

Marital Adjustment, Stress and Depression among Working and Non-Working Married Women

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ABSTRACT: The present study is aimed at exploring the relationship between marital adjustment, stress and depression. Sample of the study consisted of 150 working and non-working married women (working married women = 75, non-working married women = 75). Their age ranged between 18 to 50 years. Their education was at least gradation and above. They belong to middle and high socio-economic status. Urdu Translation of Dyadic Adjustment Scale (2000), Beck Depression Inventory (1996) and Stress Scale (1991) were used. Results indicated highly significant relationship between marital adjustment, depression and stress. The findings of the results also show that working married women have to face more problems in their married life as compared to non-working married women. The results further show that highly educated working and non-working married women can perform well in their married life and they are free from depression as compared to educated working and non-working married women.

Key words: Marital Adjustment, Stress and Depression

INTRODUCTION:

One of the most important relationships between a man and women is marriage. It involves emotional and legal commitment that is quite important in any adult life. Moreover, selecting a partner and entering into a marital contract is considered both maturational milestone and personal achievement. There is no doubt that the choice of marital partner is one of the most important decisions one makes in his / her lifetime. People marry for many reasons, like; love, happiness, companionship, and the desire to have children, physical attraction, or desire to escape from an unhappy situation¹. Marriage is a commitment with love and responsibility for peace, happiness and development of strong family relationships. Marriage as "socially legitimate sexual union, begun with a public announcement and undertaken with some ideas of permanence; it is assumed with more or less explicit marriage contract, which spells out the

reciprocal rights and obligations between the spouses and future children"².

Marital adjustment as "the state in which there is an over all feeling in husband and wife of happiness and satisfaction with their marriage and with each other"³. All the marriages are aimed at happiness in one or another way. Most couples marry filled up with expectations. Some of the expectations will be realistic while others unrealistic. This is due to the complex nature of marriage and each individual is as complex as a universe. Therefore, in marriage two universes close together⁴. Marital adjustment calls for maturity that accepts and understands growth and development in the spouse. If this growth is not experienced and realized fully, death in marital relationship is inevitable. A relationship between couples is not instantaneous rather a slow progress. "It is like the undetected cancer that kills silently and softly".

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A study on 581 couples and 25% of them disclosed that at some time in the adjustment process, they discussed discovering and 18% had seriously considered it⁵. There is a list of six areas of marital adjustment, which is defined by the psychologist, such as, religion, social life, mutual friends, in laws, money and sex⁶. Another psychologist defines ten areas of marital adjustment, i.e. values, couple growth, communication, conflict resolution, affection, roles, cooperation, sex, money and parenthood⁷. A study on marriage and marital adjustment in USA presents social activities and recreation, training and disciplining of children, religion, in law relationship, financial matters, sexual relationship, communication, mutual trust and companionship as the areas of marital adjustment⁸.

Comprehensive study of husbands and wives investigated some of the factors that contributed to marital satisfaction. Some of their findings revealed existing social, cultural, educational level the greater satisfaction. Occupation and income, which are often thought to be associated with levels of satisfaction, have no relationship with it. The number of children too affects marital satisfaction⁹. There is evidence that the pressures of managing multiple roles in women are the greatest, and the psychological benefits of employment are the least, under conditions of heavy family responsibilities that is, when young children are at home¹⁰. But beyond specific factors such as these, what is important to marital satisfaction over the course of marriage is the ability of partner to adjust to a variety of changes and to cope with a number of stresses. Marital role can be defined as set of attitudes and behaviors a spouse is expected to demonstrate in the content of the marriage relationship¹¹. A marital role comprises cultural expectations associated with the husband or with a wife. A husband is expected to provide used is considered as head of family while wife is expected to make home and companion, or the wife may be expected to be the strong one, upon whom the husband can rely¹².

Perhaps half of the adults suffering from severe stress blame the deteriorating relationships on their spouse. Looking at the growing rate of divorces, court cases for alimony, physical abuses and single parents; it does seem as if handling a relationship can be a tricky and often taxing issue. The possible causes can be endless. More often than not, stress arising from marital relationships is manifested in chronic disorders

such as depression, insomnia and hypertension. Since a relationship depends on the nature of the persons involved, it helps to seek the middle path when the inherent individual differences surface. It often helps to change one's attitude, go for counseling or talk openly with your spouse about problems facing your relationship¹³.

Depression in a spouse is an issue that most couples will face at some point in their marriage. Depression is a normal and natural response to loss or grief, whether a death, separation from a loved one, job loss, loss of physical health, or relocation. Marital distress and relationship conflict also contribute to depression. Symptoms of depression include feelings of sadness, hopelessness, helplessness, anxiety, irritability, agitation, fatigue, low energy, and a reduced activity level are common, and there is also withdrawal from social contact and loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities, including sex. There may be changes in appetite, weight or sleep patterns, memory problems or difficulty concentrating. Often there are feelings of worthlessness or inadequacy and a lowered sense of self-esteem. In more serious cases there may be suicidal thoughts or a feeling that "life is not worth living" (Comer, 1996)¹⁴. Married women have higher rates of depression than unmarried women, but the reverse is true for men. Marriage seems to confer a greater protective advantage on men than on women¹⁵. Marital adjustment and depression are strongly related. In a research, collected data on 695 women and 530 men and then re-interviewed them up to 1 year later. During this a number of participants separated from or divorced their spouses though the majority reported stable marriages. Approximately 21% of the women who reported marital split during the study experienced severe depression, a rate three times higher than that from women¹¹.

It can be seen that the phenomenon of marital adjustment that it is given a priority in all cultures, as marriage is one of the most important commitment of an individual makes in his or her life. A good marriage not only produces a satisfied life but it also generates a sense of well-being. In west, marriage is often a centerpiece in ideological claims about the 'decline of family values'¹⁶. Marital adjustment has been related to personality, job & home stresses, mental illness, depression, education, sex role attitude, happiness and success in life. However in Pakistan the phenomenon of marital

adjustment and its related variables have not been given much attention. Recently a few studies have been done on the topic of marital adjustment. In them marital adjustment has been studied with its relationship to depression among working and non-working women, male and female initiation of psychotherapy female education level. The present study is an attempt to investigate marital adjustment, stress and depression among working and non-working married women¹⁷.

Working women may be prone to depression because they bear the double burden of housework and a job outside the home. Because they have to work in two environments, one is the office environment and the other is home environment. Both are vastly different from one to another. Stress arising from marital relationships is manifested in chronic disorders such as depression, insomnia and hypertension. Since a relationship depends on the nature of the persons involved, it helps to seek the middle path when the inherent individual differences surface. It often helps to change one's attitude, go for counseling or talk openly with your spouse about problems facing your relationship. Pakistan being an Islamic country with traditional society, women are expected to stay home and do house work. Their doing job comes in conflict with the values that may cause marital maladjustment. The purpose of this study is in Pakistani context the phenomenon of marital adjustment and its related variables i-e stress and depression need a great deal of research. This research would be so helpful in knowing the difficulties faced by Pakistani working and non-working women just to spend a simple married life. Because our society is man-oriented society, women have to face all problems. If they are working they are supposed to perform all duties at office as well as at home. This study will give valuable information that what are the many causes behind women's depression and stress during marital adjustment¹⁸.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

Sample: The sample of 150 married women (75 working and 75 non-working) was taken for this research from Multan, Islamabad and Bawalpur. Working women were doctors, lectures and bankers. Convenient random sampling was used for this study.

Instruments:

Beck depression inventory (BDI): The BDI is a self-report measure of depression, consisting of

21 items that assess the severity of affective, behavioral, cognitive, and somatic symptoms of depression. Each item is scored on a 3-point scale¹⁹. An internal consistency coefficient of .86 was obtained in this study²⁰. In present study BDI-Urdu version was used to measure depression. It comprised of 20 items as its one item having sexual connotation was dropped, so score range of BDI-U is 0-60 and construct validity is 0.84¹⁶.

Dyadic Adjustment Scale: The Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS)²¹ is a self-report questionnaire of marital distress. It consists of 27 items (Urdu). Factors analysis of DAS has resulted in form components of adjustment: (a) Dyadic Satisfaction, (b) Dyadic Cohesion, (c) Dyadic Consensus and (d) Affectional expression. The scale was translated and adapted for Pakistani population²². The translated version of scale has reliability of 0.89. In translated item No. 9 was split into two parts i.e.

سرال سے برتاؤ والدین سے برتاؤ and سرال والوں سے برتاؤ because it was administered to both spouses. However, for the present study only one part of item No. 9 سرال والوں سے برتاؤ was chosen because the scale was administered only to housewives.

Stress Scale: Stress scale is developed for the purpose of the current study; items that measured the construct of general stress were derived from the original item pool of 87 she had developed. Items were deriving by five judges, who were asked to select only those items that measured general stress 23. Only those items were selected that were marked by three or more than three judges (i.e.) more than 60 percent as a result of this exercise, 32 items were removed and the rest of the scale consisted of 55 items were finalized. Items that were removed are 2, 9, 13, 15, 21, 23, 26, 27, 28, 34, 35, 36, 38, 39, 41, 44, 45, 50, 51, 54, 60, 67, 68, 69, 73, 74, 76, 80, 83, 84, 85, and 86. Another section was also added in the scale in which information regarding the occurrence of any stressful event in the past few months, the nature of the event and time of its occurrence was asked. So that relationship between stress and marital adjustment was determined.

Validity of Measures:

Inter correlation among scores of all the two scales i.e. BDI (Beck Depression Inventory) and MDA (Marital Adjustment) for total sample have also been calculated to see the relationships between the measures of study.

RESULTS:

Results presented in the **table 1** indicate that there is highly significant correlation between the two measures. The table also suggests that the correlation of BDI (Beck Depression Inventory) and MDA (Marital Adjustment) $r=.50$, (** $p<.001$). It indicates that if depression is high in married women then their married life will be suffered. Our hypothesis regarding this relationship is supported, which implies that higher the depression lower would be the marital adjustment.

The comparison of scores of working and non-working married women on MAD is performed in the **table 2**, which shows that there is non-significant difference between working and non-working married women and their marital adjustment ($t=.19$, $d.f=148$, $p=n.s$). The results further show that non-working married women also have many problems like working married women. This findings do not support our hypotheses that non-working married women are martially better adjust than working married women.

The comparison of scores of working and non-working married women on BDI is performed in the **table 3**, which show that there is non-significant difference between depression and working and non-working married women ($t=2.30$, $d.f=148$, $p=n.s$). The results indicate that working and non-working married women both have to face depression in their married life. Findings do not support our hypotheses that working married women have to face more depression as compared to the non-working married women.

The comparison of scores of working and non-working married women on Stress Scale is performed in the **table 4**, which shows that there is significant difference between working and non-working married women and stress ($t=.19$, $d.f=148$, $p=n.s$). The results show that working married women are more under stress. Because they have to work in two environments, one is home environment and other in office. So they feel more stress because of too much burden of work as compared to non-working married women. This findings support our hypotheses that working married women are more under stress than non-working married women.

The comparison of scores of educated and highly educated non-working married women on BDI is performed in the **table 5**, which shows that there is significant difference between educated and highly educated married non-working women and depression ($t=**1.47$, $d.f=73$, ** $p<.01$). The

results show that educated (graduate) non-working married women have to face more depression as compared to highly educated (above graduation) women. It indicates that graduate non-working women more depressed in their daily life and in home task than those women who get education higher then graduation. Hence, these findings support our hypotheses.

The comparison of scores of educated and highly educated non-working married women on MAD is performed in the **table 6**, which shows that there is significant difference between educated and highly educated married non-working women and in their marriage adjustment ($t=**.65$, $d.f=73$, ** $p<.05$). The results show that highly educated (above graduation) non-working married women can adjust better in their married life than graduate women. It indicates that the non-working women who are highly educated can spend their married life easily and solve their problem without stress and depression as compared to graduate women. Hence, these findings support our hypotheses that highly educated non-working married women are more adjusted as compared to educated non-working married women.

The comparison of scores of educated and highly educated working married women on BDI is performed in the **table 7**, which shows that there is non-significant difference between educated and highly educated married non-working women and depression ($t=.03$, $d.f=73$, $p=n.s$). The results show that it is not necessary that educated (graduate) non-working married women are more in depression than highly educated (above graduation) women. They have equal problems to face so their depression levels are same. These findings do not support our hypotheses that educated non-working married women have to face more depression as compared to highly educated non-working married women.

The comparison of scores of educated and highly educated non-working married women on MAD is performed in the **table 8**, which shows that there is non-significant difference ($t=.83$ $d.f=73$, $p=n.s$) between highly educated (above graduation) and educated (graduate) working married women. Results indicate that both have marital adjustment problems in their married life. It further indicates that they cannot spend their married life easily and during the solution of the problem they feel stress and depression. The results do not support our hypotheses that highly educated working married women are martially

more adjusted as compared to educated working married women.

Table 1: Correlation Matrix of Scores of BDI (Beck Depression Inventory) and MAD (Marital Adjustment) (N=150)

| | |
|------------|--------|
| <i>BDI</i> | ***.50 |
|------------|--------|

*** $p < .001$

Table 2: Means, Standard deviations and t-value of scores of working and non-working married women on MAD (Dyadic Marital Adjustment) (N=150)

| <i>Groups</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>S.D.</i> | <i>t</i> |
|--------------------|----------|----------|-------------|----------|
| <i>Working</i> | 75 | 58.27 | 21.14 | .19 |
| <i>Non-working</i> | 75 | 58.93 | 22.65 | |

$d.f=148, p=n.s$

Table 3: Means, Standard Deviations and t-value of Scores of Working and Non-Working Married Women on BDI (Beck Depression Inventory) (N=150)

| <i>Groups</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>S.D.</i> | <i>t</i> |
|--------------------|----------|----------|-------------|----------|
| <i>Working</i> | 75 | 12.36 | 9.77 | 2.30 |
| <i>Non-working</i> | 75 | 15.73 | 8.07 | |

$d.f=148, p=n.s$

Table 4: Means, Standard deviations and t-value of scores of working and non-working married women on SS (Stress Scale) (N=150)

| <i>Groups</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>S.D</i> | <i>t</i> |
|--------------------|----------|----------|------------|----------|
| <i>Working</i> | 75 | 41 | 18.79 | ***2.63 |
| <i>Non-working</i> | 75 | 33.57 | 15.62 | |

$d.f=148, *** p < .001$

Table 5: Means, Standard deviations and t-value of scores of educated and highly educated non-working married women on BDI (Beck Depression Inventory) (N=75)

| <i>Groups</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>S.D</i> | <i>t</i> |
|-------------------------------------------|----------|----------|------------|----------|
| <i>Educated (Graduate)</i> | 53 | 35.26 | 15.93 | **1.47 |
| <i>Highly educated (above Graduation)</i> | 22 | 29.50 | 14.38 | |

$d.f=73, **p < .01$

Table 6: Means, Standard deviations and t-value of scores of educated and highly educated non-working married women on MAD (Marital Adjustment) (N=75)

| <i>Groups</i> | N | M | S.D | t |
|-------------------------------------------|----------|----------|------------|----------|
| <i>Educated (Graduate)</i> | 53 | 57.83 | 22.23 | |
| <i>Highly educated (above Graduation)</i> | 22 | 61.59 | 23.94 | ** .65 |

*d.f=73, **p<.05*

Table 7: Means, Standard deviations and t-value of scores of educated and highly educated working married women on BDI (Beck Depression Inventory) (N=75)

| <i>Groups</i> | N | M | S.D | t |
|-------------------------------------------|----------|----------|------------|----------|
| <i>Educated (Graduate)</i> | 18 | 14.89 | 8.31 | |
| <i>Highly educated (above Graduation)</i> | 57 | 11.56 | 10.13 | **1.26 |

*d.f=73, **p<.01*

Table 8: Means, Standard deviations and t-value of scores of educated and highly educated working married women on MAD (Marital Adjustment) (N=75)

| <i>Groups</i> | N | M | S.D | t |
|-------------------------------------------|----------|----------|------------|----------|
| <i>Educated (Graduate)</i> | 18 | 54.67 | 21.60 | |
| <i>Highly educated (above Graduation)</i> | 57 | 59.40 | 21.06 | .83 |

d.f=73, p=n.s

DISCUSSION:

This research was undertaken to investigate the marital adjustment, stress and depression among working and non-working married women. The results indicate that non-working married women are better adjusted in their married life than working married women. Along with this they also do not feel depression and stress in their married life as compared to working married women. Where as, findings suggest that highly educated (above graduation) working married women do not have to face difficulties in their married life and depression in their life.

The hypothesis pertains that higher the levels of depression and more the stress lower would be the marital adjustment. It indicates that depressed married woman have to face marital adjustment problems in her married life. She also cannot perform better her married life responsibilities because she is under stress and if a married woman feels stress in her life, it effects her household work, her relationship with spouse

and other members of her family. Researchers studied that women feel more depression and stress after marriage and these two factors effect their married life. Because of depression and stress they cannot tolerate their spouses' behavior and immediately get irritated. This makes their life miserable and leads towards breakup²⁴.

Another hypothesis of this study is that non-working married women are better adjusted than working married women. This indicates that working married women cannot pay full attention to their homes and are unable to satisfy their family members. Where as, the non-working married women can do their household task easily and their married life goes smooth. According to the researches working married women cannot properly adjust with their married life because they have many tasks to perform at a time ²⁵. Working married women found themselves moving from job to job under a frequently changing cast of bosses. Reduced

autonomy and an ever-increasing workload, combined with the added burden of having a small child at home, made their job's huge claim on time and emotional energy intolerable. That is why they cannot perform well at home^{26, 27}.

Findings do not support our hypotheses that working married women have to face more depression as compared to the non-working married women. It means that both have equal levels of depression in their life. It can be assumed that if working married woman feels depression in her married life because of her over burden of office work, then it is right to say that non-working married women may also face depression because of any family member's misbehavior or tension at home.

This findings support our hypotheses that working married women are more under stress than non-working married women. Findings indicate that working married women who are engaged in multiple roles have to face sever stressful situations. Work sometimes serves as to put a woman into an unhappy situation, sometimes getting stuck in a situation that increases stress. Only many working married women experience high stress levels, because heavy work puts a bad effect on their lives and it creates stress in their personalities²⁸. Working married women would report more stress and less satisfaction than house wives in a sample of 200 Canadian couples²⁹.

The findings indicate that graduate non-working married women feel more depression in their daily life and in home task than the women who get education above than graduation. Because if a married woman is highly educated, she can well judge her household problems and solve them with ease. In this way she feels free from depression and lives a happy marital life. On the other hand less educated married women cannot solve their problems because of less information about that problematic issue. So that she feels herself in depression and this affects her marital life. Along with this, the results further suggest that highly educated married non-working women are better adjusted in their married lives. It indicates that those non-working women who are highly educated can spend their married life easily and solve their problems without depression as compared to only graduate women. According to researchers high education encourages women to solve their problems marital maladjustment and it also helps them in bringing up their children properly³⁰.

The findings of this research indicate that educated working women have to face more depression than those working women who are highly educated. There can be many reasons. First of all, highly educated working can get more satisfactory jobs because of their high education. Second, their high education helps them in solving their household problems without depression. But results further indicate that both have marital adjustment problems in their married life. They cannot spend their married life easily and during the solution of problems they feel stress and depression. Here the reason is that they both have to work in two situation and both are very important. Because of this, they cannot give proper attention to their home and their married life. This causes their marital maladjustment.

CONCLUSION:

Thus, it can be concluded from the above discussion that there are differences in the western countries and Pakistani regarding marital adjustment, stress and depression. The findings of the study indicate that working married women have to face more difficulties in their lives like they experienced more stress and depression as compared to non-working married women. It concludes that on some aspects working married women cannot contribute significantly for the well being of their family. Their attention diverted because of working in two situations. They cannot give proper attention to their marital lives and this causes depression and stress.

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