



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



## Marital adjustment and life satisfaction among young and old married couples

Manoj Kumar Sethi \*

*Assistant Professor of Psychology, P.G. Department of Psychology, Kuntala Kumari Sabat Women's Degree College, Balasore, Odisha, India.*

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### Abstract

The current research focused on exploring the relationship of marital adjustment and life satisfaction among young and old couples. Main objective of the study was to find out the effect of age on marital adjustment and life satisfaction among young and old couples. The Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) and Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) were used to measure the phenomenon of marital adjustment and life satisfaction. The sample was comprised of (N=300) young and old couples. Young married couples (n=150) and Old married couples (n=150) selected from three districts of Odisha (Bhadrak, Balasore & Mayurbhanj). Pearson Product Moment Correlation and t-test were used for statistical analysis. Results indicate a significant positive correlation ( $r = .43$ , significant at  $p .01$ ) in marital adjustment and life satisfaction. On the other hand there is a significant difference (significant at  $p .001$ ) between old married couples and young married couples on marital adjustment. The results also indicate that there is a significant difference (significant at  $p .001$ ) between old married couples and young married couples on life satisfaction.

**Keywords:** Marital adjustment; Life satisfaction; Young married couple; Old married couple

### 1. Introduction

Throughout the human history and in almost every society and culture across the globe, there exists the mutual sexual attraction between sexes, which takes its peak during adolescence. It has its own potential risks in the form of social, demographic, economic and health implications. Currently, in many societies, unmarried, single youths are sexually more active than what is commonly realized. Adolescents also maintain sexual relationships, even though cultural values in countries like India do not permit this.

Marriage is accepted as the most important event in an individual's life after their birth. Generally, marriage is considered the most important socially approved tradition to meet the safety and emotional needs of an adult (Kaplan & Benjamin, 2001). In that sense, marriage has been defined in various ways. Marriage is an agreement, an institutionalized path, or a relationship system. Some researchers have expressed marriage as a legal gathering of woman and man (Arshad, Mohsin, & Mahmood, 2014; Özgüven, 1997). In other words, marriage is a social and universal structure formed as a result of a social agreement to connect the lives of a woman and a man based on traditions, norms, and social values and the laws of the family make the smallest basic foundation of society (Ersanlı, 1990). Additionally, marriage is a social structure that unites two individuals with different interests, characteristics, and requirements and it is a special unity determined by social rules and laws that affects individual development and self-realization (Ersanlı & Kalkan, 2008). Although the notion of marriage is defined from different perspectives, it is commonly believed that a marital adjustment affects family structure.

\* Corresponding author: Manoj Kumar Sethi

Marriage is an ancient practice, although its meaning may have changed throughout time and space. The word 'marriage' means only a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife, and the word 'spouse' refers only to a person of the opposite sex who is a husband or wife.

In terms of social perspective, marriage plays a key role in forming the basic structure of a family unity as a social structure. In recent years, with the rapid developments in industry, social structures have also changed. With these changes in social structure, family structure as a social institution experienced changes such as smaller families and intense participation of women in work life. There is an increasing need to understand changes within the family; to understand and evaluate the content of marriages adapting to changing society and sustaining themselves through marital adjustment (Yalçın, 2014).

Young people select friends whose attitudes about sex are consistent with their own attitudes. The effect of friend's attitude on sexual behaviour was stronger for female than for males. High risk sexual behaviour in adolescent appears to be influenced by the sexual attitudes of peers and young people select friends whose attitudes about sex are consistent with their own attitudes. Researchers sought to determine how adolescent come to resemble their peers in risky attitudes and behaviours, attempting to learn whether they are encouraged by peers to adopt certain behaviour or gravitate towards others with similar attitudes and behaviours. They also examined the role of peer attitudes in development of high risk behaviours.

Marital adjustment has long been a trendy topic in studies of the family, most likely because the idea is supposed to be narrowly associated to the stability of any marriage. Marital adjustment is defined as the condition in which there is usually a feeling of pleasure and contentment in husband and wife and with each other. (Hashmi, Khurshid and Hassan, 2007).

Many studies were conducted on marriage and marital adjustment. Studies constantly proved that age at marriage is affect quality of the marriage itself. Number of investigations conducted at different times has confirmed that early marriage increases marital instability (Monahan, 1953; Burchinal, 1965; Glick & Norton, 1971; Bumpass And Sweet, 1972; Weed, 1974; Schoen, 1975; Lee, 1977).

Life satisfaction can be explained as a feeling of goodness and may be decide in terms of mood, satisfaction with dealings with others and with self achievements, self-concept, and self supposed capability to deal with everyday life (Glossary of Terms, 2003). Life Satisfaction is the manner a person feels how his or her life has been and how they perceive about where it is going ahead. It is a way to measure of well being. ([en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Life\\_satisfaction](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Life_satisfaction)).

Life satisfaction comes from inside a person himself/herself based on the persons own morals and values and what the person holds essential things. For some people it is there family, for others people it is care and love, and for some others it is wealth or other material things; any way, it is different from every person's point of view, same as life satisfaction looks different from every point of view. ([psychology.wikia.com/wiki/Life\\_satisfaction](https://psychology.wikia.com/wiki/Life_satisfaction))

There are many factors contributing to success or failure in marriages. Some of these factors are aggression, financial uncertainties, intelligence, religious and personal maturity, level of understanding, independence of thoughts, education, awareness, health, skills to manage family life, stress and strain affects, lack of experience, lake of patience and individual interests. As marriages are necessary for humans, marital adjustment and life satisfaction is equally important.

Successful martial life gives satisfaction of each person. Every person wishes to make his or her martial life successful. The present study was planned to find out the level of marital adjustment and life satisfactions in young and old couples of Indian society. This study is an effort to find out that what factors can be responsible for marital adjustment and life satisfaction in the context of life experiences.

This study gives us information about the resources of marital adjustment and life satisfaction and will opens new horizons for new researchers. The findings of the research will help the policy makers to introduce new strategies among the couples for their better marital adjustment and successful marital life in the society.

### 1.1. Review of Related Literature

**Carl Rogers (1972)** sees the present day changes in marriage as a positive trend towards greater freedom of the spouses. Because the emotional, psychological, intellectual and the physical needs of the partners are given higher priority over mere permanence as understood by traditional marriages. The purpose of marriage and family in

preservation of species as understood traditionally is debated by some sociologists today. Animals have no family and yet they survive and safeguard their species (Menachery, 1985).

**Lee (1977)** conducted a study on Age at Marriage and Marital Satisfaction: A Multivariate Analysis with Implications for Marital Stability. He took the sample of seven hundred eighty eight married people. In this study he investigated the relationships between age at marriage, the marital role performance, and marital satisfaction. The purpose of the study was to test the hypotheses related to age at marriage and marital instability which was depicted from a theory. His findings indicated the presence of little positive relations between the constructs.

**Bahre et al. (1984)** conducted a study on Teenage Marriage and Marital Stability. Theoretically, the marriages which made in earlier age have more possibility to break up, but the cause of this failure is still uncertain. A longitudinal study of a group of two hundred fifty nine married couples indicated that those who made their marriages in later ages and get more education, and did not face any financial uncertainties found more expected to stay in long and stable marriages.

**David et al. (1987)** conducted a study on the effects of early marriage on marital dissolution. The focal point of this study was an analysis of a path model which includes the estimated effects of background of early marriage, early marriage and education on the possibility of separation. A result using the General Social Surveys support research that indicates that early marriage is the most significant variable effecting divorce. Further they also concluded and measure through education a small influence of the early marriage.

**Sinha & Mukerjee (1990)** defines marital adjustment as the state in which there is an overall feeling in husband and wife of happiness and satisfaction with their marriage and with each other (p.633). It therefore calls experiencing satisfactory relationship between spouses characterized by mutual concern, care, understanding and acceptance. All the marriages are aimed at happiness in one or another way. Most couples become married filled up 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 come together.

**Akhani et al. (1999)** conducted a research on marital adjustment and life satisfaction among the women of early and late marriage. Their research also wanted to explore the relationship between marital adjustments and life satisfaction. The sample of their study was one hundred married women. The findings of their study proved their hypothesis, that women's age at marriage hold significance in the marital adjustment. The women who marry with an advance age have better marital adjustment than women of early marriage. The research also showed that the financial position of the family played an important part in deciding the level of marital adjustment as the women of high earnings shows more life satisfaction than the women of low earnings.

**According to Vries (2006)** Marriage is more than love. Marriage consists of a life of effort and concern, felicitation and melancholy, illness and health. It consists of being young and becoming old, dealing with small and big problems, coping with internal and external hardships and threats. A lot of days, weeks, months, and years are lived jointly. During this lengthy phase, the couple lives together in proximity, which unveils all. It soon become clear that big things can matter very little while small things can become awfully big. Often over a small matter a great dispute arises up. Marriage can explain how any person can be awfully small. Mistakes and shortcomings or deficiencies are visible in marriage. Married couple who live closely together can harm each other horribly through words expressions and actions (Thompson, 1990).

**Lehrer (2006)** conducted a study on Age at Marriage and Marital Instability: Revisiting the Becker- Landes-Michael Hypothesis. The hypothesis stated that marriage in early age has a high risk of failure and break up. Up till now it has been suggested that after attaining a mature age, the relationship between age at marriage and marital instability might become positive, the reason is that as unmarried women become mature mentally and physically, they can choose their partners realistically and in a better way. The result indicated that the relationship between age at marriage and marital instability is strongly negative up to the late twenties, and curve goes down after this age.

**According to Ramcharan (2008)** there are two elements in marriage. One is bodily (sexual wish etc) and another is divine (love, respect, adore etc.). Towards the end of life both elements are coming closer and closer and at a particular point of time the later aspect (love, respect, adore etc.) becomes evident. Marriage is purely the highest of all human interaction and therefore must never be entered into carelessly.

**Vaishnavranja, (2010)** conducted a research on Presentation on early marriage. The current paper was an effort to get insights on determinants and psychosocial effects of early marriage on the women of rural areas. He took 300

women in his samples that married in their early age and have experience of married life up to 5 to 15 years. It is also derived from the regression analysis that the bad effects of early marriage in earlier ages have more terrible on girl child. Overall dissatisfaction level is high with the respondents who get married at the early age.

**Rotz, (2011)** conducted a research on why have divorce rates fallen? The role of women's age at marriage. In this article, he used four different experimental methods, to show that age at marriage is the major close reason of the decline in divorce for married people. He derived the facts suggesting that the exact, contributory relationship between a woman's age at marriage and her future possibility of divorce cannot be significantly weaker than suggested by uncorrected estimates.

### *Objectives*

- To study the relationship between marital adjustment and life satisfaction among young married couples.
- To study the relationship between marital adjustment and life satisfaction among old married couples.
- To know whether there is any differences between young and old couples with regard to marital adjustment and life satisfaction.

### **1.2. Hypotheses**

Keeping in view the above mentioned objectives, following hypotheses were formulated.

- Marital adjustment would be higher in old couples as compare to young couples.
- Life satisfaction would be higher in old couples as compare to young couples.
- There would be a significant relationship of marital adjustment and life satisfaction.

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## **2. Material and Methods**

### **2.1. Participants**

The present study was included a sample of 300 young and old married couples into two category, young married couples (n=150) and old married couples (n=150) of three districts of Odisha (Bhadrak, Balasore & Mayurbhanj). The young married couples are within 5 years of their marriage and the old married couples are more than 15 years of their marriage.

- Sampling technique: Convenience sampling technique was used to select the desired sample.
- Research design: Co relational and between group designs were used in the current study.

### **2.2. Operational definition of variables**

Marital adjustment in current study was operationally defined as the score obtained through Dyadic adjustment Scale by Spanier 1976. Low Scores indicate low level of Marital Adjustment and high scores indicate high level of Marital Adjustment.

Life satisfaction in current study was operationally defined as the score obtained through Life satisfaction scale by Diener 1985. Low Scores indicate low level of Marital Adjustment and high level of scores indicate high level of Life Satisfaction.

### **2.3. Research Instruments**

Following instruments were used to test the hypotheses. The Satisfaction with life Scale (SWLS) developed by Ed Diener and colleagues (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin, 1985) and the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) originally developed by Spanier (1976)

### **2.4. Procedure of the study**

In order to accomplish the requirement of the current research, 300 married young and old couples were selected by convenience sampling technique. Then informed consent was designed according to ethics of research. The ethical standards of research were considered as the participants were given brief description about the research and insured that information will be kept confidential. All the participants were given appropriate instructions regarding research

and questionnaire. Dyadic adjustment Scale by Spanier 1976 and Life satisfaction scale by Diener 1985 were used to measure the marital adjustment and life satisfaction among young and old married couples.

### 2.5. Statistical Analysis

Pearson Product Moment correlation and t-test were used to find out the statistical significance of the data.

## 3. Results

**Table 1** Correlation between marital adjustment and life satisfaction in young and old married couples. (N=300)

	<b>Marital Adjustment</b>	<i>P</i>
<b>Life Satisfaction</b>	0.43**	0.0001

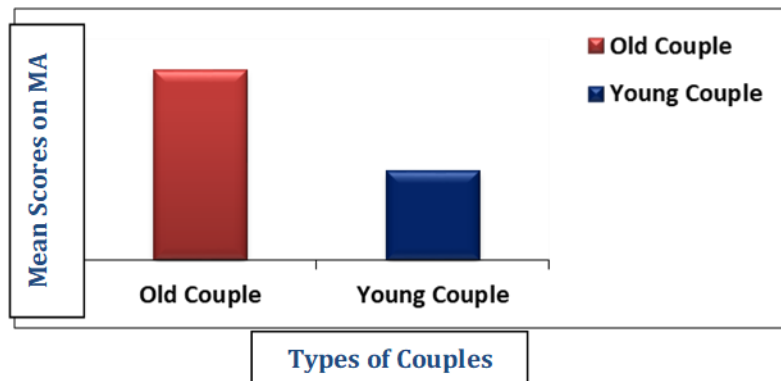
\*\*Correlation is significant at p .01 level

The above table shows that Marital Adjustment is positively correlated with Life Satisfaction in young and old married couples. Correlation is significant at p .01 level between marital adjustment and life satisfaction.

**Table 2** Difference in marital adjustment among Old and Young Married Couples. (N=300)

Variable	Types of Couple	N	M	SD	df	t	P
Marital Adjustment	Old Married Couples	150	86.43	7.56	298	8.9446	0.0001
	Young Married Couples	150	75.13	13.50			

The above table shows that there is significant difference between Old married couples and Young married couples on Marital Adjustment at  $p < 0.01$ . t test results show significant difference.

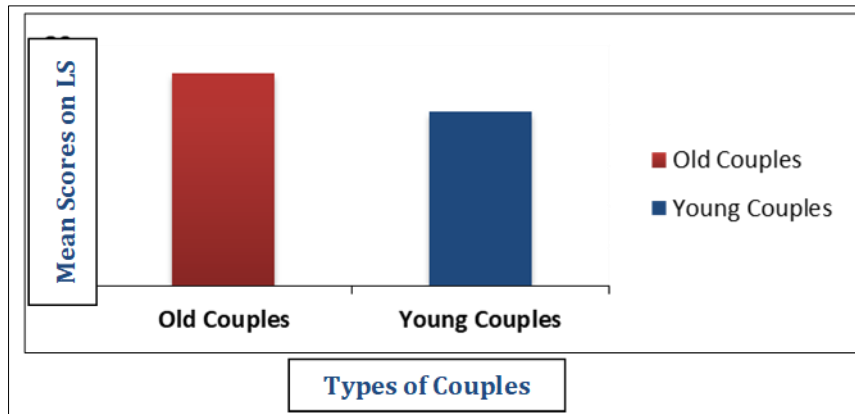


**Figure 1** Mean Scores on Marital Adjustment among Old and Young Married Couples

**Table 3** Difference in Life Satisfaction among Old and Young Married Couples. (N=300)

Variable	Types of Couple	N	M	SD	df	t	P
Life Satisfaction	Old Married Couples	150	26.53	2.77	298	9.8217	0.0001
	Young Married Couples	150	21.72	5.32			

The above table shows that there is significant difference between old married couples and young married couples on Life Satisfaction at  $p < 0.01$ . t test results show significant difference.



**Figure 2** Mean Scores on Life Satisfaction among Old and Young Married Couples

#### 4. Discussion

- The result showed that there is a positive correlation between Marital Adjustment and Life Satisfaction among married couples.
- The result showed that there is a significant difference between Old and Young married couples with regard to Marital Adjustment.
- The result showed that there is a significant difference between Old and Young married couples with regard to Life Satisfaction.

The above findings showed that there exists a strong positive relationship between marital adjustment and life satisfaction. The more marital adjustment indicates the more satisfaction in life. From the above result it was found that older couples have more marital adjustment and more life satisfaction than young married couples. As the older couples having more experiences in their family life, so they can adjust themselves very well in the family than young married couples who have less experiences.

#### *Limitations*

The results should be viewed cautiously as our population sample is limited to only 3 districts (Bhadrak, Balasore and Mayurbhanj) of Odisha state. The second limitation is the cross-sectional research design because the data was collected from the couples having different sections of society at the same period of time. Thirdly, the sample collected was also limited and covered only three districts. Thus, the study's result is restricted to a specified sample and not reviewed on a general population. In our study, the response rate was good and every couples had fully marked the answers.

**Social/ Educational Implications:** The following steps should be taken at the community workers, family, educationists and social psychologists for the better adjustment of couples whether they are young or old;

- Programmes at society/ community level should start being modified to better suit the needs of couples.
- To assist and empower young couples find their buried talents, physical and social activities should be provided.
- Family and peers should support their young couple in cultivating positive and optimistic attitude.
- Community/ society should offer counselling services to prevent any depressive condition.

#### *Suggestion for Future Research*

The present research was limited to only a small percentage of population, so there is a need to conduct a general population for the generalization of findings in the society. Hence, future research should focus on that aspect.

#### 5. Conclusion

Thus, it can be concluded from the above discussion that there is a positive correlation between Marital Adjustment and Life Satisfaction. The findings of the study indicate that older married couples have more marital adjustment and more life satisfaction than young married couple's counterpart. The young married couples have low level of marital

adjustment and less life satisfaction because some of the factors such as aggression, financial uncertainties, intelligence, religious and personal maturity, level of understanding, independence of thoughts, education, awareness, health, skills to manage family life, stress and strain affects, lack of experience, lack of patience and individual interests.

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## Compliance with ethical standards

### *Acknowledgements*

The author appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

### *Statement of ethical approval*

This study involved human subjects in its data collections I being the author have taken necessary ethical approval.

### *Statement of informed consent*

Informed consent was obtained from all the individual participants included in the present study.

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