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## UNDERSTANDING MARITAL MALADJUSTMENT: ITS CAUSES

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### *Abstract*

*Marital adjustment is basically measured through the level of gratification and contentment among the life of married couples. However, there are many factors that put an impact on the marital adjustment of couples. The age of the couples, their duration of marriage, the kind of communication between them, the sense of satisfying their needs and hopes towards each other, the way of making mutual decisions, their relations with the family members and other relatives, their way of managing their leisure time activities and their method of handling the budget of the family are some of the crucial factors. This article throws light on the causes of marital maladjustment such as personnel/psychic causes, infidelity, alcoholism/ drug addiction, physiological and psychological stressors, inability to manage conflicts, interference of in-laws, work-life imbalance etc.*

**Keywords:** Marriage, Marital maladjustment, Violence, Women, India

### INTRODUCTION

Life is like a journey which can be easily covered with a good partner. A perfect companion not only makes the whole ride of life enjoyable but meaningful as well. This is the reason that different norms and patterns exist within different cultures and societies in order to help the people in finding their true partner for marriage. Marriage is regarded as a milestone in one's life, whereby a person seeks to get love, affection, happiness and satisfaction in one's life through the help of a companion. Above and beyond, new roles and new expectations also emerge within the mind and life of the people through this new bonding. It is very difficult to define marriage and the related expectations as the concept vary from society to society and from time to time. However, different interpretations were given by various theorists to define and explain this most important part of our social order. The most frequently acknowledged belief of marriage is that it is a lifelong commitment between a husband and a wife, which is generally taken as sacred concept within the ethos. It is regarded as one of the significant relationships between a man and a woman that provides them even the accountability to work for each other's harmony, contentment and for the expansion of

developing durable and intimate association with each other. Apart from this, it also encompasses open and authorized commitment that is relatively vital in any person's lifetime.

Marriage is an important social institution that permits or admits men and women for family life. It is more or less durable association between a male and a female. Through marital ties, they start the foundation for their family life. In our society, people select and marry for various reasons such as, love, pleasure, company, physical attraction, desire to have children and sometimes with a desire to escape from an unhappy state. Goel (2013) argue that marriage takes place for the desire to attain pleasure, contentment and peace of mind on account of satisfaction through connections with others, faith, understanding and fulfilling societal responsibilities and elevating personality expansion.

## **MEANING OF ADJUSTMENT**

In the contemporary Indian society, adjustment is equivalent to adaptation. Adjustment is an active process that facilitate the individuals concerned in a proactive process to produce a win-win situation. It is again a moral quality which comprises faith, sympathy, compassion and consideration for each other in making a relationship workable between the two souls. Ernest burgess and Leonard Cottrell (1939) argue that adjustment is generally the incorporation of a couple in a union in which the two not simply join each other, but cooperate to complement each other.

## **MARITAL ADJUSTMENT**

Different theorists have tried to explain the term of marital adjustment in their writings. Sinha and 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. "As Lasswell (1982) points out, "understanding the 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. "Hence, marital adjustment calls for maturity from an individual and this process comprehends development, growth and change in the partner. If this progress is not grasped completely, then the demise in a marital bond is expected.

Marital adjustment denotes a condition of accommodation which is usually attained in diverse parts where struggle may exist. Srivastav, Singh, and Nigam (1988) considered the impact of certain demographic characteristics like age differences, education, occupation, socio-economic status, duration of marriage and number of children on marital adjustment. Their investigation specified that the age difference between the husband and wife is the main factor that enormously put a large impact on the marital adjustment. Secondly, differences in educational level of the partners were also highly apparent in the case of maladjusted pairs. Likewise, Shukla (1988) in his study found that the dual career couples expects more from each other to be compatibly accountable for the wage-earning and the housekeeping roles. Their study also found that the wives shows more interest in the provider role whereas the husbands in the housekeeper roles as compared to the single career couples. It was also found that in both single career couples and in dual career couples, the wives experience more happiness in their marriages when they found themselves gratified

with the housekeeper role and assessed their husbands favourably in the provider role. On the other hand, husbands assign more approval to satisfaction with a favourable appraisal of themselves in the provider role and their wives in the kinship roles. Hence, the working woman usually ends up playing a multiplicity of roles. The study further reveals that the working women articulated that they had disappointing relationship with their husbands (72 percent), children (72 percent) and in-laws (22 percent). The foremost reasons given by these women for developing disappointing relationship with their different family members includes lack of time to intermingle easily with husband and lack of time to afford satisfactory love and attention for their children. Some of the other reasons mentioned in the study were physical and psychological fatigue due to endless work, unsympathetic attitudes of their husbands and in-laws in the direction of their overburdened work and finally their failure to gain control over their earnings.

Mohan and Singh (1985) also studied psychological adjustment of rural and urban couples in relation to their personality in terms of extroversion, neuroticism, and psychotism. Their investigation exposed that rural couples make better adjustment as compared to couples in urban counterparts. Likewise, Kumar and Rohtagi (1984) considered the dominance need of partners and also made an effort to find out the personality factors like intelligence and extroversion with reference to adjustment in marriage. It was found out in their analysis that husbands with high degree of adjustment owned a higher need of dominance as well. However, wives having higher adjustment traits were found to be submissive. It was found also that couples having higher degree of adjustment were more intellectual with high extroversive interest than the couples showing less adjustment. Kumar and Rohtagi (1985) also observed the relationship of anxiety, neuroticism and security variables with adjustment in marriage and disclosed that anxiety affects a person's adjustment in marriage. According to Lewis and Spanier (1979), the most important factors that predict marital quality are social and personal resources, satisfaction with lifestyle and rewards from spousal interaction.

Marital adjustment is basically measured through the level of gratification and contentment among the life of married couples (Yesiltepe SS, 2011). However, there are many factors that put an impact on the marital adjustment of couples. The age of the couples, their duration of marriage, the kind of communication between them, the sense of satisfying their needs and hopes towards each other, the way of making mutual decisions, their relations with the family members and other relatives, their way of managing their leisure time activities and their method of handling the budget of the family are some of the crucial factors (Kislak-Tutarel S, Goztepe I, 2012). It is also believed that children raised in a family environment with marital adjustment between their parents are found to be more reliable and stable and such children often relish better adolescence as compared to other children (Ozbey S, 2012). According to Aminjafari (2012) marital adjustment is a process which is formed during the life of couples' since it is required for taste conventionality, person's qualities acknowledgement, behavioural rules formation and relational models' creation. Therefore, marital adjustment is an evolutionary process between a couple.

### **MARITAL MALADJUSTMENT: MEANING AND CAUSES**

Marital maladjustment is the disharmony or disequilibrium between husband and wife which leads to the problems in their married life. Marital maladjustment can occur when two individuals from different backgrounds start living

together and face different kind of adjustment problems. It is more common in urban setting. Marital maladjustment is the disability of a person to adjust with the partner due to problems that lead to inappropriate coping and marital problems. Marital maladjustment can be easily determined by the cases of separation and divorce in a particular society.

The manifestations of marital maladjustment may take the form of psychiatric illness, marital violence, temporary breakdown in terms of separation or desertion or the final dissolution in form of divorce. These may have varied effects on family dynamics especially on women and children. (Desai,1994).

The causes of marital maladjustment may be various factors, such as change in life style, urbanization, single parenthood, broken family, improvement in technologies, petty idiosyncrasies, mental illness, criminal behavior, physical health problems, lack of commitment, infidelity, abuse, difference in personal goal, lack of maturity, sexual incapability etc. The causes of maladjustment are discussed below:

1. **Personnel/ Psychic Causes** – The psycho-pathological theory is based on the idea that some individuals who suffer from any kind of mental illness, personality or behaviour related disorders and any type of dysfunctions in their life usually indulge in violent behaviour within their family unit. Therefore, any related problem of an individual due to his mental disorder or any other type of illness makes the individual to react violently within the sphere of family (Steele, 1978).

Whenever any person has irrational fears or anxieties, these can be the sources of husband-wife friction. Sometimes the cause lies deep within the psyche of the individual. These anxieties have origin in childhood experiences and early family relationships. Emotional illness is also a major cause of friction and arguments. Rushing (1979) has proved in his work that mentally ill people often behave in disruptive, bizarre ways, due to which they are not well-adjusted in to the marital bond.

2. **Bad Temperament**- All the individuals in the society expect love, care and concern from each other especially in their close intimate relationships but only a few get sufficient resources to meet up their daily demands. On the other hand, those who fail to meet the societal expectations are generally more prone to violence because they are not able to get their share of psychological, social and economic resources. In such cases, combined with the cultural approval for violence, these shortfalls lead many members to take up violent behavior and cruelty as a means of coping with traumatic state of affairs within one's life (Gelles and Cornell, 1990).

In many cultures, restraints are placed upon children in the socialization process leading to deprivation and frustrations which may be carried to adult life, and hence may adversely affect a person. An individual who is full of complaints and resentments has a lot of unresolved aggression which the person may not know how to handle. This aggression may find a vent in the form of verbal or physical attack towards the easiest available scapegoat, i.e., the partner. It results into maladjustment marriages.

3. **Alcoholism/ Drug Addiction** - Drug addiction in any of the partner severe disruption of marital life. For an addict, love of family and time for family activities take a distant second place to love of drugs. Breakdown in marital communication, conflict and violence are very much prominent in the alcoholic's families and beat their wives. They value neither their own life nor their wife's. This results in husband's throwing her out. Devasahayam (1991) in K.V. Kuppen block (a village in Gujarat) found that approximately twenty-one per cent respondents themselves admitted the reality of marital violence in their lives and declared that alcohol usage is the most significant cause of violence in their families.

A large number of studies related to violence against women within the family typically find a relationship between alcohol use and violence (Ahuja, 1987; Bhatti, 1989; Bordin, 1981; Mohan, 1989; Shah, 1989; Snell et al, 1964). Coleman and Straus (1983) reported that alcoholics are likely to abuse their wives fifteen times more than the ones who are non- drinkers.

4. **Physiological and Psychological Stressors** - Robert and Leventon (2001) in their study on work and family life revealed that physiological and psychological stressors may put a bad impact on the marital functioning. According to them, both husband and wife respond in different ways after a day at work. They found that in such type of situation, husbands show more withdrawn behavior with their wives at home in the evening hours while wives intended to display more annoyed marital conduct in such state of affairs.

5. **Infidelity/ Extra Marital Affairs** - Betrayal by partner causes more anger than any other act of insensitivity. A great deal of jealousy and mistrust arise when a partner shares attention with someone else. Infidelity works as a blow to one's self-esteem. It leaves the person feeling insecure. Deep down it hurts the ego. Infidelity takes away honesty more than anything else in marital relationship.

According to Saini, Navneet (2019) infidelity, either suspected or real, on the part of the wife is especially prone to result in severe violence against women. A husband can go to any extent in punishing his wife for the same kind of act. For instance, if a husband tells his wife not to socialize with a certain man and if she continues her relationship with that person, major disputes will take place between husband and wife and the possibility of separation or other types of violence may also take place. In this way, maladjustment between the couples is inevitable due to infidelity.

6. **Educational Disparity** - The disparities in educational attainment among husband and wife may also produce high rates of marital maladjustment among them. Ackerson et al. (2008) found that Indian women with a higher level of education in comparison to their partner were more likely to suffer physical intimate spouse violence.

Narayana (2012) in his work argue that lack of education, illiteracy, unemployment, and poor quality of life due to poor economic conditions can lead to vulnerability among the men and possibly in such circumstances, they may indulge in deviant behavior against women. Narayana describes this violent behavior as an act of dissatisfaction or an urge to harm and knock down not only women's body but their desires and dreams in order to express a form of supremacy on them.



7. **Interference of In-laws** - Marriage in India is arranged and controlled by families. It is generally regarded as an alliance between two families more than between two individuals. Marital maladjustment can occur due to family interference, use of abusive language, cruelty, demands by in-laws and quarrels over property. When the reason for marital problems lies in family, couple could minimize it by staying away from the family. (Channabasavanna and Bhatti, 1985). Studies conducted on family in India have mainly focussed on the joint family system with a patriarchal structure. It has been largely documented in all the studies that conjugal relations have very less worth in the joint family (Ramu, 1988).
8. **Dissatisfaction of Sexual Needs** - Some people may feel their marriage is not sexually satisfying. They may not be emotionally satisfied in their relationship and may wish to gain additional emotional connection. This may lead to anxiety, frustrations and quarrels. It may also push them towards extra-marital affairs that further generate severe maladjustment in their relationship.  
According to Saini, Navneet (2019) the importance of men's ability to sexually satisfy her woman is also measured as his crucial marker of masculinity in almost all societies. Anxiety about pleasuring the wife or not being able to satisfy her properly may result in asserting control and power over the woman's sexuality and in this process, men sometimes forget that the other person is also a human being and not a sex machine. Therefore, romancing and seduction that often involves force and competing with partner's desires and decisions while making sex usually brings out violence or maladjustment within the relations.
9. **Women Becoming Financially Independent** - In the ancient times, women were uneducated and unemployed. They were fully dependent upon their husband for the satisfaction of their needs. Even if husband perpetuates violence against the wife, they just had to remain silent. This kind of socialization was normally given to all the women to make their place in their in-law's home. Secondly, it was very difficult for a woman to leave the husband and go back to the parents' house due to non-acceptance of society along with the fear of insult. But the time has changed a lot, parents are providing better education to their girls and a large number of girls have been working in different sectors. This financial independence has altered the whole situation by providing a kind of economic security to women. Now, they no longer want to suffer and they know very well how to fight back against the abused husband. This is the major reason that modern educated and employed women do not make efforts to adjust in such a scenario.
10. **Work-Life Imbalance** - One of the major causes marital maladjustments is inadequate balance of career and relationship. A disproportionate amount of time and focus on work can lead to breakdown in communication and growth of tension between the couples. A working-women may spend majority of her time at workplace and may not handle all roles at home. They may face problems in their roles as wives and this may be a cause of marital dissatisfaction. (Gharibi et al 2016).
11. **Inability to Manage Conflicts** - Conflict in any human relationship is inevitable. Married couples should possess the appropriate skills to manage the conflict. People having personal problems may generally lack the skills of conflict management and problem solving. It may further aggravate the problem as they get deep rooted over time.

12. **Different Backgrounds** - Sometimes spouses from different backgrounds struggle with each other to reconcile their views on work, family and leisure. They can have differing views on all sorts of important things such as child-rearing, money management, career advancement and management of leisure time. It may become difficult to transfer the cultural values, tastes, preferences and behaviors to the other partner and such conditions may sometimes bring more tension and frustration in the married life.
13. **Marriage Against the Wishes of a Man or a Woman** - One of the major reason for maladjustment among the couples is marriage against their wishes. It is normally seen that if a boy or a girl is not willing to get married at a certain stage of their life, conflicts and fights may arise automatically which may further affect not only the partners but their families as well. Sometimes, such relationships may ultimately end up in divorce.
14. **Situational Factors** - Unforeseen contingencies or situational crisis may sometimes create marital problems. It may include social pressure on family, unexpected events such as unemployment, change of job, illness, unplanned pregnancy, serious accident causing disability of a partner, job transfer, birth of girl child, natural disaster etc. Such situations demand a re-adjustment in marital equilibrium which most partners find difficult or unacceptable leading to marital maladjustment.
15. **Miscellaneous Factors** - The defects which the other partners are aware of before marriage are usually tolerated. However, if the defect is hidden and comes to light only after marriage, it can lead to marital discord. Similarly, if facts relating to one's nature of job, property held relationships, level of education etc. are hidden or exaggerated so as to influence the other party to enter into marital relationship, it may lead to marital maladjustment.

## CONCLUSION

Marital maladjustment has long been a popular theme in family studies. Marital satisfaction is merely a subjective sensation of contentment and satisfaction experienced by partner while taking into consideration the entire existing facet of marriage. Marital maladjustment is the disability of the individual to settle with the spouse which leads to marital variance and conflict. The causes of marital maladjustment may be various factors such as personnel/psychic causes, infidelity, alcoholism/drug addiction, physiological and psychological stressors, inability to manage conflicts, interference of in-laws, work-life imbalance etc.

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