.

Study Setting

The study was conducted at **Shrimathi Indira Gandhi College, Trichy, Tamil Nadu**. The institution consisted of 17 departments with approximately 250 teaching staff. The study was carried out among teaching staff working in the Arts and Science departments. Both married and unmarried teaching staff were present in the institution; however, only eligible married women were included in the present study.

Study Population

The study population consisted of **married women working as teaching staff** in the selected institution who fulfilled the predetermined inclusion criteria.

Sample Size

Initially, 72 teaching staff members were identified as potentially eligible for participation. Of these, 5 respondents were selected for pre-testing, and the remaining 67 respondents constituted the final sample for the main study. Thus, the final sample size of the study was **67 married working women**.

Sampling Technique

A **systematic sampling technique** was adopted for selecting the respondents. The eligible teaching staffs were arranged according to the departmental list, and every fourth eligible respondent was selected according to the sampling procedure described in the original study.

Inclusion Criteria

The respondents included in the study were women who:

1. Were married.
2. Were employed as teaching staff in the selected institution.
3. Were willing to participate in the study.
4. Were available during the period of data collection.
5. Were able to understand and respond to the research questions.

Exclusion Criteria

The following respondents were excluded from the study:

1. Unmarried teaching staff.
2. Teaching staff who were not available during the period of data collection.
3. Those who were unwilling to participate.
4. Those who returned substantially incomplete responses.

Pre-Test

A pre-test was conducted among five respondents before the main data collection. The purpose of the pre-test was to assess the clarity, relevance, feasibility and acceptability of the data-collection schedule. It also helped the researcher identify ambiguities in the questions and make necessary modifications before conducting the final study.

The respondents who participated in the pre-test were not included in the final sample.

Data Collection Tool

Data were collected using a structured interview schedule along with a standardized Dyadic Adjustment Scale.

The data-collection schedule consisted of the following sections:

Data Collection Procedure

Prior permission was obtained from the concerned authorities of the institution before commencing data collection. The purpose of the study and the procedure for participation were explained to the eligible respondents.

After obtaining informed consent, the researcher administered the structured schedule and Dyadic Adjustment Scale to the selected respondents. Respondents were given adequate time to provide their responses. Clarifications were provided when necessary without influencing their answers.

After completion, the questionnaires were collected and checked for completeness. The collected information was coded and organized for statistical analysis.

Variables of the Study

Dependent variable:

- Level of marital adjustment

Independent/selected variables:

- Age
- Educational qualification
- Monthly income
- Family size
- Number of dependents
- Work experience
- Husband's employment status
- Husband's income
- Selected indicators of spousal interaction

Statistical Analysis

The collected data were systematically coded, tabulated and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Descriptive statistics included

- Frequency
- Percentage
- Mean
- Standard deviation

These were used to describe the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents and their levels of marital adjustment.

Inferential statistics included:

- Chi-square test to determine the association between categorized marital-adjustment levels and selected categorical variables.
- One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to determine whether mean marital-adjustment scores differed significantly across selected groups.

RESULTS**Socio-demographic Characteristics**

- The largest age group was 31–35 years, representing 40.3% of respondents. Respondents aged 36 years and above represented 31.3%, while 28.4% were aged 25–30 years.
- Educationally, 56.7% of respondents had an M.Phil qualification, 22.4% were postgraduates and 20.9% held a PhD.
- Regarding respondents' monthly income, 53.7% earned Rs. 15,000–20,000, 32.8% earned Rs. 20,001–25,000 and 13.4% earned Rs. 25,001 or above.
- In relation to children, 53.7% had two children, 35.8% had one child, 9.0% had no children and 1.5% had more than two children.
- Most respondents belonged to families of three to four members (62.7%), while 31.3% belonged to families of five or more members and 6.0% belonged to families of one to two members.

- With respect to work experience, 44.8% had eight years or more of experience, 25.4% had one to three years, and 14.9% each had three to five years and five to eight years of experience.
- Among husbands, 52.2% were reported to be in permanent employment and 47.8% in temporary employment.

Indicators of Marital Interaction

- The study also examined selected indicators of spousal interaction. Regular kissing of the partner was reported by 38.8% of respondents, while 26.9% reported occasional kissing, 20.9% reported very rare kissing and 13.4% reported never kissing their partner.
- Regarding laughing together, 31.3% reported never engaging in this activity, whereas 28.4% reported doing so more often. Smaller proportions reported laughing together once or twice a month, once or twice a week or once a day.
- Working together on a family project was reported more often by 23.9% of respondents, while 20.9% reported never doing so.
- Regarding sexual activity when tired, 65.7% reported that they would say no when tired, while 34.3% reported yes.
- A notable finding concerned expression of love. The study reports that 73.1% of respondents did not express their love to each other, whereas 28.9% reported expressing love.

Overall Marital Adjustment

- The most important descriptive finding was that 59.7% of respondents were classified as having a low level of overall marital adjustment, while 40.3% were classified as having a high level.
- The distribution of perceived happiness in the relationship showed that 26.9% described themselves as happy and 20.9% as very happy. A further 13.4% described the relationship as extremely happy and 13.4% as perfect, while smaller groups reported being a little unhappy or fairly unhappy.

Association between Selected Variables and Marital Adjustment

- The chi-square analysis indicated no significant association between age and overall marital adjustment ($\chi^2 = 1.744$, $df = 2$, $p > .05$).
- Educational qualification showed a statistically significant association with overall marital adjustment ($\chi^2 = 10.883$, $df = 2$, $p < .01$). Respondents with PhD qualifications were distributed differently across low and high adjustment categories than postgraduates and M.Phil respondents.
- Monthly income was not significantly associated with overall adjustment ($\chi^2 = 3.341$, $df = 2$, $p > .05$).
- Family size also showed no significant association with overall marital adjustment ($\chi^2 = 0.199$, $df = 2$, $p > .05$).
- Number of dependents was likewise not significantly associated with overall adjustment ($\chi^2 = 0.876$, $df = 3$, $p > .05$).
- A significant association was reported between frequency of kissing one's partner and overall marital adjustment ($\chi^2 = 13.960$, $df = 3$, $p < .01$).
- The reported chi-square result for sexual activity when tired was also significant ($\chi^2 = 3.831$, $df = 1$, $p < .05$).
- The analysis concerning showing love reported no significant association with overall adjustment ($\chi^2 = 0.176$, $df = 1$, $p > .05$).

One-Way ANOVA

- The ANOVA results indicated significant differences in overall marital adjustment across age groups ($F = 3.730$, $p < .05$).
- Educational qualification was also associated with significant variation in adjustment scores ($F = 4.456$, $p < .05$).

- Monthly income did not show a statistically significant difference in adjustment scores ($F = 0.811, p > .05$).
- Family size did not show a significant difference in adjustment scores ($F = 0.043, p > .05$).
- Number of dependents did not show a significant difference in adjustment scores ($F = 0.247, p > .05$).
- Husband's monthly income also did not show a significant difference in adjustment scores ($F = 0.356, p > .05$).
- The source reports no significant ANOVA difference for kissing frequency ($F = 1.575, p > .05$), although the accompanying narrative contains an internal inconsistency.
- The ANOVA for frequency of laughing together was reported as significant ($F = 2.266, p < .05$).
- The analysis of perceived happiness in the relationship was also reported as significant ($F = 2.300, p < .05$).

DISCUSSION

- The findings indicate that marital adjustment among the respondents requires attention, with more than half reporting a low level of adjustment. Educational qualification showed a significant association with marital adjustment, suggesting that education may influence communication, awareness and problem-solving abilities.
- Monthly income did not show a significant association with marital adjustment, indicating that financial resources alone may not determine marital well-being. Emotional support, communication, companionship and role-sharing may also contribute to adjustment.
- Affectionate interaction was also relevant. Frequency of kissing was significantly associated with marital adjustment, while laughing together and relationship happiness showed significant variation. These findings highlight the importance of affection, positive interaction and emotional connection in marital relationships.
- A considerable proportion of respondents reported limited expression of love. Although showing love was not statistically associated with overall adjustment in the reported analysis, emotional expression may still contribute to interpersonal closeness and reassurance.
- Overall, the findings suggest that marital adjustment is influenced by multiple personal and relational factors rather than employment or income alone. Communication, mutual understanding, emotional support, shared responsibilities and quality family time may help strengthen marital relationships.

CONCLUSION

Marital adjustment is a multidimensional aspect of family well-being that involves satisfaction, cohesion, communication, affection, agreement and the management of interpersonal tension. The present study of 67 working women employed as teaching staff at Shrimathi Indira Gandhi College, Trichy, found that 59.7% of respondents had a low level of overall marital adjustment, while 40.3% had a high level. Educational qualification was significantly associated with overall adjustment, while age, monthly income, family size and number of dependents did not show significant associations in the reported chi-square analysis. Significant differences were observed across age and educational qualification groups in the reported ANOVA. Selected indicators of spousal interaction, including kissing frequency, laughing together and perceived relationship happiness, also demonstrated statistically significant findings in parts of the analysis. The results suggest that marital adjustment among working women should not be understood solely in terms of employment or income. Emotional closeness, communication, shared activities, family responsibilities, education and interpersonal support are important dimensions of marital life. Institutions and communities can contribute to women's well-being by providing accessible counselling, encouraging healthy work-family balance and creating opportunities for family interaction and recreation. The study ultimately emphasizes the importance of mutual understanding and shared responsibility within marriage. Strengthening

communication, emotional support and constructive interaction between spouses may contribute to healthier marital relationships and improved quality of family life.

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