

Interaction Effect of Family Type, Age Gap and Length of Married Life on Marital Adjustment

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ABSTRACT

The present normative survey was aimed to study the main effect and interaction effect of age gap, family type and length of married life on marital adjustment. The Marital Adjustment Questionnaire developed by Kumar and Rohatgi (1976) was administered on a random sample of 326 married adults (average age 37.46) selected from Ernakulam district of Kerala. The data, thus collected, were subjected to statistical analysis (three-way ANOVA) by keeping the objective and the hypothesis in mind. The study revealed that age gap, family type and length of married life have significant main effect on the marital adjustment of participants. Whereas the family type do not significantly influence marital adjustment in interaction with either length of married life or age gap between the spouses, the latter two independent variables have significant interaction effect on marital adjustment. The analysis also exposed that all the three independent variables, viz., family type, age gap between spouses and the length of married life, have significant interaction effect on marital adjustment of people living in Ernakulam district.

Keywords: *Marital adjustment, Family type, Age gap, Length of married life, Main effect, Interaction effect.*

Living represents a continuous series of adjustments between satisfaction of individual needs and satisfaction of demands of the groups to which he belongs. Challenges which people have to face in their efforts to adjust themselves with intimates are the general causes of mental ill-health. Marital conflict is one of the major sources of stress, depressive symptoms and functional impairment among both men and women (Choi & Marks, 2008). Marital conflict normally stems from poor quality of marriage and subsequent marital dissatisfaction. The quality of the marriage is determined with concepts of adjustment, satisfaction and happiness, as well as evaluations of married couples. Marital satisfaction is an essential element for

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personal growth, successful family life and is contributory to marital adjustment. Marital adjustment is the state in which there is an overall feeling in husband and wife of happiness and satisfaction with their marriage and with each other (Rao, 2017). It is a complex and kaleidoscopic phenomenon which acts as a core component in determining the success of a marital life (Beegamet *et al.*, 2017). The fulfilment and positive development in married life will be possible only when the relationship between couples is coherent and satisfactory. The relationship between marital adjustment and mental health of the couples have been reported by many researchers (eg. Parmar, 2014; Gaikwad & Shashikant, 2016; Hossain *et al.*, 2017 etc.). Different factors significantly influence the marital adjustment of couples, such as personality of the partner, ages of couples, sexual satisfaction, communication between them, employment, income, change in status of women etc. (Rita & Singh, 2017; Singh *et al.*, 2006). Studies exploring marital adjustment in relation to socio-demographic factors are not scarce in research literature, but the interaction effect of such factors on marital adjustment still remains an unexplored area of study. This study is a modest attempt to investigate the main effect and interaction effect of age gap, family type and length of married life on marital adjustment.

Objective

To study the main effect and interaction effect of family type, age gap and length of married life on marital adjustment of people living in Ernakulam district of Kerala.

Hypothesis

There will be no significant main effect and interaction effect of family type, age gap and length of married life on marital adjustment of people living in Ernakulam district of Kerala.

METHODOLOGY

Normative survey method was used in the present study. The study made use of a random sample of 326 adults (male = 158, and female = 168) in the age range 25 to 55 from Ernakulam district of Kerala. The average age of the subjects were estimated to be 37.46. Data collection was accomplished with the help of the Marital Adjustment Questionnaire developed by Kumar and Rohatgi (1976), a 25 item instrument with 'yes' or 'no' responses. The questionnaire is reported to have acceptable validity and a test-retest reliability of 0.71.

Procedure

The tools were administered on the sample either individually or in small group situation under standardized conditions, their responses were collected in the response sheets, and the total score on the instruments were found out. A personal data sheet was also attached with the tools, so as to collect the required demographic information. The data thus obtained were subjected to appropriate statistical techniques and interpreted accordingly. The statistical analysis was accomplished with the help of SPSS (version 17.0 for Windows).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In order to find out the main effect and interaction effect of family type (FT), age gap between spouses (AG), and length of married life (LM) on marital adjustment (MA), three-way ANOVA was carried out. The result is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of 3 X 3 factorial design ANOVA for marital adjustment

Dependent variable: Marital Adjustment

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	2113.588a	16	132.099	42.028	.000
Intercept	40730.181	1	40730.181	1.296E4	.000
Length (LM)	280.743	2	140.371	44.660	.000
Family (FT)	51.751	1	51.751	16.465	.000
Age Gap (AG)	133.778	2	66.889	21.281	.000
LM * FM	13.117	2	6.558	2.087	.126
LM * AG	37.272	4	9.318	2.965	.020
FM * AG	11.064	2	5.532	1.760	.174
LM * FM * AG	26.320	3	8.773	2.791	.041
Error	971.221	309	3.143		
Total	126462.000	326			
Corrected Total	3084.810	325			

a. R Squared = .685 (Adjusted R Squared = .669)

The data and result of the three-way ANOVA reveals that all the three independent variables, viz., Length of Married Life (LM) (F = 44.660, p<0.001), Family Type (FT) (F = 16.465; p<0.001), and Age Gap (AG) between the couple (F = 21.281; p<0.001) have significant main effects on the marital adjustment of people living in Ernakulam district. The result indicates that the mean scores of marital adjustment will be different for people living in joint and nuclear families, having different age gap with their spouse, after different length of marital living.

The F-value for interaction between length of marital life (LM) and family type (FT) is not significant (F = 2.087; p>.05). It shows that mean scores of marital adjustment of people from joint and nuclear families after different periods of marital living do not differ significantly. The F-value obtained for interaction between length of marital life (LM) and age gap between the couple (AG) is significant (F = 2.619; p<0.05). The people having varying age gap with

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their spouse after different length of marital living differ significantly in their marital adjustment. The F-value estimated for interaction between family type (FT) and age gap (AG) is also not significant ($F = 1.760$; $p > 0.05$), exposing the fact that people from joint and nuclear families having different age gap with their spouse are alike in their marital adjustment. The F-ratio obtained for interaction between age gap, family type, and length of marital life is significant ($F = 2.791$; $p > 0.05$). It discloses that there exists significant interaction effect of age gap, family type and length of married life on marital adjustment of people living in Ernakulam district.

In the light of obtaining significant main effect and interaction effect of Length of Married Life (LM) and Age Gap (AG), *post-hoc* comparison of group means was done to find out exactly which levels of the independent variables create a significant change in the dependent variable. Scheffé's test of multiple comparisons was used for comparing groups categorized into three levels on the basis of age gap as well as length of marital life. Comparison of the mean scores of Marital Adjustment (MA) between groups formed on the basis of High-, Average-, and Low-age gap (AG) between spouses was done, and the details are given in Table 2.

Table 2: Post-hoc test for the comparison of high-, average-, and low age gap groups with respect to marital adjustment

(I) AG	(J) AG	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
LARGE	Medium	2.31*	.256	.000	1.68	2.94
	Small	5.20*	.290	.000	4.49	5.91
MEDIUM	Large	-2.31*	.256	.000	-2.94	-1.68
	Small	2.89*	.234	.000	2.31	3.46
SMALL	Large	-5.20*	.290	.000	-5.91	-4.49
	Medium	-2.89*	.234	.000	-3.46	-2.31

The error term is Mean Square (Error) = 3.143. * Significant at the .05 level.

The result of *Scheffe post-hoc comparison* (*vide Table 2*) clearly indicate that significant difference exists between all the pair combinations of Large-, Medium- and Small-age gap (AG) between spouses considered in the study. The means of marital adjustment (MA) for groups in homogeneous subsets are given in Table 3.

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Table 3: Means for groups in homogeneous subsets of marital adjustment

Levels of AG	N	Subset ($\alpha = .01$)		
		1	2	3
Small	86	16.86		
Medium	174		19.75	
Large	66			22.06

The error term is Mean Square (Error) = 3.143.

The result of analysis present in Table 3 shows that the mean scores of Marital Adjustment of the participants with small Age Gap is 16.86, which is significantly lower than that of participants with Medium (M = 19.75) and Large (M = 22.06) age gaps between spouses. It is evident that couples with high age gap are better in their marital adjustment compared to participants with medium and low age gaps. Similarly, comparison of mean scores of marital adjustment between groups formed on the basis of high-, average-, and low Length of Married Life (LM) was also done and the result is given in Table 4.

Table 4: Post-hoc test for the comparison of high-, average-, and low length of married life with respect to marital adjustment

(I) LM	(J) LM	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
HIGH	Average	2.25*	.247	.000	1.64	2.86
	Low	6.47*	.295	.000	5.75	7.20
AVERAGE	High	-2.25*	.247	.000	-2.86	-1.64
	Low	4.22*	.247	.000	3.62	4.83
LOW	Average	-4.22*	.247	.000	-4.83	-3.62
	High	-6.47*	.295	.000	-7.20	-5.75

The error term is Mean Square (Error) = 3.143 *Significant at the .05 level.

The result of the *post-hoc* comparison, given in Table 4, visibly indicate that significant difference exists between all pair combinations of High-, Average-, and Low Length of Married Life(LM) considered in the study. The means of marital adjustment (MA) for groups in homogeneous subsets are given in Table 5.

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Table 5: Means for groups in homogeneous subtests of marital adjustment

Levels of LM	N	Subset ($\alpha = .01$)		
		1	2	3
Low	72	15.67		
Average	182		19.89	
High	72			22.14
The error term is Mean Square (Error) = 3.143				

It is evident from the result of analysis present in Table 5 that the mean scores of marital adjustment of the participants with low length of married life is 15.67, which is significantly lower than that of participants with average and high length of married life which 19.89 and 22.14 respectively. Thus it can be concluded that the people with longer marital life excel people with average and shorter duration of married life in their marital adjustment; and teachers with average duration of married life excel their counterparts with low duration of marital life in marital adjustment.

CONCLUSION

The F-ratios obtained on carrying out the three-way ANOVA (vide Table 1) make clear that there is significant main effect of family type, age gap between spouses, and length of married life on marital adjustment of people living in Ernakulam district. The analysis further revealed that Length of married life and Age gap between spouses have significant interactive effect on marital adjustment of the participants. Neither the age gap between spouses nor length of married life, however, influence marital adjustment of people in interaction with the family type. The interaction effect of ‘family type’ with neither ‘age gap between spouses’ nor ‘length of married life’ is significant in marital adjustment. Another noteworthy finding generated from the analysis is that the three independent variables *viz.*, type of family, length of married life, and age gap between spouses have significant interactive effect on the marital adjustment of people living in Ernakulam district of Kerala ($F = 2.791$; $p < 0.05$).

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Conflict of Interest

The authors colorfully declare this paper to bear not conflict of interests

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