

Assessment of Marital Adjustment among Couples with Respect to Women's Educational Level and Employment Status

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ABSTRACT In this study, families with employed and non-employed women across different educational levels from Ludhiana city were compared on their existing level of marital adjustment. For it 300 Sikh families ($N = 300$) were selected according to the working status of woman in the family and divided into two categories of families, that is, families with employed women ($n_1 = 150$) and families with non-employed women ($n_2 = 150$). These two categories of families were selected by drawing equal numbers of families ($n_{11}, n_{21} = 50$) from each of the three levels of education (with reference to woman in the family) viz. post graduation and above (Level I), upto graduation (Level II) and matric and below excluding illiterate (Level III). A socio-demographic questionnaire was used to identify families for the sample under study. Level of marital adjustment in the selected families was assessed using marital adjustment questionnaire. Arithmetic mean, standard deviation and t-test were used to analyse the data. The findings revealed that sexual dimension of marital adjustment among husbands and wives was unaffected by wives' education level and employment status. On the contrary, it was observed that wives employed and educated upto Level I or Level II and their husbands were significantly more socially adjusting than wives non-employed and educated upto Level III and their husbands respectively. Husbands showed no variation on the emotional dimension of marital adjustment with wives' educational level and employment status, whereas, wives were seen to be more emotionally dependent on their husbands when they were educated upto Level III or were non-employed.

INTRODUCTION

Education facilitates an increase in knowledge and widens the mental horizon of a person. That is, it brings about changes in the attitudes and values of a person about every realm of life and develops in him/her the desire to improve him/her through introspection. So, women who are educated are not satisfied with their role of a mere housewife. They have realized the importance of their existence and want to utilize their intellectual abilities and to do something which gives them satisfaction and secures for their identity in the family and the society as well. This can be accomplished only by their becoming economically independent, that is, start contributing to the family income. So, more and more educated women per year are moving towards getting economically independent. The percentage of educated women job seekers among the total educated job seekers witnessed an increase from 72.6% in 1993 to 74.6% in 2002 (Directorate General of Employment and Training,

Ministry of Labour, Govt. of India, 2002). So, these days women are entering into employment sector not only because of economic compulsion as in earlier times but also because of their desire for self-expression and having an independent identity which is a resultant of their being educated.

Education and employment has brought about self-reliance, confidence and a sense of identity in the women. As a result of being educated and employed, they are now better turned out, outgoing, open to new ideas, well-informed and aware of their rights and surroundings. They can identify and cope with their problems better as they have lot of exposure and access to the world. They are much of their own individual now, on the road to emancipation. They have acquired certain level of mental maturity and psychological strength for making options for the choice, assuming responsibility for their decision and moving ahead in life independently and efficiently. They have moved from a life of drudgery to a new arrangement of things. Given the new set of roles and family structures, these women have adapted to this challenging task with aplomb.

This change on woman's part, that is, education and employment has got significant implications not only for the woman concerned

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herself but for her family too. Woman's education level influences her marital quality. Greenstein (1990) stated that better or higher education on the part of woman reduces the likelihood of marital dissolution. Probably because a woman's education reflect skills including communication that improve conjugal relationship. Like education, women's employment status also influences family functioning. With a large number of married women taking up jobs, necessitated by economic and psychological factors, the role of women as homemaker cum wage earner is being widely accepted. This has necessitated structural changes in the family organization. Being a working spouse or parent involves the performance of multiple roles of worker, parent and spouse. These roles are interdependent in terms of time, energy and commitment required for their adequate performance. So, it results in role strain for the women and ultimately leads to their decreased psychological well-being and introduces a source of strain/pressure in the family mechanisms of balance.

In order to reduce the pressures endemic to work-family interface, couples in dual-earner families have negotiated an optimal allocation of roles. In majority of the households where wives were engaged in outdoor employment, husbands extended a helping hand in the performance of household chores (Joshi, 1999). Similar finding was reported by Hood (1983) too. He stated that wives' employment was associated with more equal sharing of child care, more shared interests and spouse's greater interest in each other as individuals and confidantes, whereas, this was not the case when compared with traditional families wherein women were non-employed and men were the only breadwinners of the family.

However, as women's investment in the market work has increased they have become less specialized in the domestic arena and more economically independent thereby leading to a decline in their desirability of staying married and this situation worsens more with the increase in their earnings and material resources as it reduces their need for dependence on husband's breadwinning services for their sustenance (Oppenheimer, 1997).

Besides this, sometimes its the certain characteristics of married women's employment that aggravates the condition of marital instability or divorce. Greenstein (1990) found that women who are employed more than 35 hours per week

have more than twice the risk of marital disruption than women who are employed 20–35 hours per week. However, five years later, Greenstein (1995) further reported that gender ideology moderates the effects of their hours employed per week on marital stability. He indicated that hours employed per week did not have a statistically significant effect on marital stability for women holding traditional gender ideologies but it had a negatively significant effect for women holding moderate ideologies and a strong negative effect for non traditional women. Non standard work schedules on women's part also increases the likelihood of marital instability but it does so only under certain conditions. Among women with children, married more than five years, working night increased the likelihood of separation or divorce by three times and this might have had an effect during the early years as well. Another notable finding was that it is the late hours of work (night) but not the days of work (weekdays) that affect marital instability (Presser, 2000).

The problem in marriage also occurs when the wife's attainment is higher than her husband's. Philliber and Hiller (1983) indicated that when wife's occupational attainment exceeds her husband's, either the marriage is likely to result in divorce or the wife has to abandon her career for a job more compatible with her husband's. Such changes are especially likely if she is employed in a position normally occupied by men. However, Hannan et al. (1978) reported that a woman's occupational attainments may also have a negative effect on union dissolution by increasing family income. Extra income can decrease financial stress and increase marital-specific capital (a resource worth more inside a marriage than outside it). The result of this extra income is to make a union more attractive relative to available alternatives, decreasing the likelihood of union dissolution.

Numerous studies have also explored whether wives' employment outside the home has detrimental effects on husbands' well-being. Nonetheless, there is still widespread debate because the results are inconclusive. For example, Booth (1977) reported that the husbands of employed wives' were in much better mental health in comparison to the husbands of housewives'. But, many years later, Staines et al. (1985) found that husbands with employed wives experienced significantly more distress and poorer physical health than husbands of wives who did

not work outside the home. Orbuch and Custer (1995) emphasize that the impact of women's employment on the well-being of husbands depends on the ethnicity/ race of the couple. For Black husbands, the effect of having a career wife is lower marital well-being, whereas, for White husbands, it is associated with less depression but greater anxiety if husbands participate in household labour.

The research papers reviewed on the topic reflected that researchers were mostly concerned with how women's education and employment is related with the increasing rate of marital dissolution in the country and their own and their husbands' psychological well-being. No study could be found that made an effort to understand in what way their education and economic role has affected the norms and values underlying patriarchal structure and has led to redefinition of the roles of men and women in dual earner families. So, the present study was undertaken by Singh (2005) in Ludhiana city of Punjab with the objective to assess and compare marital adjustment among families with employed and non-employed women across different educational levels hypothesizing that there will be no significant difference in marital adjustment among families with employed and non-employed women across different educational levels.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Locale of the Study: The families purposively selected to study marital adjustment among families with employed and non-employed women across different educational levels were drawn exclusively from Ludhiana city. In order to arrive at the specific kind of families required for the research study, firstly the list of all the institutes of higher/ technical education located in Ludhiana city was prepared. Then from that list, so as to get an ideal sample, only those colleges/ institutes were drawn that had 7-8 hours of work schedule. Further, from this list those colleges/institutes were dropped where majority of the employees used to work even after the regular 7-8 hours of job at the institute like medical colleges. Finally, from this prepared list about fifty percent of the colleges/ institutes were randomly picked up for the drawl of the specific kind of families required for the present study. The colleges/ institutes, thus, finally selected were Government College for Women, Polytechnic College for Women,

College of Agriculture, Punjab Agricultural University, College of Veterinary Sciences, Punjab Agricultural University and College of Basic Sciences, Punjab Agricultural University. These five colleges basically formed the link from which the specific kinds of families required for the research study were located.

Selection of Sample: The investigator approached the Principal/ Dean of the selected colleges through a letter of request which clarified the purpose of the study. After the permission for contacting the teaching and non-teaching staff during office hours was granted, a list of all the staff members from each selected college was obtained. From this list, firstly, the female staff members were drawn and distributed self-designed socio-demographic questionnaire to be filled by them in their office itself. It was meant to identify those female employees whose families met the essential criteria for inclusion in the sample under study. The criteria for selecting families were:

1. The selected family should belong to Sikh religion.
2. The selected family should be essentially nuclear.
3. The selected family must have one of its children in the age group of 12-18 years and he/she must be residing with the family.
4. All the members of the selected family should be apparently healthy—physically and mentally.

Those employed women's families which fulfilled the above mentioned essential criteria for inclusion in the sample were firstly enlisted and then sorted under three groups of families made with reference to the education level of the "woman" in the family viz., post graduation and above (Level I), upto graduation (Level II), matric & below excluding illiterate (Level III). From each of the above mentioned three groups of families, fifty families were randomly selected and were named as GROUP 1, GROUP 2 and GROUP 3 respectively. These three equal sized groups of families altogether were labeled as CATEGORY A (n=150) which represented families with employed women.

After this, all the male staff members of the selected colleges were drawn and handed over self-designed socio-demographic questionnaire to be filled by them in their office itself. With its help those employed men's families which met the essential criteria for inclusion but had

essentially non-employed women (referring to wives of male staff members) were drawn, and enlisted and finally divided into three groups of families on the basis of three identified levels of women's education (Level I, Level II and Level III) as in CATEGORY A. From each of these three groups of families fifty families were randomly selected and labeled as GROUP 4, GROUP 5 and GROUP 6 respectively. These three equal sized group of families altogether formed CATEGORY B ($n=150$) which represented families with non-employed women. A clear description of division of sampled families for the present study is presented in Figure 1.

The target respondents in each selected family were husband, wife and the eldest child among children between 12-18 years of age. Thus, the present study was based upon a total sample size of 900 respondents (300 husbands, 300 wives and 300 children between 12-18 years of age.)

Research Instruments: The following tools were employed for conducting the present research study:

i) *Socio-demographic questionnaire:* The self-designed socio-demographic questionnaire was used to identify the families for the six groups of families under study. It consisted of questions pertaining to the socio-personal characteristics of the families like religion of the family, family type, place of residence, physical and mental health status of family members, husband's and wife's educational qualification, occupation and their work hours as well as details of the children in the family.

ii) *Marital adjustment questionnaire* (Kumar and Rohtagi, 1995): The Marital Adjustment Questionnaire (MAQ) is a standardized tool used for assessing the extent of marital adjustment among husband and wife. Apart from giving separate marital adjustment score for the husband and the wife it also provides a meaningful single composite marital adjustment score for the couple. This tool is meant for the married couples with age ranging from 28-60 years. The Marital Adjustment Questionnaire consists of 25 (twenty five) highly discriminating "Yes No" type items across three areas of marital adjustment that is sexual, social and emotional.

Pre-testing of Research Instrument: The available standardized parent-child relationship scale was in English. Since, study was to be conducted in Ludhiana (Punjab) where Punjabi is the first language it was translated in Punjabi to help respondents have the option to answer it comfortably in any of the two languages they prefer. In order to find the reliability of the tool in Punjabi language, the test-retest method was used. Ten non-sampled families were administered the English version of the tools and two weeks later they were again asked to answer the same tool in Punjabi version. Their responses on both the versions were compared and its reliability was found as 0.93.

Data Collection: The investigator approached the sampled families at their homes by taking prior appointment from all the respondents of the family. Before distributing the

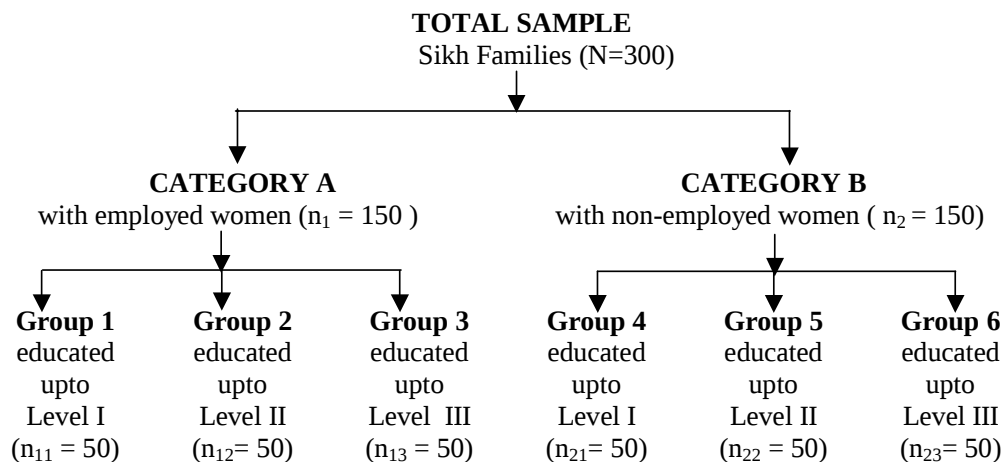


Fig. 1. Flow chart showing division of sampled families

tools to respondents, the purpose of the study was made clear to them and were asked whether they wanted the English or Punjabi version of the tools to answer and the respondents were given the tools accordingly. Then respondents were provided with the instructions regarding how to answer each tool and were requested to give honest responses assuring that their identity would be kept confidential and information provided by them would be used exclusively for the purpose of research work. The tools were answered by all the respondents of the selected families independently in the presence of the investigator.

Statistical Analysis: The collected data were classified and tabulated in accordance with the objectives to arrive at the meaningful and relevant inferences by using arithmetic mean, standard deviation and t-test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The objective of the present study was to assess and compare marital adjustment among families with employed and non-employed women across different educational levels. For the study it was hypothesized that there will be no significant differences in the marital adjustment among families with employed and non-employed women across different educational levels. The existing level of each dimension of marital adjustment among families with employed and non-employed women across different educational levels is presented in terms of mean scores and standard deviation and these parameters are tested for their difference across groups of families by applying student's t-test.

Husbands' Perception of Marital Adjustment: Comparison among Families with Employed and Non-Employed Wives Across Different Educational Levels

Table 1 puts forth mean scores, standard deviations and t-values for each dimension of marital adjustment of the husbands among families with employed and non-employed wives across different educational levels.

A close perusal of this Table clearly shows that husbands irrespective of their wives' employment status and educational level attained a mean score of four on the sexual dimension of marital adjustment. It indicates that husbands'

adjustment on the sexual dimension of marital relations has nothing to do with their wives' employment status and education level. It was also observed that husbands across families with employed and non-employed wives from different educational levels insignificantly varied on the emotional dimension of marital adjustment. This finding is in line with that of Rosenfield (1992) who reported that wives' employment outside the home has little overall relationship to husbands' psychological and physical well-being.

On the contrary, husbands varied significantly on the social dimension of marital adjustment with respect to their wives' employment status and education level. When analysed across the employment status of wives, it was observed that husbands of employed wives with I and II level of education were significantly more socially adjusting (t-value A vs A': 2.007 and t-value B vs B': 2.069) than the husbands of non-employed wives from corresponding levels of education at 5% level of significance. This finding is in concordance with that of Maret and Finlay (1984) who suggested that if the wife is employed, there is a greater likelihood that household chores and child-care would be shared between spouses, and that in general they would have a more egalitarian conjugal role structure than couples where the wife is non-employed. However, in the families where wives' were educated only upto Level III, husbands didn't vary significantly on the social dimension of marital adjustment with their wives being employed or non-employed (t-value C vs C': 1.318). Thus, it can be said that employment status of wives influences their husbands' adjustment on the social dimension of marital life but only when wives are highly educated.

Analysis across the educational level of wives reveals that husbands of employed and non-employed wives did not differ significantly on the social dimension of marital adjustment when their wives were educated upto Level I or Level II (t-value A vs B: 1.228 and t-value A' vs B': 0.976 respectively). On the other hand, when husbands of employed wives having education equivalent to Level I or Level II were compared with husbands of employed wives with Level III of education, it was noticed that the former were significantly more socially adjusting (t-value A vs C: 4.396 and t-value B vs C: 3.831, respectively) than the latter. Similar trend was observed among husbands of non-employed wives too. Husbands

Table 1: Husbands' perception of marital adjustment: Comparison among families with employed and non-employed wives across different educational levels

Dimensions of Marital Adjustment (husbands)	Mean scores and ($\pm$ SD)						t-values		Across employment status of wives (at three educational levels of wives)			
	CATEGORY A (Employed wives)			CATEGORY B (Non-employed wives)			Across educational levels of wives (within two categories of family)		CATEGORY A (Employed wives)		CATEGORY B (Non-employed wives)	
	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level I	Level II	Level III	A vs B	B vs C	A vs B	A' vs B'	A' vs C'	Level I
	(A)	(B)	(C)	(A')	(B')	(C')	B	C	A vs B	A' vs B'	A' vs C'	Level II
Sexual	4 (-)	4 (-)	4 (-)	4 (-)	4 (-)	4 (-)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Social	8.16 (± 0.370)	8.08 (± 0.274)	7.74 (± 0.565)	7.98 (± 0.515)	7.86 (± 0.700)	7.60 (± 0.495)	1.228	3.831**	4.396**	0.976	2.144*	3.763**
Emotional	9.94 (± 0.586)	10.06 (± 0.470)	9.98 (± 0.553)	10.02 (± 0.622)	10.08 (± 0.566)	10.16 (± 0.738)	1.13	0.779	0.351	0.504	0.608	1.025
												0.192
												0.662
												0.192
												1.38

Note: 1. * indicates 5% level of significance; ** indicates 1% level of significance

2. Educational levels of wives:- Level I (A, A'): Post graduation or above; Level II (B, B'): Upto Graduation; Level III (C, C'): Matric or below excluding illiterate

Table 2: Wives' perception of marital adjustment: Comparison among employed and non-employed wives across different educational levels

Dimensions of Marital Adjustment (wives)	Mean scores and ($\pm$ SD)						t-values		Across employment status of wives (at three educational levels of wives)			
	CATEGORY A (Employed wives)			CATEGORY B (Non-employed wives)			Across educational levels of wives (within two categories of family)		CATEGORY A (Employed wives)		CATEGORY B (Non-employed wives)	
	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level I	Level II	Level III	A vs B	B vs C	A vs B	A' vs B'	A' vs C'	Level I
	(A)	(B)	(C)	(A')	(B')	(C')	B	C	A vs B	A' vs B'	A' vs C'	Level II
Sexual	4 (-)	4 (-)	4 (-)	4 (-)	4 (-)	4 (-)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Social	8.40 (± 0.495)	8.32 (± 0.768)	7.84 (± 0.548)	8.2 (± 0.404)	8.08 (± 0.274)	7.68 (± 0.741)	0.619	3.598*	5.364**	1.738	3.580**	4.358**
Emotional	10.06 (± 0.935)	10.14 (± 0.833)	10.62 (± 0.667)	10.40 (± 0.670)	10.46 (± 0.706)	10.96 (± 0.755)	0.452	3.181**	3.449**	0.436	3.421**	3.923**
												2.072*
												2.387*

Note: 1. * indicates 5% level of significance; ** indicates 1% level of significance

2. Educational levels of wives:- Level I (A, A'): Post graduation or above; Level II (B, B'): Upto Graduation; Level III (C, C'): Matric or below excluding illiterate

with wives non-employed and educated upto Level I or Level II were significantly more social in marital relations (t-value A' vs C': 3.763 and t-value B' vs C': 2.144 respectively) than the husbands whose wives were non employed and educated upto Level III.

Wives' Perception of Marital Adjustment: Comparison Among Employed and Non-Employed Wives Across Different Educational Levels

Table 2 presents existing level of wives' marital adjustment across their employed and non-employed status through different educational levels.

It is evident from the Table that, alike husbands, wives also attained a mean score of four on the sexual dimension of marital adjustment irrespective of their employment status and education level. So it can be concluded that wives' extent of sexual adjustment in marital relations is uninfluenced by their employment status and education level.

However, wives varied significantly on the social dimension of marital adjustment by their being employed and highly educated and that too in the same pattern as did the husbands. Employment wise analysis reveals that employed wives with education upto Level I and Level II were significantly higher on the social dimension of marital adjustment (t-value A vs A': 2.213 and t-value B vs B': 2.082) than those who were non-employed with corresponding levels of education. Kandel et al. (1985) was of the view that when a woman works to contribute to the economic standing of the family there is greater appreciation of her contribution by the husband, which in turn reflects in marriage in the form of enhanced cooperation, understanding, mutual appreciation and equality in relationship. Similarly, Hood (1983) reported that wives employment were associated with more equal sharing of child care, more shared interests and spouse's greater interest in each other as individuals and confidantes. On the contrary, when wives were educated only upto Level III their employment status made no difference to their social adjustment in marital relations (t-value C vs C': 1.228).

When compared across educational levels, it was observed that there existed insignificant difference on the social dimension of marital adjustment between wives who were in Level I and Level II irrespective of their employment

status. Comparison of employed wives with education equivalent to Level I or Level II with Level III revealed that employed wives with Level I or Level II education were significantly (t-value A vs C: 5.364 and t-value B vs C: 3.580 respectively) more social than those with education upto Level III. Among non-employed wives too the same trend was observed.

It is evident from Table that, in contrast to husbands, wives' emotional dimension of marital adjustment was significantly influenced by their employment status and educational level. Employed wives educated upto Level III were significantly more emotionally dependent on their husbands than (t-value A vs C: 3.449 and t-value B vs C: 3.181 respectively) those who were educated upto Level II or Level I. Similar trend was observed in the category of non-employed wives too. Non-employed wives with Level III education were significantly more emotionally attached to their husbands than (t-value A' vs C': 3.923 and t-value B' vs C': 3.421 respectively) those with Level I and Level II education. When the data was analysed across the employment status of wives it was seen that at all the three identified levels of wives' education (Level I, Level II and Level III), the emotional dependence of wives on their husbands decreased significantly by their being employed.

After close perusal of the findings it can be stated that the hypothesis formulated under it, that is, there will be no significant differences in the marital adjustment among families with employed and non-employed women across different educational levels stands rejected.

CONCLUSION

Education and employment of the Indian women has got significant implications not only for their own lives but for all the lives and relations linked with them. Their being educated and employed brings about tremendous qualitative change in their own and their husbands' marital adjustment. Highly educated and employed women and their husbands are more socially adjusting than their corresponding counterparts. Education and employment on the part of women is also essential for making her confident and less emotionally dependent on their husbands. So, education and employment is a new age mantra for Indian women to improve the level of marital adjustment among them and their husbands.

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