

Shukla Marital Coping Scale (SMCS): Development of a Measure to Assess Unmarried Adolescent's Perception about Level of Adjustment after Marriage

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Social scientists have long been fascinated by attitudes and beliefs surrounding family relationships and gender roles. They believe that attitude towards family formation influence a wide range of behaviours including work, education and family life (Morgan and Waite, 1997; Thorton, Alwin and Cambum, 2001; Parsons, 1999). Furthermore, attitudes and values about family formation have been changing rapidly especially during young adulthood, the point at which gender role attitudes, educational aspirations and choices among role alternatives are most likely to conflict. Gender role attitudes are those attitudes which are directly related to men's and women's role within marriage. Earlier post-marital residence with spouse and in-laws was mandatory as there was a trend of joint or extended family. But the 20th century has witnessed remarkable changes in family structures and dynamics: smaller household sizes, a further shift from extended to nuclear families, a decrease in mutuality, and the appearance of new forms of unions such living-apart-together, changing gender and inter-generational relations etc.

Beginning in the 1960s, a number of inter-related and mutually reinforcing economical, technological and cultural factors combined to accelerate and extend those changes in existing family features. Some couples have an intimate relationship but maintain temporarily/ partly/ completely separate households. In the majority of cases as a result of occupational or other compelling circumstance less often a conscious choice (Trost, 1998; Rindfuss and Stephen, 1990; Villanueva and , Gokalp, 1997). Both partner relations and parent-child relations are also characterized by several changes in the values that prevail in the balance of power and decision making and in the emotional content of the relations among family members. All in all, both couple partnership and parent-child relations are subject to much higher cognitive and emotional exigencies. Family relations have consequently become more vulnerable, less stable but also more satisfying. So far examining trends and transitions in co residence with spouse and other family members, a marital coping scale with 25 items was conceptualized.

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NEED OF THE STUDY:

Although there is a long list of adequate instruments available as measures of marriage expectation of adolescents (Dunn, 1960; Slosarz, 2002), there are a number of scales measuring overall attitudes towards marriage (Braaten & Rosen, 1998; Gabardi & Rosen, 1991; Kinnaird & Gerrerd, 1986; Cohen 1985;) and there is only one scale measuring attitude of unmarried Indian adolescents regarding marriage (Pramod kumar, 1988). But there is no suitable instrument available for measuring the attitude of unmarried adolescent towards marital adjustment with life partner and inlaws family. Changing social and cultural values, increased urbanization and industrialization and no doubt Time has significant influence on one's expectation to marry. Marital conventionalization or social desirability has a greater influence on marriage opinion. Social desirability contamination has been seen as a cause for serious concern. It seems appropriate to circumvent the phenomenon by careful construction of items which do not have a strong or easily apparent social desirability loading. Existing Measures of marital expectations lack various characteristics desired in sound psychological tests. The fact remains that in previous Indian version of attitude scale effectiveness of marriage expectation is impractical in present scenario. Rather than argue for the complete dismissal of these self report instruments, it seems more practical to place greater emphasis on their careful construction and evaluation and to establish firmly their reliability and validity. The present study outlines the development of a new instrument assessing overall attitude towards adjustment with life partner and other family members of in laws house.

Ultimately, the applicability of this measure will be for all individuals, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and experiences with relationships.

THE SCALE

Design

The concept of attitude towards one's own marriage utilized in the present study represents an attempt to measure a changeable perception or readiness to respond in the individual. For purpose of this study marriage expectation is defined as the perception of an unmarried individual regarding his/ her own marriage. One objective in the development of the SMCS was to develop a single factor measure of perception of adolescent toward one's own marriage. The study believes that one may form attitudes and expectations regarding marriage life through personal experiences. Highly embedded positive marriage attitude may influence behavior and highly embedded negative marriage attitudes may also affect beliefs about relationship (Riggio & Weiser, 2008). Individuals with highly embedded positive attitude about marriage view their own future marriage as happy and successful but those with highly embedded negative marriage attitudes have less positive expectations. One objective in the development of the scale was to develop a single factor measure for attitude towards one's own marriage.

Since the purpose of the study was to treat the scale as an attitude scale, Edward's (1957) Guidelines and the process outlined by Worthington and Whittaker (2006) for constructing Likert-type attitudinal scale were selected as a design model. One important design consideration

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affected by this selection is scale length. Scale items are appropriately comprised of items which evoke affect or opinion rather than cognition. When each item in scale evokes an effective response towards some aspect of the attitudinal object, the total scale cumulatively and effectively samples the attitude toward the object. One design criterion for constructing the scale was to avoid cognitive or recall items and to require that they deal with opinion toward some aspect of one's own marriage. An additional requirement was that each item has the anticipated probability of evoking divided agreement and disagreement from subjects in a normal population. Another requirement was that the items should be fresh and not drawn from the traditional item pool. One design characteristic was to produce a scale which had a single –item style throughout and which would have as simple a scoring scheme as possible. Both these requirements were met by adopting the Likert-type attitude scale format.

DEVELOPMENT

Keeping in mind the desired design characteristics, items pertaining to opinion with various aspects of adjustment after marriage were generated. These items were written using clear, concise and readable language. Content for these items was suggested by the literature on marriage relationships and by the senior author's experience in adolescent's view point, and discussion with adolescents in general.

Twenty Seven suitable items were collected and framed into an initial version of the scale. Response categories were: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. Five experienced judges from the field of psychology, sociology and psychiatry agreed completely for evaluation on the favorability and unfavorability of the items. They reviewed the scale items in terms of sentence formation, clarity and complexity of statements, repetition of sentences, monotonous statements and fulfillment of objectives of scale construction. Worthington and Whittaker also advocates taking particular notes on the item's clarity, conciseness, reading level, face validity, content validity, and redundancy. In the light of the criticism and comments offered by the experts, two items were altogether dropped and seven items were either rewritten or modified. 25 items were thus selected for the attitude scale which showed 100 percent agreement among the judges as related to development of scale.

THE PILOT STUDY

An initial administration of the scale utilized 160 volunteer subjects ranging in age between 18-23. Two third of this initial group were females. Total score of this initial study group ranged from. The mean was 163.87 and the standard deviation was 18.25. Eighty percent of the scores were indicative of satisfaction. The result was left skewed, with the majority of scores being high and indicating satisfaction.

Item analysis of data obtained in this pilot administration indicated that two items were to be discarded. The items having popularity value between .2 and .8 was included in the scale.

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THE FINAL STUDY

After an instrument is developed and its reliability and validity are established, its research practicality must also be demonstrated. One indication of its proper development should be that it will function appropriately when used as intended. So finally 25 item marital coping scale was administered to a group of 1569 students- 518 male and 1051 female studying in different UG/PG classes in the various colleges and faculties of BHU, Varanasi. The score of each item was ranged from 1-5. Mean raw score of the SMCS was 170.88 with standard deviation 17.06 along with median 174.00 and mode 182.00. The percentage of high marriage attitude among male adolescents was 17.4 as compared to 31.6 among female adolescents. Association between gender and marriage attitude status was observed highly significant ($p \leq 0.001$). Result of this study indicated that, in general, items correlated well with the total scale, that there was a very high level of internal consistency, and that the scale involved a single factor.

Cronbach's alpha reliability of the selected questions after item Analysis

S.No.	Items	Cronbach's alpha
1.	After marriage, couples must co-habitat.	0.754
2.	With the advancement of communication facilities, couples who live apart are happy with their marital life.	0.744
3.	Living-Apart-Together (LAT) couples can maintain the closeness and intensity of their relationship by mutual understanding and love.	0.711
4.	There is nothing bad in living apart in view of financial security.	0.770
5.	Couples who live apart for a longer period have weak relationship bonding.	0.768
6.	Marriage itself means co-residence of couples.	0.760
7.	Other family members provide emotional stability to the couples who live apart.	0.737
8.	Couples should live apart only for economic reasons,	0.746
9.	Many times couples live apart due to social reasons also, i.e., chronic illness of any family member or elderly care etc. These social factors are also essential and should be followed necessarily.	0.775
10.	These social reasons are not at all acceptable in any condition and must not be the reason for LAT-relationships.	0.746
11.	Regular communication is must in LAT couples.	0.753
12.	Couples who reside together get bored easily.	0.791
13.	Relationship between couples are strong when they live together.	0.793
14.	After marriage, couples should live with whole family.	0.738
15.	Living with whole family is very responsible decision.	0.732
16.	Personal life gets affected in joint or extended family set up.	0.725
17.	Couples should live separate from family after marriage.	0.751

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18.	Living jointly with family provides financial security.	0.738
19.	Financial burden increases while living jointly with family.	0.769
20.	Couples get more personal time while living in a joint set up.	0.718
21.	In adverse conditions (like – illness, financial loss, care of children, dual career family or during leave of the maid etc.) companionship of family members is utmost essential and happiness provider.	0.740
22.	In any situation family members are always burden or responsibility.	0.739
23.	Couples should live separate from family so that their personal life don't get affected.	0.727
24.	Joint family is a foolish concept in this present Time.	0.731
25.	Couples should live separate from family but time to time they can help other members financially.	0.766

Reliability, Validity and other Statistical Analysis of SMCS

Reliability	0.64
Validity	0.80
Mean	88.54
±SD	07.44
Cronbach's alpha	0.761
Minimum	62.00
Maximum	115.00
Low	<81
Medium	82 – 96
High	> 96

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

An instrument in the form of a Likert-type attitudinal scale was developed for the purpose of assessing marital adjustment of unmarried adolescents ranging from age 18-23 and at the time when they first begin to formulate their expectation and desires for marriage and union formation and early in the transition to adulthood. It was administered to a total of 1569 subjects. Items had very high discrimination and the instrument proved to be of sufficient reliability and of high internal consistency.

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