

A Comparative Study of Marital Adjustment and Marital Satisfaction among Husbands and Wives

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Abstract—The present study examines gender differences in marital adjustment and marital satisfaction among husbands and wives. A comparative approach was employed to assess both dimensions using paired-samples analysis. Findings revealed that wives reported significantly higher marital adjustment than husbands, suggesting that women tend to invest greater emotional effort and adaptability within marital relationships. Conversely, husbands reported higher marital satisfaction, highlighting a paradoxical dynamic wherein greater adjustment does not necessarily translate into greater subjective satisfaction for women. Strong positive correlations between spouses' adjustment and satisfaction scores underscore the dyadic and interdependent nature of marital relationships. The results emphasize the influence of gender roles and social expectations in shaping marital experiences, with implications for counseling and interventions aimed at fostering equity and reciprocity within marriages.

Keywords: Marital Adjustment; Marital Satisfaction; Gender Differences; Husbands and Wives; Dyadic Relationship; Emotional Labor.

I. INTRODUCTION

Marriage is one of the most significant social institutions, serving as a foundation for emotional support, companionship, and family stability. The quality of marital life is often assessed through two crucial dimensions: marital adjustment and marital satisfaction. Marital adjustment refers to the processes of compromise, conflict resolution, and adaptability that partners employ to maintain relational harmony. Marital satisfaction, on the other hand, reflects the subjective sense of contentment and fulfillment derived from the marital bond.

Prior research suggests that marital quality is influenced by factors such as communication patterns, gender roles, emotional labor, and societal expectations. Within the Indian socio-cultural context, traditional gender norms often place a greater burden of relational maintenance on women, which may influence both adjustment and satisfaction differently across genders. The present study seeks to contribute to this discourse by comparing husbands and wives on these two vital dimensions, thereby highlighting the paradoxical patterns in marital relationships.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Research on marital quality consistently indicates that gender plays a crucial role in shaping adjustment and satisfaction. Studies have found that women are often more engaged in relationship maintenance, compromise, and emotional regulation, leading to higher marital adjustment scores (Spanier & Cole, 1976; Kurdek, 1999). However, this greater adjustment does not always yield proportional increases in marital satisfaction, as women may simultaneously experience greater stress and lower fulfillment due to societal expectations (Amato, 2000; Umberson et al., 2005).

Conversely, men often report higher marital satisfaction despite lower adjustment, suggesting that they benefit more directly from the stability created by their wives' emotional labor (Rao, 2017; Fowers & Olson, 1992). Cross-cultural studies further reveal that these gendered differences are more pronounced in collectivistic societies, where traditional roles are strongly

emphasized. The interplay between adjustment and satisfaction, therefore, reflects not only individual efforts but also broader socio-cultural norms.

This body of literature underscores the importance of examining marital quality through both a gendered and dyadic lens, recognizing that partners' experiences are interdependent and shaped by relational expectations.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a comparative research design to assess marital adjustment and marital satisfaction among husbands and wives.

Sample: The research included 100 married couples (N = 200 participants), with equal representation of husbands and wives. The participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure diversity in age and marital duration.

Tools Used - Marital Adjustment Test (MAT) – to measure the extent of adaptability, conflict resolution, and adjustment within marriage.

Marital Satisfaction Scale (MSS) – to assess the subjective level of happiness and fulfillment within the marital relationship.

Procedure: Data were collected through structured questionnaires administered individually to both husbands and wives. Standardized instructions and ethical considerations, such as confidentiality and informed consent, were strictly followed.

Statistical Analysis: Paired-samples statistics, correlations, and t-tests were employed to compare the scores of husbands and wives on marital adjustment and marital satisfaction. This allowed both descriptive and inferential examination of gender differences.

The methodology provided a systematic approach to identifying not only absolute differences between husbands and wives but also the relational interdependence between their reported experiences.

IV. RESULTS

Marital adjustment (MA) –

Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	H_MA	45.48	100	11.674	1.167
	W_MA	59.79	100	10.093	1.009

Paired Samples Correlations				
		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	H_MA & W_MA	100	.632	.000

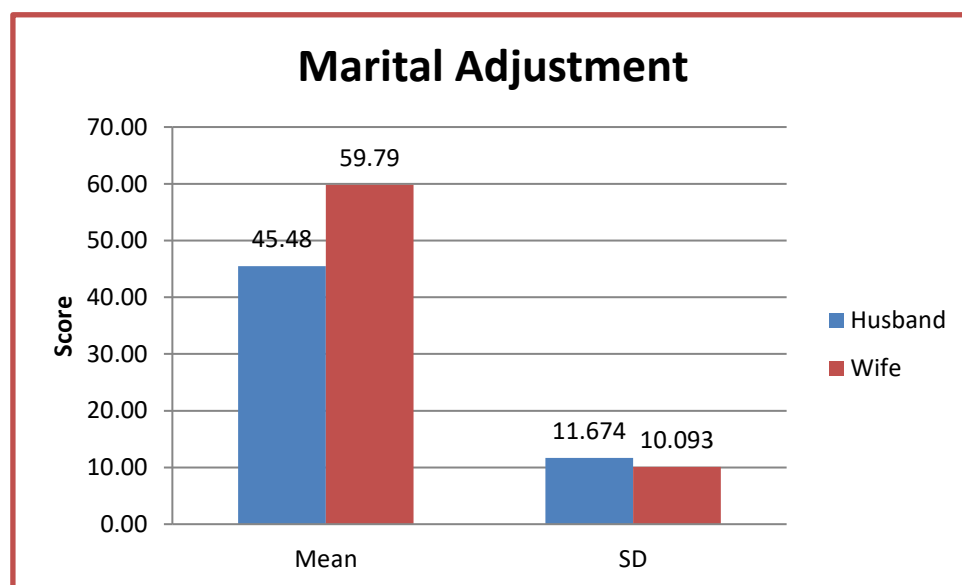
Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	H_MA - W_MA	-14.310	9.443	.944	-16.184	-12.436	-15.154	99	.000

The paired-samples statistics revealed notable differences in the levels of marital adjustment reported by husbands and wives. The mean score for husbands' marital adjustment ($M = 45.48$, $SD = 11.67$) was substantially lower than that of their wives ($M = 59.79$, $SD = 10.09$). This initial comparison suggests that wives in the sample reported greater adjustment to marital life than their male counterparts.

The correlation analysis further indicated a strong and positive association between husbands' and wives' marital adjustment scores ($r = .632$, $p < .001$). These finding highlights that although the absolute levels of adjustment differ across genders, there is a significant relational pattern wherein higher adjustment by one partner tends to be accompanied by higher adjustment by the other. Such interdependence underscores the dyadic nature of marital relationships, where one partner's ability to adapt is closely linked to the other's marital functioning.

The paired-samples t-test confirmed the statistical significance of these differences. The mean difference between husbands and wives was -14.31 ($SD = 9.44$), with a 95% confidence interval ranging from -16.18 to -12.44 . The obtained t-value ($t(99) = -15.15$, $p < .001$) clearly establishes that wives' marital adjustment is significantly higher than that of husbands. The narrow confidence interval and the magnitude of the t-statistic lend strong support to the robustness of this difference.



Taken together, these findings provide compelling evidence that gender differences exist in marital adjustment, with wives demonstrating significantly higher adaptability within marriage. While both partners' adjustment levels are positively correlated, the consistently higher scores among wives suggest that they may invest more effort in accommodating marital expectations, resolving conflicts, and sustaining relational harmony. This pattern aligns with prior research suggesting that women are often socialized to prioritize relationship maintenance and emotional labor within the family context.

Marital Satisfaction (MS) –

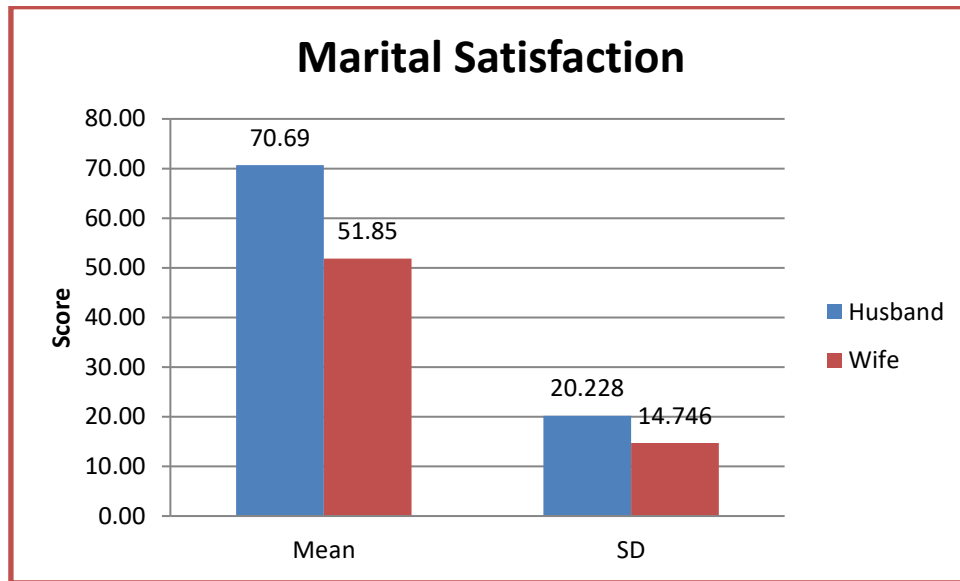
Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	H_MS	70.69	100	20.228	2.023
	W_MS	51.85	100	14.746	1.475

Paired Samples Correlations				
		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	H_MS & W_MS	100	.633	.000

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	H_MS - W_MS	18.840	15.784	1.578	15.708	21.972	11.936	99	.000

The paired-samples statistics demonstrated a clear gender difference in marital satisfaction. Husbands reported a higher mean score ($M = 70.69$, $SD = 20.22$) compared to wives ($M = 51.85$, $SD = 14.75$). This descriptive difference of nearly 19 points suggests that, within the sample, husbands experienced a considerably greater sense of satisfaction in their marriages than wives.

The paired-samples correlation revealed a strong positive association between husbands' and wives' marital satisfaction scores ($r = .633$, $p < .001$). This indicates that although the absolute levels of satisfaction differ, there is still a significant degree of interdependence in how marital satisfaction is experienced by partners within a dyad. When one partner reports higher satisfaction, the other is also likely to report higher satisfaction, reflecting the reciprocal and relational nature of marital dynamics.



The paired-samples t-test confirmed the statistical significance of the observed difference. The mean difference between husbands' and wives' marital satisfaction scores was 18.84 ($SD = 15.78$), with the 95% confidence interval ranging from 15.71 to 21.97. The t-value was found to be 11.94 with 99 degrees of freedom, and the associated p-value was less than .001. This establishes that the difference in marital satisfaction between husbands and wives is highly significant and unlikely to be due to random variation.

These findings suggest a consistent pattern: husbands report significantly higher levels of marital satisfaction compared to their wives. While both partners' satisfaction scores are positively correlated, the imbalance reflects a gendered divergence in marital experiences. Wives, despite demonstrating greater marital adjustment (as shown in the previous analysis), report lower satisfaction. This paradox indicates that while women may invest more in adapting to the marital relationship, such adjustment does not necessarily translate into enhanced personal satisfaction. Husbands, conversely, appear to perceive their marital experience more positively, even with comparatively lower adjustment scores.

V. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal a paradoxical yet insightful pattern in the dynamics of marital relationships. Wives reported significantly higher levels of marital adjustment than husbands, suggesting that they tend to compromise more, adapt to circumstances, and invest emotional effort in maintaining harmony within the marital bond. At the same time, their level of marital satisfaction was considerably lower than that of their husbands, who despite showing lower adjustment scores, expressed a higher degree of satisfaction. This duality highlights the nuanced interplay between adjustment and subjective contentment in marriage.

The positive correlations between spouses' adjustment and satisfaction scores emphasize the dyadic nature of marital experiences—when one partner demonstrates higher adjustment or satisfaction, the other tends to report similarly higher levels. However, the significant mean differences confirm that gender roles and expectations shape how marital life is experienced. Women's greater adjustment yet lower satisfaction may reflect societal norms that position them as the primary custodians of emotional labor and conflict resolution. While such efforts stabilize marital relations, they do not necessarily yield greater personal fulfillment. In contrast, husbands may derive satisfaction from the stability achieved, even without equivalent personal adjustment.

These results align with existing literature indicating that gendered expectations influence marital quality, with women often investing more in relational maintenance and men reaping greater perceived benefits. The findings call attention to the importance of promoting equity and reciprocity within marriages. Counsellors and practitioners should recognize the disparity between adjustment and satisfaction and encourage couples to share responsibilities and emotional efforts more evenly.

In sum, this study contributes to understanding the complex interdependence between marital adjustment and satisfaction, emphasizing the need for gender-sensitive approaches to strengthen marital bonds and enhance individual well-being within the institution of marriage.

VI. CONCLUSION

The present study sought to compare husbands and wives on two vital dimensions of marital quality: adjustment and satisfaction. The results revealed a striking gender divergence. Wives consistently reported higher marital adjustment, indicating a greater tendency to compromise, adapt, and maintain relational harmony. However, despite this higher level of adjustment, their scores on marital satisfaction were significantly lower than those of their husbands. Husbands, conversely, exhibited lower adjustment yet expressed greater satisfaction with marriage. This paradox underscores the complex interplay between adaptation and subjective fulfillment in marital life. While both adjustment and satisfaction were positively correlated within couples, the gender gap suggests that women may shoulder a disproportionate share of emotional and behavioral effort without experiencing a corresponding increase in satisfaction. These findings have important implications for marital counseling and gender-sensitive interventions, highlighting the need to balance responsibilities and emotional reciprocity to foster healthier, more fulfilling relationships.

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