



Marital satisfaction during middle adulthood

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ABSTRACT

The present case study was conducted to study the marital satisfaction among middle aged (20 men and 20 women). In-depth interview was conducted using semi structure questionnaire on marital satisfaction. It was revealed that both men and women were satisfied with the affection, intimate conversation, recreational companionship, honesty and openness and family commitment with their spouse. With regard to financial support maximum of the men were moderately satisfied while majority of the women were also moderately satisfied with domestic support from their spouse. Maximum of the male and female respondents were in low level of satisfaction with respect to health of their spouse. Majority of the female and male respondents were in moderate level with regard to relationship with in-laws.

INTRODUCTION

Middle age is the period of age beyond young adulthood but before the onset of old age. It begins at forty and extends to age sixty. It is time they have to adjust to developmental task relating to family life, to civic and social responsibilities, and to adult leisure activities. It is a time of empty nest- the time when children no longer want to live under the parental roof.

Marriage (also called matrimony or wedlock) is a socially or ritually recognized union or legal contract between spouses that establishes rights and obligations between them, and their children, and between them and their in-laws.

Marital satisfaction refers to a global level of favourability that individual spouses report with their marital relationship (Roach *et al.*, 1981). It is often viewed as an individual's interpretation of the overall quality of the marriage or the person's happiness with the marriage.

Gana *et al.* (2013) studied the effects of love styles on marital satisfaction in heterosexual couples: A dyadic approach. The results revealed that among the love styles, only Eros contributed to marital satisfaction for both men and women.

However, the results showed that wives' Eros style had a positive impact on husbands' marital satisfaction, whereas husbands' Eros style did not influence wives' marital satisfaction. Erotic lovers are honest and open with their partners and seek a deep and pervasive relationship. Kim (2013) studies the effect of marital intimacy, sex communication, and sexual satisfaction on the marital satisfaction for Korean middle-aged women. It was found that marital satisfaction has a positive correlation with the marital intimacy.

Villa and Das (2013) found that marital social skills (proactive self-control, reactive self-control and expressiveness/empathy) were more strongly correlated to husbands' marital satisfaction and husbands' three social skills (assertive conversation, self-assertiveness and expressiveness/empathy) were correlated with wives' marital satisfaction. Wives' marital and interpersonal functioning may be a greater predictor for husbands' marital satisfaction and marital conflict (Faulkner *et al.*, 2005).

Dew and Stewart (2012) found that when spouses report satisfying communication, respect, commitment, and fairness and have equal levels of economic power, they report lower levels of financial conflict.

Anathbandhu and Damodar (2009) found that wives are more accustomed to the obligation of doing household work and respecting husbands. They are less reactive to negative feelings as they respect their husbands and are more committed to their relationships. Also, social pressures force wives to accept the role of submissiveness and subordination. Men's religious attendance is inversely related to the overall frequency of disputes and to disagreements over housework, money, how time is spent, and sex, whereas women's attendance is not (Ellison and Curtis, 2002).

Nimtze (2011) study the Satisfaction and contributing factors in satisfying long-term marriage and found two major themes : Attitude," referring to the mind-set participants brought to their marriage relationship, and "Action," referring to the work and effort participants invested in the marriage relationship emerged from the data in reference to marriage longevity. Subthemes emerging from "Attitude" included an "Attitude of Commitment," "Attitude of Respect," and "Attitude of Humor." Subthemes emerging from "Action" included "Act of Communication," "Act of Compromise," and "Act of Support."

Rezash and Fisher (1996) found that men become more empathic as they age and male empathy is positively correlated with positive verbal interaction within the marital dyad, as well as global marital satisfaction.

Levenson *et al.* (1993) found relation between marital satisfaction and health was stronger for woman than for man. In satisfied marriages wives' and husbands' health was equivalent and in dissatisfied marriages wives complain more health problems than their husbands.

Evidence suggest that, on average, marital stability and satisfaction increase in mid-life as conflict over child-rearing and other matters decline. Improvement in the marital satisfaction may also derive from the middle-aged adults' increased sense of control- a kind of marital self-efficacy. It is likely that middle-aged partners' identification of successful

problem-solving strategies contributes to the sense that they have control over their relationship

Several studies (Hicks and Platt, 1970; Otto, 1979) conclude that marital happiness varies according to the stage of the family life cycle, which include factors such as number of children and their ages, occupational status of husband and wife are considered important. Other studies (Orden and Bradburn, 1968; Carlson and Stinson, 1982) indicate that age has an increasing positive effect on marital happiness that is the higher the age of marriage, the better the outcome in terms of marital happiness.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The present study was conducted in the city of Imphal, Manipur during January, 2014. The sample consists of 40 (20 male and 20 female) of the age range 48-56 years. All the respondents were from joint family. Most of the female respondents were housewives and all the male respondents were earning.

In-depth interviews were conducted using a semi structured questionnaire in the areas such as affection, intimate conversation, recreational companionship, honesty and openness, physical health, financial support, domestic support, family commitment and in-laws relationship to study the marital satisfaction.

OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

The present case study was undertaken to study the marital satisfaction during middle adulthood in the areas such as affection, intimate conversation, recreational companionship, honesty and openness, physical health, financial support, domestic support, family commitment and in-laws relationship.

Table 1 gives consolidated information on all 9 domains

Table 1: Different areas of the marital satisfaction

Sr. No.	Area of marital satisfaction	High level of satisfaction				Moderate level of satisfaction				Low level of satisfaction			
		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1.	Affection	24	60	28	70	12	30	7	17.5	4	10	5	12.5
2.	Intimate conversation	26	65	24	60	9	22.5	12	30	5	12.5	4	10
3.	Recreational companionship	22	55	24	60	15	37.5	14	35	3	7.5	2	5
4.	Honesty and openness	28	70	30	75	10	25	7	17.5	2	5	3	7.5
5.	Physical health	6	15	9	22.5	4	10	3	7.5	30	75	28	70
6.	Financial support	7	17.5	24	60	28	70	9	22.5	5	12.5	7	17.5
7.	Domestic support	29	72.5	13	32.5	11	27.5	15	37.5	0	0	12	30
8.	Family commitment	27	67.5	25	62.5	7	17.5	10	25	6	15	5	12.5
9.	In-laws relationship	18	45	13	32.5	19	47.5	22	55	3	7.5	5	12.5

Total respondents = 40, F= Frequency, %= Percentage

of areas of marital satisfaction in which case study were conducted. Majority of the male respondents (60%) were in high level of satisfaction with the affection they share with their spouse. Maximum of the female respondents (70%) were also in high level of satisfaction with the affection they share with their spouse. The respondents narrated that they have stayed together long with their spouse and know their spouse very well so they were able to provide comfort and care to their spouse to make them happy. McDaniel *et al.* (2010) found that communication and quality time with spouse were found to be the greatest determinates of marital satisfaction.

Majority of the male (65%) and the female (60%) respondents were in high level of satisfaction with the intimate conversation they share with the spouse. The respondents expressed that with the children moving away from home for further studies, marriage and jobs outside home gave them time for privacy so the couples have intimate conversation. Gorchoff *et al.* (2008) found that the transition to an empty nest increased marital satisfaction via an increase in women's enjoyment of time with their partners

Maximum of female respondents (60%) and more than half (55%) of the male respondents were in high level of satisfaction with the recreational companionship with their spouse. The respondents narrated that they give company in recreational activities such as watching television, visiting temples and relative place. Knowles (2002) also found relationship between leisure time with the spouse and marital satisfaction.

With regard to honesty and openness maximum of both the male (70%) and female (75%) respondents were in high level of satisfaction with their spouse. Majority of the respondents have expressed that honesty and openness with their spouse has made their marriage successful and running smoothly.

It was observed that low level of satisfaction was seen regarding health. During the interview many of the respondents have complained about the health complications of their spouse such as diabetics, heart disease, obesity, arthritis and joint pains etc. which create a stress and fear among respondents. Research by Guo and Huang (2005) found that health conditions were one of the significant contributors to marital satisfaction.

More than half of the female respondents were in the high level of satisfaction regarding financial support from their spouse. Majority of the female respondents who were interviewed were housewives and depend on their spouse for financial assistance so they were happy with the support their spouse offered them. Maximum of the male respondents were in moderate level of satisfaction with the financial support from their spouse. They narrated that as their spouse were not earning any income they didn't receive financial assistance.

Maximum of the male respondents (72.5%) were in high

level of satisfaction with the domestic support from their spouse and female respondents were in moderate level of satisfaction. Most of the males responded expressed that they were not very familiar with the domestic work so they have to rely on their spouse for domestic work such as cooking, washing and ironing clothes. The female respondents expressed that their spouse hardly involved in domestic work. Therefore, the female respondents did not get much help in domestic work from their spouse. Choudhary *et al.* (2009) in a study also found that women were more involved in domestic activities as compared to man.

Majority of the male (67.5%) and female (62.5%) were in high level regarding the family commitment from their spouse. Maximum of the respondents narrated that the sacrifice and the selfless effort done by their spouse for the welfare of the family regarding raising their children and taking care of the parents and in-laws has made their marriage successful. Goddard *et al.* (2005) found that empathy and commitment are the reliable predictors of the marital satisfaction.

Nearly half of the male (47.5%) and more than half of female (55%) respondents were in moderate level of satisfaction regarding their relationship with their spouse. The female respondents narrated that they tried to fulfil the expectation of their in-laws but they were not sure that they have fulfilled the expectations of their in-laws. They also expressed that there were times when they feel they given less time to their in-laws taking care of them because they were busy in raising their children and fulfilling spouses' expectations.

Conclusion :

It can be concluded that the marital satisfaction was seen in many of the aspects such as affection, intimate conversation, honesty and openness and family commitment. This might be the reason of the successful and long lasting marriage of the respondents. Majority of the male respondents were moderately satisfied with financial support from their spouse and most of the female respondents were moderately satisfied with the domestic support they received from their spouses. With regard to health maximum of the respondents were not satisfied because their spouses have complications such as diabetic, heart disease, obesity, arthritis and joint pains etc. Therefore, it can be concluded that the respondents were satisfied in the areas of marriage such as affection, intimate conversation, honesty and openness and family commitment with their spouse.

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