

# Effect of Marital Adjustment in Middle-Aged Adults

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**Abstract-** The purpose of the present investigation was to see the effect of marital adjustment of males and females in middle age. The sample consisted of 124 respondents, out of which 62 were males and 62 females (mean age= 50 to 65), who were financially independent from their offspring. To measure adjustment we used Shamshad-Jasbir Old-age Adjustment Inventory (SJOAI) created by Dr. Shamshad Hussain and Dr. Jasbir Kaur. The inventory measures problems of marital adjustment faced by middle age. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, t-test analysis. There were found significant differences between two genders (male and female) in the marital adjustment. The result of the study revealed that there is a significant impact on males' as well as females' adjustment level.

**Index Terms-** Marital adjustment, middle age, Shamshad-Jasbir Old-age Adjustment Inventory (SJOAI), middle aged couples

## I. INTRODUCTION

Middle age is characterized by competence, maturity, responsibility and stability. Middle age is a phase of transition when life patterns are revised in several ways to adapt to the new lifestyle. People at this stage want to enjoy the success of job, satisfaction derived from the family and social life as well as look forward to the success of their children, aging parents, the use of leisure time and plans for old age. Middle age is also considered as the time of transference of authority, freedom and decision taking power to younger generation. This is the phase when people face entirely new set of challenges, expectation and liabilities and make several compromises. There may be many other aspects of life where one has to adapt to the changes like parenthood crises, coping with the untimely death of the spouse, etc. The occurrences of physical changes lead to changes in behavior also.

People have made consistent choices in certain directions and they often don't feel much freedom to significantly change their lives. Life crises often make the decision for them about change. People who feel cynical, disappointed, and angry about their lives tend to feel less optimistic, in this age. By this time the marriage has endured many shifts: from the more romantic, idealistic, and/or sexual emphasis, through the more prosaic, child-rearing, team-mate era. These previous sequences might have culminated in a relationship that is seasoned, stable and more satisfactory or more conflictual, tenuous and alienated than at any other time. In the absence of children, the conjugal bond, whatever its nature, will gain prominence.

There are challenges which should be met and coped with successfully. At this age it is good to look at the world with new prospective and changed interests. Some may find this adjustment stage really difficult and hard to cope with. Apart from these challenges there are also significant benefits for the relationship in the middle years of marriage. Most of today's mid-adults enjoy relatively good health, children becoming less dependent on them and stabilized finances. This can be an opportunity for couples to pursue their own interests and to spend more time together.

## II. CHALLENGES & LIFE SATISFACTION IN MIDDLE AGE

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As far as middle age is concerned following parameters can be taken into account to explain the life satisfaction:

### A. Mental

A close marital relationship can be viewed as a significant interpersonal resource across the adult life span, representing potentially the most intimate type of emotional support throughout the adulthood years. Conjugal support is a multidimensional construct consisting of three factors: instrumental support, emotional support and confiding (Anderson TB & McCulloch B. J. 1993). Physical health of mid-adult couples is related with their nature of marital relationship (Bookwala J. 2005) over and above marital status.

### B. Job

Work in mid-life is characterized by two paradoxes: one the work satisfaction is at its peak in these years and secondly the quality of work performance remains high, despite declines in some cognitive or physical skills. Patterns of work and work satisfaction do vary between men and women in middle adulthood. Men are more likely to improve their level of satisfaction in situations where change is

possible. Women tend to withdraw and to engage in collective complaining with female co-workers. Still, women are better able to balance their dissatisfaction with areas of contentment.

#### *C. Social*

In the process of socialization, adults prepare for a transition in role; this involves identifying the new norms and expectations that will be associated with the new social role once the transition is made. They have a concern for laws, traditions, and cultural values and offer a balance against too rapid cultural change.

#### *D. Marital*

It is likely that middle-aged partners' identification of successful problem-solving strategies contribute to the sense that they have control over their relationship. Skilled diplomacy (an approach to solving problems that involves confrontation of the spouse about an issue, followed by a period during which the confronting spouse works to restore harmony) is practiced more often by wives than by husbands, but it appears to be an effective skill for marital problem-solving no matter which spouse uses it.

#### *E. Family*

When looking at family relationships from the perspective of middle age, it should be looked in both directions: down the generational chain to relationships with grown children and up the chain to relationships with aging parents. The family role at this stage involves not only maximum amounts of assistance given in both directions in the generational chain, but also the maximum responsibility for maintaining affection bonds, what is sometimes called the mid-life "squeeze," or the "sandwich generation".

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The first important adjustment around family relationship elderly people must make, is establishing good relationship with their spouse. With the role change from worker to retiree most people have opportunity to spend more time at home than they ever had before. If their relationships with their spouse are good, this will contribute to the happiness of both. If however, their relationships are strained, friction is increased by constant contacts.

As is true of other times in the life-span, happiness in old age too depends upon fulfillment of the three 'A's of happiness-acceptance, affection and achievement. If all the three 'A's are being received in the companionship of spouse, then it may lead to the happiness and life satisfaction of adults couples.

Human beings constantly have to adjust to various roles, environmental demands and pressures. Throughout the course of life, human beings strive for well-being and happiness in various spheres of life - personal, social, economic, marital and work. Marital maladjustments are the consequences of dissatisfaction, especially in middle aged couples who are becoming more inclined towards extra-marital relationships and divorce. So, researcher was interested to know about the factors influencing the marital adjustment during middle age as well as the mental health of couples and also to explore how they react in frustrated situations.

### III. MARITAL ADJUSTMENT

Marital adjustment is a life longs process; although in the early days of marriage one has to give serious consideration. This understanding of individual trait of the spouse is an ongoing process in marriage; because even if two people know each other before or at the time of marriage, there is a possibility that people change during the life cycle. Marital adjustment, therefore, calls for maturity that accepts and understands growth and development in the spouse. If this growth is not experienced and realized fully, death in marital relationship is inevitable. Sinhaand Mukerjee (1990) defines marital adjustment as, "the state in which there is an overall feeling between husband and wife, of happiness and satisfaction with their marriage and with each other." It, therefore, calls experiencing satisfactory relationship between spouses characterized by mutual concern, care, understanding and acceptance. Sexual compatibility and mutual enjoyment is an important factor contributing to the success of most marital relationship, job of spouse, shape families in a variety of ways. Two major aspects of work directly affect family life: (1) the level of economic rewards associated with work and (2) the conditions associated with performing a job.

No matter how satisfactory and inevitable marriage is some conflict theorists assert that marital relationships reflect and reinforce gender inequalities (Degler, 1980). Examples that support such an assertion are: (1) until the past few years, a husband could rape his wife and not be charged; (2) in traditional marriage vows the bride is given away to the groom; and (3) the woman has traditionally taken the surname of the husband after marriage. Conflict theory helps to explain the extent of violence in families, where care and cooperation are supposed to exist something not easily explained by functionalist theory. Good communication skills do not prevent conflict. Actually a conflict, followed by a confrontation, can produce positive results.

Fujihara (1998) did a study on 153 married couples which showed that marital adjustment was significantly correlated with subcategories of social adjustment (1) household adjustment (except the spouse), (2) external family adjustment, (3) work adjustment, (4) social leisure adjustment and (5) general adjustment. Thus, marital adjustment may be a part of social adjustment for women, but the two may be discrete for men. A study, made on 1,609 couples from the Russian Army, found that marital dissatisfaction from husband will cross over to the wife directly, whereas the indirect crossover, when a stressor, such as economic hardship or a negative

life event increases the strain of a partner, is mediated the impact of the wife's social undermining behaviour on her husband (Westman, Vinokur, Hamilton & Roziner, 2004).

Vohs, Catanese, and Baumeister (2004) ended that, consistent with the traditional sexual script, research has consistently shown that men have a stronger sexual motivation than do women. Further, Sprecher (2002) found that relationship satisfaction (but not sexual satisfaction) negatively predicted the likelihood of relationship breakup for women but not for men. In contrast, sexual satisfaction (but no relationship satisfaction) negatively predicted the likelihood of relationship dissolution for men but not for women. Thus, perhaps for men decreased sexual satisfaction leads to decreased relationship satisfaction, whereas for women, the reverse is true.

Levenson, Robert W. et al. (1993) in a study based on 156 American couples in long-term marriages differed in age (40–50 or 60–70 years) and marital satisfaction (satisfied or dissatisfied), found that marital interaction in older couples was associated with more affective positivity and lower physiological arousal (even when controlling for affective differences) than in middle-age couples. In terms of the relation between physiological arousal and affective experience, husbands reported feeling more negative the more they were physiologically aroused; for wives, affect and arousal were not correlated.

Carstensen, Laura et al. (1995) in a study on 1056 couples differing in age and marital satisfaction concluded that emotional behaviors expressed by couples differed as a function of age, gender and marital satisfaction. In older couples, the resolution of conflict was less emotionally negative and more affectionate than in middle-aged marriages. Differences between husbands and wives and between happy and unhappy marriages were also found. Wives were more affectively negative than husbands, whereas husbands were more defensive than wives, and unhappy marriages involved greater exchange of negative affect than happy marriages.

Pasupathi, Monisha et al. (1999) observed 79 younger and older, happily and unhappily married couples, discussing conflicts. They coded listening behaviors indicative of attention and comprehension (responsiveness) as well as those expressing emotions. It was expected that older married couples would display lower frequencies of responsive listening behaviors than middle-aged couples. Results provide conditional support for this hypothesis.

Green (2000) studied 13,000 households, including an oversample of minority households. Results revealed that long-term couples engaged in less conflict, utilized different conflict resolution strategies, were more satisfied with their marriages and perceived alternatives to their relationships as less favorable than younger couples. In addition, when husbands' and wives' scores on the above measures were compared, long term couples exhibited fewer differences than younger couples.

Isaac and Shah (2004) in a study based on 20 distressed and 20 non-distressed couples from a marital and family therapy center in the city of Bangalore, India, revealed that: (a) the group as a whole showed greater femininity than masculinity; (b) more non-distressed individuals show high androgyny; (c) androgynous dyads show better marital adjustment; and (d) qualitative analysis suggests a trend for couples to move towards more gender-neutral constructions of marriage, indicating a link between androgyny and marital adjustment and type of match between dyads.

Myers and Madathil (2005) administered Marital satisfaction and wellness questionnaire on forty-five individuals (22 couples and 1 widowed person) living in arranged marriages in India. The data were compared with existing data on individuals in the United States living in marriages of choice. Differences were found in importance of marital characteristics, but no differences in satisfaction were found. Differences were also found in 9 of 19 wellness scales between the two groups.

Fielder and Robinson Kurpius (2005) investigated the relationship of two contextual variables (the marital relationship and stress) with the experience of menopause for 224 married midlife women. Marital quality, marital satisfaction, and stress predicted menopausal symptomatology. Women in dissatisfying marriages, characterized by less social support, less depth, and higher conflict, reported increased stress and more menopausal symptoms than did women in satisfying marriages. Sexual satisfaction was positively related to marital satisfaction. No differences were found due to menopausal stage.

Yeh, Lorenz et al. (2006) based their study on 283 married American couples, to examine the causal sequences among three constructs for husbands and wives separately. Results of cross-11 lagged models, for both husbands and wives, provided support for the causal sequences that proceed from sexual satisfaction to marital quality, from sexual satisfaction to marital instability, and from marital quality to marital instability. Initially higher levels of sexual satisfaction resulted in an increase in marital quality, which in turn led to a decrease in marital instability over time. Effects of sexual satisfaction on marital instability appear to have been mediated through marital quality.

Laumann, Paik et al. (2006) conducted survey of 27,500 men and women aged 40 to 80 years in 29 countries. The cross-national variation of four aspects of sexual well-being (the emotional and physical satisfaction of sexual relationships, satisfaction with sexual health or function, and the importance of sex in one's life) was explored using cluster analysis, and relationships among sexual well-being, general happiness, and various correlates were examined using ordinary least squares regression and ordered logistic regression. Results from the cluster analysis identified three clusters: a gender-equal regime and two male-centered regimes. Despite this cultural variation, the predictors of subjective sexual well-being were found to be largely consistent across world regions.

Alder (2010) conducted study to determine whether there is a relationship between marital satisfaction and the independent variables of age, education level, and courtship length. Respondents ( $N = 60$ ) were required to complete surveys online regarding their experiences in their marriages. Results indicated that there was not a statistically significant relationship between marital satisfaction, age, education level, and courtship length. However, there was a negative correlation between post-engagement courtship and dyadic adjustment, indicating that, as length of engagement increases, marital adjustment decreases.

Humbad, Donnellan et al. (2010) evaluated the associations between externalizing psychopathology and marital adjustment in a combined sample of 1,805 married couples in USA. Results indicated that more externalizing psychopathology, greater negative emotionality, and lower communal positive emotionality were associated with reduced marital adjustment in both individuals and their

spouses. Low constraint was associated with reduced marital adjustment for individuals but not for their spouses. Multivariate analyses indicated externalizing psychopathology continued to predict marital adjustment even when accounting for overlap with personality.

#### IV. METHODOLOGY

##### *Objectives*

Objective of this study is to study the effect of adjustment in middle aged adjustment. Significant differences were found between two genders (male and female) in the areas of health, home, social, marital, emotional and financial adjustment. There is a significant impact of these areas on males' as well as females' adjustment level.

##### *Delimitations*

1. Subject is collect from Banastali University campus, this research is area specific.
2. The research is focused upon low income group population, which includes mess workers, watchman, shopkeeper, mechanic, library workers, horse barn workers and gardeners.

##### *Sample*

The sample consisted of randomly selected 124 respondents, (62 males and 62 females mean age range= 50 to 65) which are mess workers, watchman, shopkeeper, mechanic, library workers, horse barn workers and gardeners; who are financially independent from their offspring. Subjects from only low socio-economic status were selected. Individuals in this sample were only married couples.

##### *Measures*

This study uses old age adjustment inventory, developed by Shamshad Hussain and Jashbir Kaur. This inventory was developed for male and female ranging between 50 to 65 years of age belonging to different professions. This 125 items inventory measures the adjustment of old aged people into six areas- health, home, social, marital, emotional and financial. Percentile norms are available sex wise and professional status wise.

##### *Reliability of the Test*

The obtained indices of different type of sampling schemes are as follows:

Item Analysis	Reliability	Validity	Norm Construction
N=375	N=100	N=100	N=100

#### V. RESULTS

Table-1:

Mean-Values are Showing effect of marital adjustment in middle-aged adults (N=124)

	Gender	Mean	SD	Significance
<b>Heath</b>	<b>Males</b>	19.48387097	3.857043527	0.001***
	<b>Females</b>	16.80645161	3.937373301	
<b>Home</b>	<b>Males</b>	17.64516129	2.225756635	0.289*
	<b>Females</b>	18.06451613	2.156735296	
<b>Social</b>	<b>Males</b>	15.32258065	1.817710626	0.253*
	<b>Females</b>	14.93548387	1.932220058	
<b>Marital</b>	<b>Males</b>	11.93548387	2.455311858	0.001***
	<b>Females</b>	9.258064516	4.427690379	
<b>Emotional</b>	<b>Males</b>	13.87096774	3.091415247	0.001***
	<b>Females</b>	11.87096774	3.471116752	
<b>Financial</b>	<b>Males</b>	6.709677419	2.160654855	0.085*
	<b>Females</b>	6.064516129	1.965864159	
<b>Total</b>	<b>Males</b>	84.87096774	10.19077672	0.001***
	<b>Females</b>	77.0001	13.51623189	

(n=100) health, home, social, marital, emotional and financial

\*\*\*Highly Significant at 0.001level  
\* Significant

The table depicts that significant relation of home, social and financial parameters were found in marital adjustment of males and females in middle aged. Whereas health, marital and emotional parameters have highly significant relation on marital adjustment in middle aged. As the mean value of health adjustment in men (19.48), and in female (16.80), mean value of marital adjustment in men (11.93) and in female (9.25) and the mean value of emotional adjustment in men (13.87) and in female (11.87) which is higher significant value the indicating that males make high level of adjustment than females.

The mean marital adjustment scores of these two genders were then compared. The Table-1 reveals that there is a significant difference between male and female i.e. high level of marital adjustment in males (Mean value = 11.93 and S.D. = 2.45) and low level of marital adjustment in females (Mean value = 9.25, S.D. = 4.42) in comparison to high companionship of spouse group.

The result of the present study shows the significant at 0.001level. The investigator therefore concludes that there is a positive significant effect of marital adjustment between males and females.

For other dimensions of marital adjustment, only in financial adjustment no difference have been found which is indicating that both the spouses are enjoying equality and equity roles, participate and cooperate in all kinds of responsibilities leading to good marital adjustment. Through above mentioned result it can be concluded that companionship of spouse is an important support that creates joy and a sense of belonging through shared time together and expression of love and affection. It also provides assistance such as financial support or help with chores, through all life's changes. The cause of more life satisfaction for older couples may be that there are many opportunities to enjoy their lives together and to grow closer. In addition, spouses provide extraordinary companionship and support when health and mobility decline and partner needs assistance.

## VI. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Working females have to play dual roles as they are employed outside house. They shoulder more responsibilities than males, adjust their time and energy for children, spouse, and household activities, religious and social activities. They seek contentment and recreation out of all these activities performed and makes adjustment accordingly. This can be supported by Powers, Myers and Tingle (2004) studied 83 individuals (42 couples) living in medical marriage. Results revealed that resident spouses scored higher than the general married population on wellness, mattering, and satisfaction with shared marriage values and scored lower on work satisfaction and realistic beliefs. Barling (1986) in a study on "inter role conflict and marital functioning" found that conflict regarding work and family roles was associated with lower levels of marital adjustment among dual earner couples.

In contrast, males are more mentally healthy than females. A balance of psychic forces in the males shows sound mental health. Ability to understand and to share other people's emotions, the ability to concentrate at work and interest in several activities in middle aged males results in good adjustment with spouse and with the family members. They always have an inner feeling to spend quality time with their spouse, take care of and satisfy sexual needs of the partner. They have concern and feel responsible for needs of the family members and for smooth functioning of the family, they are able to make equal role distribution among the family members. They try to maintain balance between family and society. During middle age the males have less family responsibilities (as the children are grown up or settled down) and would also desire to spend some time for social work or welfare activities. It leads to their overall life satisfaction.

Hill (2005) conducted a study on 1,314 individuals and found that work to family facilitation was positively related to job satisfaction and life satisfaction, and negatively related to individual stress. Family to work facilitation was positively related to marital satisfaction, family satisfaction and life satisfaction, and negatively related to organizational commitment. Working fathers reported long work hours (49 hours / week), major involvement in household responsibilities (46 hours / week), and a work culture less supportive of their family life than working mothers reported. However, working fathers reported less individual stress, and greater family satisfaction, and life satisfaction than working mothers.

### *Principal Implications of the Study*

This study has very deep social implications to strength the marital bonds between the working couples. This can help / suggest

1. The middle aged couples to develop patience and tolerance and understanding for each other.
2. The importance of recreation, role distribution for smooth functioning marriage life.
3. Working couples to owe respect and equality rights to each other regarding financial and family matters with special reference to females.

### *Suggestions*

1. This study was conducted to see the middle age crisis in adulthood regarding effect of marital adjustment. Further investigation may be undertaken to find out other factors affecting marital adjustment in middle adulthood.
2. Sample of present investigation was drawn only from Banasthali University, Rajasthan State of India.
3. Further revitalization programs could be undertaken for the identified maritally maladjusted couples.
4. Similar research study can be undertaken on a sample belonging to different communities and cultures like Hindu, Muslim etc.

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