

Does Marital Adjustment and Psychological Well-Being Differences in Working and Non-Working Female?

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Abstract

The present study intends to examine marital adjustment and psychological well-being among working and non-working women. The study was carried out on a purposive sample of 40 participants. Marital adjustment inventory and Ruff's Medium Form of Psychological Well-Being Scale was administered on forty working and non-working female participants. Results revealed that working and non-working women did not differ from each other on marital adjustment as well as on psychological well-being but on few dimensions of psychological wellbeing. The findings have been discussed in the light of relevant research evidences.

Introduction: - Marriage is by far the most important personal relationship for any person and has been described as the most intimate, delicate and far-reaching relationship between man and woman. The stability and continuity of a marriage is important not just to the members of the marital dyad, but to their family and community as a whole. Traditionally, in Indian culture, people expected their marriages to be arranged by their elder extended kin who continued to play a significant role in the couple's lives. Marriage has been discussed in terms of interdependence between two individuals (Lewin, 1948) and what happens to one individual is likely to influence the other. As a function of the interdependence in relationship, the nature of the relationship may undergo transformation to accommodate the changes in the partner's health and behavioral status (Kerns & Turk, 1985). The intimate relationship between husband and wives are the cornerstones of interpersonal behavior which not only provide the social context in which people lives but also influence their well-being (Jones & Perlman, 1991).

Marital adjustment seems complex than it may appear. Basically, in marriage, two persons adjust to each other's sensory, motor, emotional and intellectual capacities. On the personality level they must adjust together to their total environment, including such matters as a new household, children, provision and preparation of food, relatives, friends, relations and work (Fonseca, 1966).

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The success of marital life much depends upon the success in marital adjustment by the husband and wife. Marital maladjustment results in conflicts and tensions and many a time divorce.

Several studies have studied marital adjustment in working and non-working women. For example, Nathawat and Mathur (1993) found that working women reported significantly better marital adjustment and subjective wellbeing than housewives; they also scored higher than housewives in general health, life satisfaction and self-esteem measures. Lloyd (1980) found that socioeconomic status is a contributing factor for marital adjustment, and believed that higher income to be a significant factor. Similar findings have been supported by Adegoke (1987) and Rogers and May (2003) who reported that working class women are generally more satisfied with their lives than non-working women. However, the difference between these findings could be attributed to cultural differences.

However, certain studies have reported contradictory findings. Kausar (2003) studied the effect of personality traits and socio-economic status on marital adjustment in working women and found no difference between marital adjustment of working women of low, middle and high socio-economic background and attributed that personality trait could be the factor liable for the marital adjustment in working and non-working female rather being the socio-economic factor. Similar non-significant marital differences in working and non-working women of Port Harcourt metropolis was reported by Nigeria- Tamunoimama Jamabo and Ordu (2012).

Marital adjustment and psychological wellbeing is related to each other. Psychological wellbeing is particularly viewed as a positive functioning of an individual and is described as the quality of life of a person. It includes what laypeople call “Happiness”, “peace”, “fulfillment” and “life satisfaction”. Ryff (1991) states that convergence of similar features of positive psychological functioning constitutes the core dimensions of psychological wellbeing and these dimensions are autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others purpose in life and self- acceptance. Ryff (1989) extensively explored the meaning of psychological wellbeing and thought that wellbeing could be made sense by breaking it down into six dimensions each of which contributing to people’s experience of wellbeing. Each dimension of psychological well-being articulates different challenges as they strive to function positively. The present study focuses on wellbeing from the perspective of eudemonic approach which emphasize meaning and self-actualization and defines wellbeing in terms of the degree to

which person is fully functioning. Kumar (2006) observes that conceptions of well-being are integrally related to how one views the nature of man and what perspective is valued. Increase in women's participation in labor force over the past few decades have led to increased interest in the effects of employment on women's well-being. Women employment has been investigated as either beneficial (role enhancement hypothesis) or detrimental (role strain hypothesis) to women's psychological well-being. Women employment may be associated with better psychological functioning. This effect may be mediated by the over absorption of one's time and resources within a particular identity role (Elgar & Chester, 2007).

Psychological wellbeing particularly in labor market and more specifically in the context of women employees has received much attention. The occupation is one of the most important factors which bring a lot of changes in the life of women. The occupation brings along with it many expectations, pressures, time demands and commitments which may affect the mental health of women. The relationships between occupation and mental health of women have been studied by several researchers. Thakur and Misra (1999) studied the well-being experiences of 196 employed and 54 unemployed women. It was found that the unemployed women received significantly more social support, in spite of that, the well-being measures indicating mental health was better in employed women. Erlandson (2006) examined psychological wellbeing in working with full time and part time jobs and reported that full time employed women having positive attitude about employment reported better psychological well-being than their counterparts. Sahu and Rath (2003) studies self-efficacy and wellbeing in working and non-working women in urban areas and found positive correlation between self-efficacy and wellbeing and added that marriage employment and parenthood are associated with good mental and physical health. Rastogi and Kashyap (2001) reported better mental health of employed woman.

However, other contradictory findings have reported poor psychological wellbeing of working women. For example, some other researchers are of this view that the life of working women has been viewed, as problematic period of one's life as compared to non-working women. One of the Indian survey demonstrated a statistics' which indicates that 80% of working women psychological state is not well in working women in Karnataka experiencing frustration and stress(14.22% in 1971, and 25.68% in 2001). Further, another study conducted by Ramesh (2009) on working and non-working women demonstrated that non-working women are more

adjusted than working women-emotionally, socially and health wise. Non-working women have more life satisfaction than working women. Similar findings have been reported by Hashmi, Khurshid, and Hassan (2007).

On the other hand, a comparative study was done on the psychological symptoms observed in the working women and housewives were assessed on the psychological symptoms scanning scale and findings showed that anxiety, phobia, paranoia and psychosomatic subscales points and average of symptoms were significantly higher in the housewives(Cilli, et al., 2000).

The overview of the literature suggests working class of women are more satisfied and adjusted in their marital life (Nathawat & Mathur, 1993; Rogers & May, 2003). As far as the psychological wellbeing is concerned, lack of consensus seems about the findings, some researchers are of this view that psychological wellbeing is better in employed woman (Sahu & Rath, 2003; Thakur & Misra, 1999) while others hold different view (Cilli et al., 2000).

It is evident through the literature that in the present era of globalization and industrialization, women are educated and work keeping their interest in mind. This not only provides recognition to the women but also adds their recognition to the society. However, due to this women esp. employed faces many problems. They had adjustment relationship problem with the family members, children and work place and especially with their married life. They face stress because of multiplicity of worked performed by them, which in turn affects their well-being too. Thus, to know the nature of marital adjustment and psychological well-being in working and non-working women, the present study makes an attempt to examine the marital adjustment and psychological well-being of working and non-working women.

Method

Sample:

The present study was carried out on a sample of 40 couples with the marital life ranging from of 10 to 15 years residents of Varanasi city, India. Twenty working women and twenty non-working women along with their spouses participated in the present study. All the couples were selected from middle class socio-economic strata with a minimum qualification (68.7% graduation and 31.3% post-graduation) belonging to the urban (77.5%) and rural (22.5%) area. Sixty percent of couples belonged from joint family while, 40% were from nuclear family. The newly married couples were excluded from the present study because the new marriage itself

puts a number of adjustment demands on the couples. Mean age of working and nonworking female was 34.52.

Tools:

Following is a brief description of the tool used in the present study along with its psychometric properties. The self-report inventory were used in the present research and in addition to the personal data sheet were used that collected demographic information such as name, age, gender, education, socio-economic status, nature of job, class of job, job-timing, nature of the family, ecological area –urban/rural etc. of the participants.

- **Marital Adjustment Inventory**

Marital adjustment was measured by Marital adjustment inventory developed by Har Mohan Singh was used to measure the quality of a relationship between two persons who are married. It is a self-report scale consisted of 20 items consisting 10 point rating scores. The reliability and validity of this inventory was found satisfactory.

- **Psychological well-being**

Psychological wellbeing was measured by using Ryff's (1989) medium form that consists of a series of 54 statements reflecting the six areas of psychological wellbeing: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, and purpose in life and self-acceptance. Respondents rate statements on a scale of 1 to 6, with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 6 indicating strong agreement. The reliability for each dimension varied between 0.86 and 0.91. Correlation coefficients with 20-item parent scale for each varies between 0.83 and 0.99 indicate higher level of validity for the scale. For each category, a high score indicates that a respondent has a mastery of that area in her life. Conversely a low score shows that the respondent struggles to feel comfortable with that particular concept.

Procedure: The above-mentioned scale was used to assess marital adjustment of the working and non-working women and their spouses. The participants were selected purposively. The scale was given to each participant individually and was administered as per the standard instructions printed with scale. However, in any case, instructions related to the marital adjustment inventory was clearly explained to each participant and their queries (if any) were properly attended. In addition to it, each participant was requested to ensure that they have responded to each and every item of the test booklet. The confidentiality of their responses was

assured to them. The complete self-report scale was scored as per the standard scoring procedure and data was analyzed by using appropriate statistics. The independent t-test was performed to test the present hypothesis of the study.

Results

In order to address the objective of the present study, independent sample t-test was calculated and the findings have been tabulated.

Table 1 Mean, SD and t values indicating differences between working and non-working females on marital adjustment and various dimensions as well as total score of psychological well-being

Working females (N=20)			Non-working females (N=20)		t-value	df	sig
Measures	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Marital adjustment	44.25	17.42	52.05	16.82	1.440	38	.158
Autonomy (dimension of psychological wellbeing)	10.55	2.911	10.05	3.734	.472	38	.639
Positive relation with others (dimension of psychological wellbeing)	10.40	3.530	9.10	2.732	1.302	38	.201
Purpose in life (dimension of psychological wellbeing)	10.35	3.110	10.90	2.231	.643	38	.524
Self-acceptance (dimension of psychological wellbeing)	9.95	3.154	9.30	2.342	.740	38	.464
Environmental mastery (dimension of psychological wellbeing)	9.25	1.832	8.10	2.198	1.797	38	.080
Personal growth (dimension of psychological wellbeing)	8.20	2.191	9.30	3.585	1.171	38	.249
Total Psychological Wellbeing	58.40	9.058	56.15	6.991	.879	38	.385

Perusal of the Table 1 reveals that mean of working and non- working female is 44.25 and 52.05 respectively which indicates that non-working female scored higher on marital adjustment and is adjusted than working female. The t value was calculated for the significance

of mean differences and non-significant differences have been observed ($t = 1.440$, $df = 38$, $p = 0.158$) indicating that working female does not differ from non-working female on the measure of marital adjustment. This pattern of findings suggest that both working and non-working female are adjusted well in their married life. Similarly, on the measure of psychological well-being no significant differences have been noted on the total as well as various dimension of psychological wellbeing ($p < .05$).

Table 2 Mean, SD and t values indicating differences between spouse of working females and spouse of non-working females on marital adjustment and various dimensions as well as total score of psychological wellbeing

Spouse of working females (N=20)			Spouse of non-working females (N=20)		t-value	df	sig
Measures	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Marital adjustment	54.7	19.22	55.00	19.81	.049	38	.961
Autonomy (dimension of psychological wellbeing)	9.95	2.64	9.30	2.77	.758	38	.453
Positive relation with others (dimension of psychological wellbeing)	11.35	3.43	9.05	2.83	2.308	38	.027
Purpose in life (dimension of psychological wellbeing)	10.85	2.87	11.05	3.01	.215	38	.831
Self-acceptance (dimension of psychological wellbeing)	9.45	2.81	8.95	2.48	.595	38	.555
Environmental mastery (dimension of psychological wellbeing)	8.15	1.84	8.70	1.65	.992	38	.327
Personal growth (dimension of psychological wellbeing)	8.30	2.43	9.95	2.16	2.268	38	.029
Total Psychological Wellbeing	58.05	8.01	57.55	6.40	.218	38	.829

Perusal of the Table 2 reveals that mean of marital adjustment in spouses of working female and spouses of non-working female is 54.7 and 55.00 respectively. The t-value was calculated for the significance of mean differences and non-significant differences have been observed ($t = .049$, $df = 38$, $p = .961$) indicating that both spouses of working and non-working female does not differ from each other on measure of marital adjustment. This pattern of finding suggests that both spouses of working and non-working females are adjusted equally well in their married life. However, on the measure of psychological wellbeing spouses of working and non-working female were found to differ significantly on the dimension of positive relation with others (mean spouses of working women = 10.40 and mean spouse of non-working female = 9.10, $t = 2.308$, $df = 38$, $p = .027$) and personal growth (mean spouses of working women = 8.30 and mean spouse of non-working female = 9.95, $t = 2.268$, $df = 38$, $p = .029$). Rest of the dimension and total scores were found to be non-significant on the measure of psychological wellbeing ($p < .05$). These findings suggest that spouses of working women are able to perceive more positive relation with others than their counterparts, while, spouses of non-working females perceive better chance of personal growth than the spouses of working females.

Discussion

The objective of the study was to explore the nature of marital adjustment and psychological well-being in working and non-working female as well as their in spouses too. The findings suggest that both working and non-working women have similar marital adjustment and psychological well-being. However, the working woman differ in reflecting positive relation with others and personal growth as compared to non-working woman. Several researchers are also in line with the present finding who have reported no differences in the marital adjustment in working or non-working women (Pish-ghadam, Bakhshipour, & Ebrahim, 2013; Jamabo & Ordu, 2012). Further, in a different study, Kausar (2003) studied personality traits and socio-economic status as predictors of marital adjustment in working women and found no difference between marital adjustment of working women of low, middle and high socio-economic background and attributed that personality trait could be the factor liable for the marital adjustment in working and non-working female rather being the socio-economic factor. Therefore, it was deduced that marital adjustment of working class women was not dependent on their socio-economic background; rather the personality trait of the woman was considered as a prominent factor in her marital adjustment. Similarly, Jamabo and Ordu (2012) reported non-

significant differences in marital adjustment in working and non-working women of Port Harcourt metropolis in Nigeria. Hence, can be said that marriage is a universal concept for all and a developed system that cannot be affected by any other and husbands having the spouse working or doing only household chores (housewife) does not make any difference in the modes of adjustment to home, health, social, emotional and occupation spheres of life.

Taking both findings together, it can be speculated that the working and non-working women enjoy equal marital adjustment, which entails that women being paid employed whether in public or private sector, been an entrepreneur or full time house wife does not disrupt a woman's family. Therefore, the degree of marital adjustment of a woman depends on how she handles her family for example, paying attention to her husband, children and their need and also communication/interaction in the home and the society at large. One factor for the observed finding can be attributed to education, that despite the environmental pressures in home and outside home, both employed and non-employed women can always create a healthy atmosphere for their marital adjustment. In fact, education enhances marital adjustment of women which also implies that literacy contributes to marital adjustment. Education enhances marital adjustment via enhancing their communication skills, enabling them to talk over their problems/sources of conflict, enhance their reasoning ability and ability to logically arrive at solutions to conflicts. For marriage, it is usually said that marriage is an Art, an "Art of Understanding One's Mate", becoming an intimate part of the people one know and the things that surround them; entering into a kind of "oneness" with their environment. The happiness in any marriage is an outcome of joyous unification of heart and head, i.e. needs intelligence, love and determination (D'souza, 1975, p.18). Marriage is composed of understanding of the meaning of marriage and deep desire to be loyal to each other for life. Many people see marriage as a beginning of a life of growing and expanding happiness.

Thus, the dyadic adjustment in married life largely depends on several factors, such as, mutual understanding, faithfulness, love-affection (Clark, Fitness, & Brissette, 2000), sexual satisfaction, and valuing to each other. Kumar (1986) identified most prominent factors in his study responsible for happily married life. He interviewed happily married couples to identify factors which contributed to happiness in marriage, and found higher degree of agreement in both husbands and wives responses. Sexual satisfaction, proper understanding, right marital attitudes, faithfulness and giving importance to each other, companionship, love and affection,

were most important factors in marital happiness. Three factors on which the two groups agreed are sexual satisfaction, faithfulness and giving importance. Thus, the present findings can be interpreted that marriage adjustment is about several things that makes it possible.

The another finding of the present study is that it working women and non-working women did not differ significantly on psychological wellbeing however, they differ only positive relation with others and personal growth; As working women reported better positive relation with others and personal growth. Several findings are in line who has reported better psychological wellbeing in employed women (Erlandson, 2006, Thakur & Misra, 1999). One of the reason for this can be attributed to the employment. As researchers have suggested that employment provides women better opportunity to be self-dependent and therefore, one could expect that working women may have better psychological well-being. The reason why psychological well-being was equal among both working and non-working female could be job nature and working conditions of women that contribute to their experience of psychological well-being but not the paid employment that contributes to the psychological well-being of working. Hence, promoting psychological well-being of employed women requires co-operation of people at individual, community, government and at the societal level at large and so with the non-working female too. Further, this speculation has been confirmed by other researchers. For instance, when happiness or satisfaction are used as indices of well-being, employed and non-employed women typically do not differ significantly (Serlin, 1980). These findings, however, refer to the effects of employment per se and do not take into account qualitative aspects of the paid worker role.

It can be said, taking the whole picture of the present study that in our Indian society both, men and women play a pivotal role and their roles may be defined based on their cultural values and societal norms. Marriage is considered to be most fundamental of all social ties. Thus, Cohen laboratory studies (1997, 2003), suggest that “human beings with good friendship networks can repel the simple common cold, are particularly suggestive. How marriage works its magic remains mysterious. If an answer can be found, it may unlock the puzzle of exactly how the mind and body are intertwined”. Education and employment brings tremendous qualitative changes in women’s and their husbands’ marital adjustment. Highly educated and employed women and their husbands are more socially adjusting than their corresponding counterparts.

Thus, education and employment is a new age mantra for Indian women to improve the level of marital adjustment among them and their husbands.

Some limitations and issues for future research should be noted. The sample included small and purposively selected sample, any generalization of the results should be made with caution. Sample of present investigation was drawn only from Varanasi. Further research would be conducted in other states or metro cities, which will cater to the sample of different backgrounds. Thus, study on wider and varied population may provide richer and more valuable information's. The future study must include large data-base including employed women of other professions (Doctors, Engineers, Lawyers, Factory workers, Managers etc.)

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