

Comparative Study

Marital Satisfaction During the Honeymoon Period: A Comparative Study Between the Newlywed and Long-Term Married Couples

Ananya Srinivas^{1*}

ABSTRACT

Marriage is becoming vague and meaningless in contemporary culture, and there is little possibility for the social construction of marriage. Modern couples are choosing to remain unmarried because marriage is associated with a dramatic decline in happiness and overall satisfaction. Because younger couples are adopting a more westernised view of life and society, the Indian belief system in the concept of marriage is diminishing. The aim of the paper is to find out the emotions and the nature of happiness at the beginning of marriage and why it slowly fades over the years by also taking into account the factors responsible for a happy marriage, the cultural background and the nature of adjustment and adaptation present in the couples studied. A comparative qualitative study was conducted by taking a sample (N=30) of 15 newly married couples and 15 long term married couples (> 5years) from different cultural backgrounds, with the administration of marital satisfaction scale and the overall life satisfaction scales and a comprehensive psychoanalytic interview in order to bring out the subtle nature of the human emotions resent in each of the partners. The results showed that there was only moderate decrease in the marital satisfaction amongst both the groups. The effects of other correlated factors such as affluence, gender, family background and the level of education were carefully examined.

Keywords: *Marital Satisfaction, Life Satisfaction, Newlywed Couples, Happiness, Adjustment, Adaptation*

Marriage is a social institution. It is called an institution because it has certain rules and regulations which helps fulfill social factors such as intimacy, companionship, affection and social support. Also, marriage offers a deep sense of oneness that no other relationship can substitute. It is the union of two compatible persons that allows the society's provisions to move forward. Most couples marry to end their lengthy years of dating successfully. Marriage in many cultures is solely for the goal of bearing a child. Many young individuals in current Indian society who are dating would marry in order to establish that their marriage is compatible with their love. A marriage after years of dating is confirmation that their love life, and life in general, has progressed. However, the flip side of the tale is that many people fail to recognize that life, adjustment, disputes, and circumstances exist even after marriage. Adjustment has always been a part of life, and it is

¹Research scholar, Department of Psychology, Surana College, India

*Corresponding Author

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Marital Satisfaction During the Honeymoon Period: A Comparative Study Between the Newlywed and Long-Term Married Couples

something that people do at every stage of marriage. Many times, the word adjustment is synonymous with the word compromise because the circumstances applicable to the state of adjustment become so demanding that the individual feels obliged to believe that their acts are sacrificial.

The concept of Marriage and Love in the Indian society has become more westernized: the western concept of love has always been that of courtship and of feminism. Feminism has taken an adverse twist and become synonymous with behaving like a man rather than attaining equal rights as a man. The focus of love is tainted with technology as well. Couples express their love for each other verbally through texts and it is an unreliable source of gaining affection because there is always gender differences in maintaining a stable consistency. The concept of love is the west in one of over symbolism and expression of one's feelings. The west symbolizes love as a more overt act of pampering the female partner with gifts in order to express his affection. Since the advent of globalization and the identification of the Indian generation with the western ideologies, love, too has become narrowly westernized (Medora, JH Larson et al, 2002)

Since the time of the emperors, monarchs, and poets, the Indian concept of love has been delicate and silent, like the flow of a stream, rather than flamboyant. Since ancient times, the Indian idea of love has been one loaded with duties and responsibility (Black, S, 2017). It necessitates the female partner's recognition of her responsibility, not only to her spouse, but also to her extended family, neighbourhood, and society as a whole. This type of behaviour is now known as submissiveness and a compromised vulnerable position. Male partners have a sense of obligation and affection for their women, which they exhibit through abstract attributes such as loyalty, protection, and an inward sense of adoration and respect (TT Vu, 2021). The present generation, on the other hand, has failed to grasp love as an expression of everything one person feels for the other and has found attachment in the materialistic aspects of obtaining something from the other (Dingus, 2014)

Marriage has historically been regarded as a joyous occasion in India. There are numerous traditions throughout India's various civilizations. The central concept of Indian marriage traditions, on the other hand, recognizes the bond shared not just by the bride and groom, but also by both their families, and considers the married couple's contribution to society as a whole. The conditions for contributing are so subtle and intricate that understanding the roles individually becomes difficult; however, the idea is that while they function well as a single unit of family, they are a part of the larger network of families that forms society; thus, a deviation of a few single units would cause the entire construct of a larger society to lose its regular flow.

The gender differences in roles, adjustment and level of adaptation: When it comes to the roles and responsibilities of a man and a woman, modern education, media, and society as a sub-unit of individual have depicted a fairly dysfunctional role (Eagly, 1984). Except in circumstances of a history of domestic violence and abuse, there is an imprecise and ill-defined notion of how a woman should be treated, which women themselves do not understand. The resulting demands are excessive and unreasonable. The modern generation also promotes less tolerance for a woman's adjustment to her husband and in-laws, creating an overpowering desire to be treated "appropriately.". Marriages frequently fail due to a lack of adjustment because women are simply allowed to leave a "miserable" marriage. The women are emphasizing the two individuals as a separate entity rather than accepting the

Marital Satisfaction During the Honeymoon Period: A Comparative Study Between the Newlywed and Long-Term Married Couples

entire family as a one unit (Bruder, A. H. 1972). The lack of adjustment is caused by a variety of factors such as a person's personality, education level, their high expectations, economic conditions (Williamson 1972) the women's self-centered nature in opposition to her husband's family, the in-law's treatment, the woman's loss of identity, and the structure of society in general (Amato and Previti, 2003).

The impact of education and the level of adjustment: Education shapes a person and instil in them a feeling of discipline and responsibility in their lives. As a result, it was demonstrated that educated people would enjoy a much happier and successful life than uneducated/high school graduated couples (Whisman, 2015). Education is not a criterion; yet, what a godly education produces is cultural unity and tolerance. However, it can be taken in a larger sense that education does not have to be formal. Many Indian families instil in their children an informal eagerness to marry. They teach morals, adaptation, tolerance, and patience. One of the primary aspects that contributes to a good marriage is adjustment. Adjustment should not be confused with worries such as compromise or sacrifice. Adjustment is the nuanced and intricate process of a woman assimilation into the household. When the cultural backgrounds of the spouses are different, the personalities of the couples clash, disagreements are not resolved, and the households are not supportive, adjustment becomes tough (Gallo and Smith, 2001). Personal adjustment should be accompanied by a sense of understanding and tolerance. It is accompanied by a sense of respect for the partner and their needs. Adjustment necessitates love, respect, and a greater understanding.

The level of inclusiveness in women: Women have always been expected to fulfil nurturing roles simply because it is in their nature to do so. A woman is the new family member who will be welcomed by the household she is marrying into, and this household will have its own roles to accomplish. A functioning part of a healthy family requires both the husband's family and the women to accommodate each other equally. A woman's inclusive nature will not only make her family feel at ease and enrich their lives, but will also unite the entire household (Lupton and Smith 1999) Tolerance, nurturance, acceptance, and greater inclusiveness, as well as treating others as one's own family, have been identified as sheltering factors in women, and these factors help her balance and maintain the family. The concept of inclusiveness is broad but difficult to grasp. It accepts all extended family members as equals and assists the woman in accepting them as one. For the time being, her involvement and assimilation with the husband's family will assist them in maintaining a better household and family.

Relative comparison between partners with themselves and other married couples: Human beings always live better lives when they compare their current situation to that of someone else (Festinger, 1954). This concept of relative comparison can also be applied to married couples. This is common in long-term married couples who begin to compare their lives with other partners and wish to have the same marital life, freedom, and satisfaction (Veenhoven, R. 1991). According to studies, women tend to compare and desire better lives than men, and they design their lives in ways that their other couple friends do. However, over time, the couple will be able to be more fulfilled in their lives and achieve a more satisfactory outcome.

METHODOLOGY

Aim: to study the marital satisfaction between newlyweds and long-term married couples and to understand the reasons for the decrease in happiness over the years.

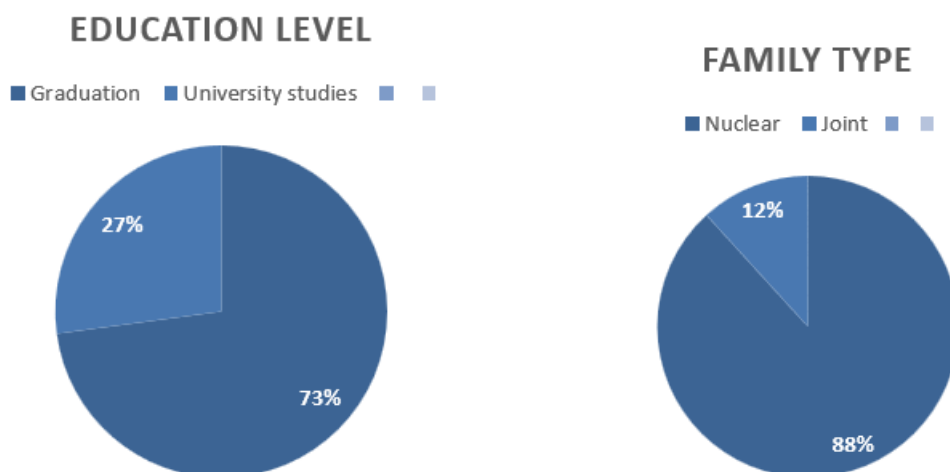
Marital Satisfaction During the Honeymoon Period: A Comparative Study Between the Newlywed and Long-Term Married Couples

Objective

1. To understand the level of adjustment between the partners and with the extended family members
2. To understand the various factors leading to adaptation among the married couples.
3. To investigate the various factors leading to both marital happiness and unhappiness and also to understand socio-emotional factors associated with it.

Sample:

The participants included thirty couples (N=30) consisting of 15 newlywed couples with the term of 6 to 12 months and 15 long term married couples with the term of 3 to 5 years that were living in Karnataka, India. The women in the long-term married group were mothers (average age was 32 years) who had children between the age group of one to five years. With regard to the educational levels, 76% of the participants had completed graduation, 28.3% had completed university studies. Most of the short-term married couples were in nuclear families (24%), while the long-term married couples were in joint families (56%). The married couples are taken from 15 different cultural and religious backgrounds. An extensive interview was conducted for each of the couple to understand their individual view points and also their collective perspective on their marital happiness.



Measures

1. The ENRICH marital satisfaction scale (MSS) consisting of 15 questions, which answered on a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2= moderately disagree, 3= neither agree nor disagree, 4= moderately agree and 5= strongly agree) it include two dimensions that is marital satisfaction (MS) and idealistic distortion (ID). The scale is scored by summing up the items and by reversing the values of the items 2, 5, 8, 9, 12 and 14. The formula for calculating the total score is as follows $EMS = MS - (MS) \times (MS \text{ and } ID)^2 \times I(ID \times 0.01)$. Higher scores represent greater marital satisfaction.
2. The Life satisfaction Scale or LSS consists of 5 questions which can be responded with a seven-point scale (1-strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=slightly disagree, 4=neither agree nor disagree, 5=slightly agree, 6=agree and 7=strongly agree). A semi structured interview was also conducted and the follow up questions were asked to the couples and feedback was collected.

Marital Satisfaction During the Honeymoon Period: A Comparative Study Between the Newlywed and Long-Term Married Couples

Procedure

The participants were selected based on a snowball sampling and the couples who met the above criteria were asked to participate in a detailed interview in two sessions: one individually and one with both partners. Using a snowball sampling technique, graduate students from the Department of Psychology of the Surana College were assigned the task of interviewing two couples each to answer the EMS Scale and the Life satisfaction scale. The couple's socio-demographic information was collected, and after establishing rapport and obtaining informed consent, the marital satisfaction scale was administered. The interview session continued, and the couples were allowed to express their concerns while receiving minimal intervention in order to understand the factors that contribute to their happiness and unhappiness. Following the completion of the interview, they were given the life satisfaction scale and asked to provide self-evaluations as well as suggestions and improvements in the areas of need.

RESULTS

Analysis and results: The data was analysed using SPSS v27 software.

Table 1: showing the results of the marital satisfaction amongst newly wed and long term married couples

MSS	N	Mean	SD	SEM	df	t	P
newly wed couple	15	56.00	6.00	1.55	28	4.2268	0.0002
long term married couple	15	45.73	7.25	1.87			

An independent sample t test reported a significant difference in the marital satisfaction amongst newlywed and long term married couples, $t(28) = 4.2268$, $p < 0.001$. the newly wed couple with the marital duration of 6 to 12 months ($M=56.00$, $SD=6.00$) have greater marital satisfaction as compared to long term married couples with a marital duration of more than 5 years ($M=45.73$, $SD=7.25$).

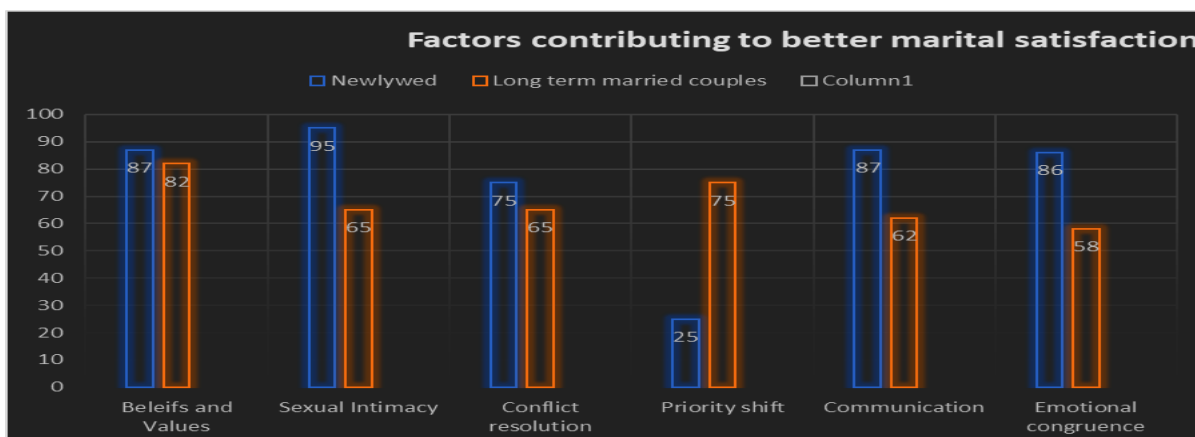
Table 2: showing the results of the life satisfaction amongst newly wed and long term married couples

LSS	N	Mean	SD	SEM	df	t	P
newly wed couple	15	25.00	3.68	0.95	28	2.7273	0.0109
long term married couple	15	22.07	1.94	0.50			

An independent sample t test reported a significant difference in the marital satisfaction amongst newlywed and long term married couples, $t(28) = 2.27273$, $p < 0.001$. the newly wed couple with the marital duration of 6 to 12 months ($M=25$, $SD=1.94$) have conventionally greater life satisfaction as compared to long term married couples with a marital duration of more than 5 years ($M=22.73$, $SD=1.94$).

Overall, the newly wed couples showed a greater marital satisfaction when compared to long term married couples, however, there was not a significant deviation in the life satisfaction scale. There were other factors that existed in both the newly wed and the long-term married couples level of satisfaction that were found during the extensive detailed interview conducted. Most newlywed couples would have begun their relationship while they were young and would need more financial support and independence. The couples must create a family and work together to accomplish the goals they have set. They will be able to

Marital Satisfaction During the Honeymoon Period: A Comparative Study Between the Newlywed and Long-Term Married Couples



distribute their labor more effectively and participate in activities together since they have prioritized one another as they achieve financial stability and status. The couples that were questioned had solid fundamental bases for their relationships because to their shared ideas and religious backgrounds, which allowed them to come to an understanding on a variety of ritualistic or practice-related issues. Additionally, the value system aids in conflict resolution and facilitates greater understanding. The activity of finding the best solution rather than proving who is correct follows mutual respect, and as a marriage develops, the desire to put aside differences becomes more readily available rather than attempting to cling on to the difference. The newness and the stronger emotional experience of delight and excitement generate the honeymoon effect. The initial relationships will always have greater sexual intimacy and bonding and the partner have more preference to spend more time with each other. Sexual relationships are an extension of affection and love which also leads to better marital satisfaction. Because of lesser responsibility on the children and also because of greater priority of spending time with each other, there is also the focus on working towards one's career and fulfilling a common goal at hand. At the start of a new relationship, the partners ignore petty fights and have greater communication with their spouses, choosing not to have such fights and reaching a faster resolution. Communication is appropriate with other decision-making processes because both partners blindly trust each other's decisions and believe that their agreement is more important to the decision than the partners' disagreement.

The compromise that occurs at the beginning of a marriage soon fades because they view the other person as "another" person, which leads to conflicts because each partner expects the other to be more understanding of the situation. This disagreement with conventional belief extends to child rearing as well. Family feuds between the maternal and paternal sides are difficult to resolve. This is caused by the adaptation effect, which causes a person to return to their original set point of happiness. The couple also exerts less effort on themselves, and impressing each other becomes tedious. The arrival of a child is also a significant factor due to the distribution of responsibility. Because each partner is overly available, the excitement that existed at the start of the marriage eventually fades. There is a lack of transparency, understanding, and belief in the other person: when a person overly expresses themselves, the focus of thoughts shifts to only their negative qualities, and the person is unable to see things from the other person's perspective. Men eventually deviate from their priorities and shift their focus to career development, whereas women shift the greater responsibility to children.

Marital Satisfaction During the Honeymoon Period: A Comparative Study Between the Newlywed and Long-Term Married Couples

CONCLUSION

It cannot be concluded that happiness decreases over time; however, there is a level of adaptation that couples achieve due to the fact that they are easily and overly available for each other, and with the arrival of a child, responsibility and priority have shifted. It's also not that the couples have lost interest in each other, but that they have a strong bond and understanding but have had limited communication over the years. Men usually reach saturation in their expressions of affection and love towards their wives, and as a result, they have duties and shifting of responsibilities, but a woman still demands the same affection that existed at the start of the relationship due to their inherent nature. Happiness is subjective, and people who marry are happy before the marriage, and once the emotional influence of marriage wears off, the couples quickly return to their original state of happiness, feeling the loss of the emotional impact. It is essential that modern couples understand the obligations and responsibilities of marriage and should not have unrealistic expectations of what marriage should be. There is also the advise that couples get pre-marital counselling, be prepared for the path of marriage together, and learn to tolerate their partners' unfavourable tendencies. The couples still believed they had a really good relationship with each other and found solace and comfort in their family as a whole unit rather than the spouse as an individual who was focused on at the beginning of the relationship. Because of the mother's nurturing needs and the child's need to be cared for, sexual intimacy has been limited, if not non-existent, in many couples who have been married for a long time. Couples were asked to provide suggestions and further implications for the study as part of the study, and recommendations included better communication among partners and better understanding between them.

Many of them also suggested that they reduce their focus on the minor details and learn to let go in order to function better as a family as a whole. The interview was conducted in a systematic semi-structured manner with minimal psychoanalytic intervention in order for the couples to identify areas for improvement in their marital lives and to provide better relationship quality. The overall research provided better answers as well as factors contributing to both the satisfaction nature of conflicts and areas for further study.

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Marital Satisfaction During the Honeymoon Period: A Comparative Study Between the Newlywed and Long-Term Married Couples

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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