



# A Comparative Study Of Psychological Stress, Adjustment And Coping Among Married Men And Women Living In Joint Families.

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## ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to examine gender differences in psychological stress, adjustment, and coping strategies among married individuals living in joint families. A comparative research design was employed. The sample consisted of 40 married individuals, including 20 men and 20 women, selected using purposive sampling from joint family settings. Standardized psychological instruments were used to assess levels of stress, adjustment, and coping strategies.

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics, specifically the independent samples t-test. The results revealed significant gender differences across all three variables. Married women reported significantly higher levels of psychological stress, whereas married men demonstrated better psychological adjustment and more effective coping strategies. The effect size analysis (Cohen's d) indicated large practical significance for all differences observed.

These findings highlight the impact of traditional gender roles and family dynamics within joint family systems, which may place greater psychological demands on women. The study underscores the need for targeted psychological interventions and support systems to enhance coping and adjustment, particularly among women in joint family environments.

**Keywords:** Psychological Stress, Adjustment, Coping Strategies, Gender Differences, Joint Family System

## I. INTRODUCTION

The family is the fundamental unit of society and plays a crucial role in shaping an individual's psychological well-being. In India, the joint family system is a traditional structure characterized by shared living, collective responsibility, and interdependence among members.

While joint families provide emotional and economic support, they also create challenges such as role conflict, lack of privacy, and high expectations. Married individuals, particularly women, often experience increased psychological demands due to multiple role responsibilities.

Psychological stress refers to the mental strain experienced when environmental demands exceed an individual's coping resources. Adjustment refers to the ability to maintain balance between personal needs and environmental expectations, while coping strategies are the methods used to manage stress.

This study focuses on understanding how these variables differ between married men and women in joint families.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The joint family system in India, characterized by shared living and interdependence, provides emotional and economic support but also creates psychological challenges due to complex role expectations (Karve, 1961; Desai, 1964). Contemporary studies indicate that such families function as both supportive and stressful environments. Adeyemi and Bello (2025) noted that strong family support can generate pressure when expectations are unmet, while Zhang and Chen (2025) highlighted intergenerational conflicts affecting well-being.

Psychological stress arises when demands exceed coping resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), often due to role overload and interpersonal conflict. Verma (2025) found higher stress in joint families, particularly among women (Nomaguchi and Milkie, 2020). Adjustment and coping are critical, with emotional regulation and communication improving outcomes (Park and Lee, 2024; Hassan and Ali, 2024). Gender differences are evident, with women experiencing higher stress and using emotion-focused coping (Bharat, 1995; Tamres, Janicki, and Helgeson, 2002). Overall, coping mediates the relationship between stress and adjustment, though comparative research remains limited (Reddy et al., 2020).

This study highlights the critical influence of gender roles on psychological stress, adjustment, and coping strategies in joint family settings. Therefore, the present study addresses the gaps.

### III.METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Research Objective

The study aims to compare psychological stress, adjustment, and coping strategies among married men and women living in joint families.

#### 3.2 Research Design

The present study adopted a **quantitative, comparative research design** to examine gender differences in psychological stress, adjustment, and coping strategies among married individuals living in joint families. This design was considered appropriate as it allows for the systematic comparison of two groups—married men and married women—on selected psychological variables.

The study followed a **cross-sectional approach**, where data were collected at a single point in time from the participants. Standardized psychological instruments were used to measure stress, adjustment, and coping strategies. The data obtained were analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques, including the independent samples t-test, to determine significant differences between the groups.

This design enabled an objective evaluation of relationships among variables and provided a clear understanding of gender-based differences within the joint family context.

#### 3.3 Sample Design

The sample for the present study consisted of married individuals residing in joint families. Participants were selected based on their relevance to the objectives of the study, ensuring inclusion of both men and women for comparative analysis.

A non-probability sampling technique (convenience sampling) was used to select participants based on accessibility and willingness to participate. Only those individuals who were married and living in a joint family setup were included in the study.

The final sample included both male and female participants, allowing for the examination of gender differences in psychological stress, adjustment, and coping strategies. All participants provided informed consent prior to data collection.

#### 3.4 Sample Size

The total sample size of the study was 40 participants, comprising 20 married men and 20 married women residing in joint families. The equal representation of both groups ensured balanced and reliable comparative analysis.

### Tools Used

- Psychological Stress Scale
- Adjustment Scale
- Coping Strategies Inventory

(All tools were standardized and validated.)

### Statistical Analysis

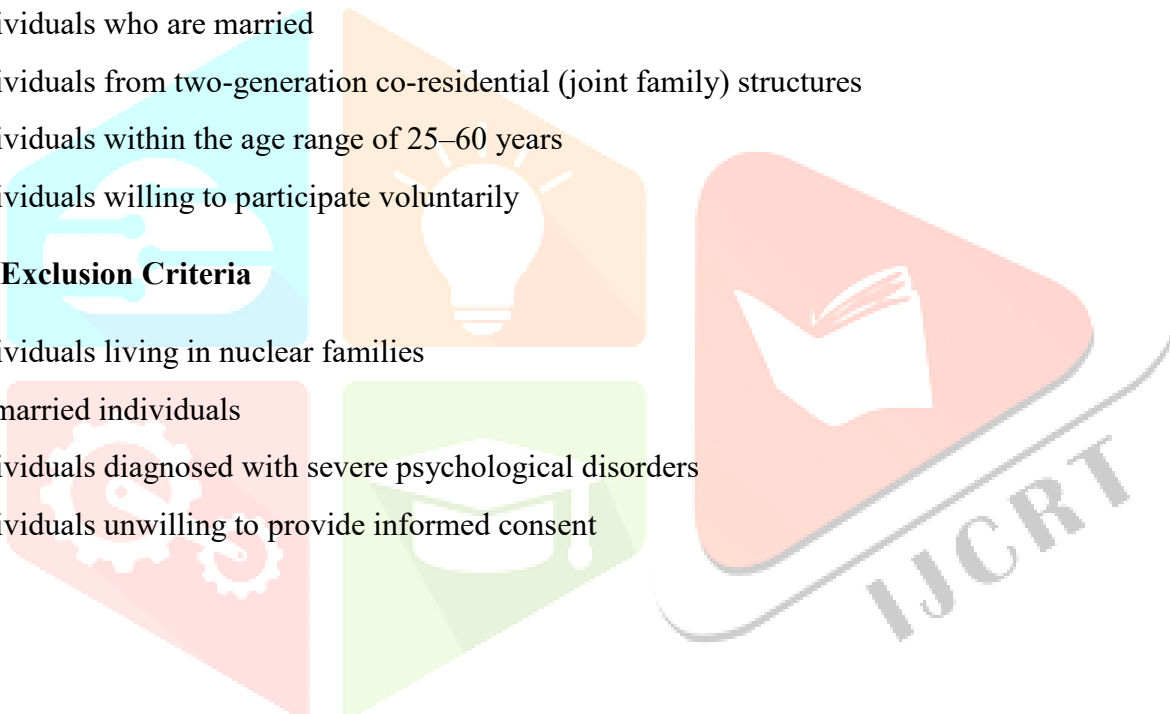
- Mean and Standard Deviation
- Independent Samples t-test

### 3.5 Inclusion Criteria

- Individuals who are married
- Individuals from two-generation co-residential (joint family) structures
- Individuals within the age range of 25–60 years
- Individuals willing to participate voluntarily

### 3.6 Exclusion Criteria

- Individuals living in nuclear families
- Unmarried individuals
- Individuals diagnosed with severe psychological disorders
- Individuals unwilling to provide informed consent



## IV. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics

**Table1:**

**Descriptive Statistics of Psychological Stress, Adjustment, and Coping Strategies**

Variable	Gender	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Psychological Stress	Men	13.00	4.21
	Women	17.00	4.87
Adjustment	Men	21.50	5.10
	Women	17.20	4.75
Coping Strategies	Men	28.40	6.25
	Women	23.10	5.80

The descriptive statistics provide an initial understanding of gender differences in psychological stress, adjustment, and coping strategies among married individuals in joint families.

With regard to psychological stress, married women ( $M = 17.00$ ,  $SD = 4.87$ ) reported higher stress levels compared to married men ( $M = 13.00$ ,  $SD = 4.21$ ). This suggests a tendency for women to experience greater psychological strain within the joint family context.

In terms of adjustment, married men ( $M = 21.50$ ,  $SD = 5.10$ ) demonstrated higher levels of adjustment than married women ( $M = 17.20$ ,  $SD = 4.75$ ), indicating that men appear to adapt more effectively to joint family environments.

Similarly, for coping strategies, married men ( $M = 28.40$ ,  $SD = 6.25$ ) scored higher than married women ( $M = 23.10$ ,  $SD = 5.80$ ), suggesting that men may utilize more effective or adaptive coping mechanisms.

Overall, the descriptive findings indicate a consistent pattern in which women experience higher stress, while men demonstrate better adjustment and coping. These trends provide a foundation for further inferential analysis to determine whether these observed differences are statistically significant.

## 4.2 Correlation matrix

Table2:

**Pearson Correlation Matrix for Psychological Stress, Adjustment, and Coping Strategies**

Variables	1	2	3
1. Psychological Stress	1.00		
2. Adjustment	-0.62**	1.00	
3. Coping Strategies	-0.58**	0.65**	1.00

**Note:**

- \*\*  $p < 0.01$  (significant correlation)
- Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) ranges from -1 to +1

Psychological stress was significantly negatively correlated with adjustment ( $r = -0.62$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and coping strategies ( $r = -0.58$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), indicating that higher stress is associated with poorer adjustment and reduced coping. In contrast, adjustment showed a significant positive correlation with coping strategies ( $r = 0.65$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), suggesting that effective coping enhances adjustment.

## V.CONCLUSION

The study concludes that married women in joint families experience higher psychological stress, poorer adjustment, and less effective coping strategies compared to men. These findings reflect the influence of gender roles and socio-cultural expectations within the joint family system.

There is a need for targeted psychological interventions and awareness programs to address these disparities and promote mental well-being among both men and women.

## VI. LIMITATION AND FURTHER SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The present study has certain limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, the sample size was relatively small and restricted to a specific population, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Secondly, the study focused only on married individuals in joint families, thereby excluding other family structures such as nuclear families, which may show different patterns. Thirdly, the use of self-report measures may have introduced response bias, as participants might have provided socially desirable answers. Additionally, the cross-sectional nature of the study restricts the ability to establish causal relationships among variables.

Future research can address these limitations by including a larger and more diverse sample to enhance generalizability. Comparative studies involving different family systems (e.g., joint vs. nuclear families) can provide deeper insights into the role of family structure. Longitudinal studies may help in

understanding causal relationships between stress, adjustment, and coping over time. Furthermore, future research can incorporate additional variables such as social support, personality traits, and cultural factors to gain a more comprehensive understanding of psychological well-being. Intervention-based studies focusing on stress management and coping enhancement, particularly among women, would also be valuable.

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