
Marital Adjustment Among Working and Non-Working Women: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

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Abstract

This qualitative study to explore the marital adjustment among working and non-working women in Pakistan. Using purposive sampling strategy, semi-structured interviews were conducted with six married women, including four working women and two non-working women living in nuclear and joint family system. Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis method, fourteen themes were derived as self-negation, work load, financial stability, challenges, intimacy of relationships, coping strategies, family strength, independence, dual responsibility, demand for perfection, sense of guilt, enhance strength, increasing exposure and sense of completion. The results revealed that working women experienced dual responsibility, financial stability, and a sense of independence, which positively impacted their marital adjustment. However, they also reported feeling overwhelmed, guilty, and distant from their spouses. Non-working women reported feelings of financial dependence, lack of recognition, and limited social freedom. The study highlights the importance of considering the impact of occupational status on marital adjustment and the need for support systems for women in both nuclear and extended family settings. The study can also contribute in social psychology as it challenges the stereotypical thinking of working women not being able to justify their familial roles.

Keywords: Marital Adjustment, Occupational Status, Working Women, Non-Working Women, Family Unit.

Introduction

Relationships are like pathways which lead us in our lives. They are instrumental in making our lives more meaningful and productive. The concept of relationship is not the event of the modern society because emergence of this world is attributed to a relationship. Importance of relationship is extremely holistic in its nature and has been even recognized by the modern individualistic societies. However, the functions, elements and type of relationship vary from culture to culture. Marriage is one of the relationships which have a social and religious recognition globally. There is a tremendous type of diversity among relationship but one thing is that they serve a purpose and marriage is no exception. Marriage is one relationship which is equally valued by both the genders

regardless of cultural variations. The current study aimed to investigate the marital adjustment of working and non working women living in nuclear and extended families. The concept of marital adjustment has been of core importance to all those disciplines which are related to the functioning of human beings in social context. Despite having a lot of discrepancies while describing and quantifying the stability of marriage, it has been an area which has received a tremendous attention. In order to have a better insight and a more holistic view about marital adjustment, the need is to have a closer look at the institution of marriage. If marital adjustment is considered as relevant to the stability of a marriage then it becomes essentially important to explore the etymology and definition of marriage. Adjustment and satisfaction in a relationship cannot be explored if the true meaning of that particular relationship is not uncovered (Gupta & Nafic, 2014). Marriage is a socially legitimate sexual union, begins with a public announcement and undertaken with some ideas of permanence. After marriage new relationships are made which increase the responsibilities of both men and especially for women and they had to work hard to adjust herself to new environment. But when wife is a working woman then she had to perform double duties at home or in her occupation and she has to face problems in maintaining balance between home tasks and job and she have problem ins marital maladjustment. Working married women have enormously changed their family lives through uplifting the standards of their family. Her vocation influences her identity as well as her family relationship and is likewise subject to face emergency of adjustment. So it is important to investigate marital adjustment in working women and to attribute it to the multitask nature of females. Now-a-days the role of breadwinner is no more restricted to males which may be attributed to social change. Despite how married women relate to their part as monetary supplier, the larger part stress over the impacts that working outside the home may have on their family's prosperity (Hochschild 1989). These progressions have driven couples to rethink the marriage contract and subsequently have affected the mental, enthusiastic, social and monetary advantages that couples get from marriage. A decent marriage delivers a fulfilled life as well as produces a feeling of prosperity (Pan & Sun, 2022). Khurshid et al. (2020) found that non-working wives confront more marital adjustment issues. Joshi (2014) watched social relations obligation had critical effect on adjustment of married women. Gupta & Nafis (2014) found that non-working female scored higher on marital adjustment than working females. Forbes et al. (2021) discovered working wedded women need to confront more issues in their wedded life as contrast with non-working wedded women. They explored marital adjustment of working and non-working women, results showed that non-working women were better at marital adjustment. About dialog about wedded working women's adjustment life it is need of time to embrace studies. Today the greater part of married women is utilized. They are extending their lives to incorporate a vocation, they should likewise keep up their traditional part as a wife, mother at home. The adjustment and marital relationship are significant difficulties in a large portion of the groups of urban and rural territory. Working women may be inclined to depression in light of the fact that they endure the twofold weight of domestic work and occupational demands outside the home as compared to the non working women. Since they need to work in two situations, one is the workplace environment and the other is home environment. Both the spheres are stressful and can be seen causing demotivation, sleep deprivation and hypertension. Since a relationship relies on upon the way of the persons included, it serves to look for the center way when the innate individual contrasts surface. It frequently serves to change one's perception, going for guidance or talk transparently with your companion about issues confronting your relationship (Shaud & Asad, 2020). Pakistan being an Islamic nation with many orthodox beliefs related to the role of the women and restricting them to domestic work. Their employment comes in clash with the qualities that may bring about marital maladjustment. The reason for this study is in Pakistani culture is to explore that how work status of females help them in level of adjustment and a tool of self-

exploration. This study will give important data that what are the numerous reasons behind women's discouragement and the role of family unit in determining their adjustment level. Mohammadia, Aghdamb and Ranjic (2011) studied postpartum depression in working women and housekeeping women and its association with social support and marriage adjustment. Findings recommended height of wretchedness scores in housekeeping women. What's more, discoveries demonstrated that around 52% of depression difference after labor is clarified by marital adjustment and social support.) Marriage is actually a method of living which requires continuous adjustment and adaptability. Slathia (2014) went for figuring out marital adjustment issues confronted by non-working married women and working married women of Jammu and Kashmir city. A specimen of 100 women (50 working married women and 50 non- working married women) was chosen arbitrarily. Results uncovered that working married women faces marital adjustment issue in a more noteworthy degree to that of non-living up to expectations married women. Working married women on account of included obligations of occupation may experience the ill effects of more serious reason for maladjustment at home or in the workplace. Marriage and adjustment has always been focus of researchers in sociology and social psychology therefore we do find a substantial amount of literature on the nature and determinants of marital adjustments, a need was felt to view it from a different prism. Most of the researches have been focusing on societal view of marital adjustment only. The study focuses on the role of occupational status and type of family unit in marital adjustment. It particularly focuses on the positive impacts of occupational status on marital adjustment. By identifying such differences would be helping and redefining the stereotypical image of working women and their failure in maintaining their family life. It can also be used to encourage non working women to break down the stereotypical image of non working women being incapable of proving their competence in other productive fields apart from the domestic domain.

Thus, following objectives were made for the study

1. To find out perceptions of working and non-working women about their marital adjustment.
2. To find out different issues in the lives of married women and their occupational status.
3. To explore the influence of family unit on marital adjustment.

Method

The current study used a mixed model involving a qualitative and quantitative approach Interactive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is used as a tool of data analysis. The aim of IPA is to offer an indepth analysis of a phenomenon under discussion. It is idiographic in nature because it incorporates a small sample size in order to have a more holistic view.

Participants

In this study, purposive sampling strategy was used for sample selection. The sample of six married women was taken out of which four were working and 2 were non-working women. Only married women who have been married for at least five years both working and non-working participated in the study. Women from both nuclear and extended families were included. Working women belonging to conventional and non-conventional professions were taken. Single, divorced and separated females and self-employed women were not included in the current study.

Measure

Demographic information sheet and screening questions

All the interested women had given a sheet that was consisted of some closed-ended demographic questions (used to gather important information and biodata of the participants) and some screening questions that were built according to inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Semi-structured interview guide

For the purpose of in-depth interviews, some predetermined questions were made that were further used by the researcher in order to gather relevant data from the participants. This interview guide included following questions:

1. What do you think are the factors which facilitates females in attaining and retaining marital adjustment?
2. Has your occupational status helped you in your recognition of yourself?
3. Do you think that you wasted yourself?
4. Do you feel burnt out due to dual role i.e. your occupational and familial roles?
5. Do you think that your current family unit facilitating or disturbing you in your marital life?
6. How often you feel that you have become a domestic servant?

Procedure

Interview guide was prepared with the help of previous literature. Interviews were conducted to gather information regarding different issues in marital adjustment among working and non-working women. Interview guide consisted of different questions. Before starting the interviews, all the participants were given details about the nature and purpose of the study. Participants were ensured that information provided by them would be kept confidential and would not be used other than the research purposes. Instructions were provided to the participants. They were encouraged to provide their true opinion and views regarding marital adjustment and marital satisfaction in working women. After finalizing the interview guide, the researcher explained purpose of the study and requesting the participants for their consent for conducting interviews. Consent was granted after inquiry about the nature of questions and confidentiality of the audio taped data. Individual consent was also taken by participants. Before starting the interviews, researcher introduced herself to the participant and told them about the nature of study and assured about the confidentiality of information provided by them. Total six participants were interviewed which included four working women and two non-working. Working women who were taken as participants belong to different non-conventional professions like police, engineering, banking and conventional like teaching. Interviews prolonged for one hour and upon the completion of interviews, the researcher thanked the participants for their participation. Then audio taped data was transcribed for analysis.

Results

Qualitative analysis was done in order to have in depth understanding and perception of marital adjustment among working and non-working women living in nuclear or extended family system. Following 14 themes and their subthemes were drawn from the analysis.

Table 1: *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Interviews on Marital Adjustment with Working Women Living in Nuclear and Extended Families (N=6)*

Super-ordinate Themes	Sub-ordinate Themes
Dual Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased roles• Management skills• Equilibrium
Financial Stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Security• Respect• Recognition• Family contentment• Not being answerable
Self-Negation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ignoring owns need

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shortage of time • Sacrifice • Poor self-care
Demand for Perfection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familial expectation • Occupational expectation • Understanding • Well kept
Independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial • Minor decisions • Socialization
Sense of Guilt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality time • Children suffering • Parental neglect
Work Load	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Household • Occupational • Children's issue • Physical labor
Enhanced Strength	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tolerance • Adaptability • Emotional intelligence
Increase in Exposure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills explored • New experiences
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life as a struggle • Obstacles • Gender related problems • Social demands
Intimacy of Relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emptiness • Distance • Less physical contact • Catharsis
Increased Coping Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional coping • Problem solving • Coping at work
Family Unit as a Source of Strength	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support being provided • Independence • Division of responsibility
Sense of Completion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motherhood • Womanhood • Was able to use potentialities

In-depth interviews were taken from the participants. Coding was done along with theme formation. After making the first code, development of theme took place. Step by step coding was done. Firstly, emergent themes were developed from the codes and then superordinate themes were made. The first theme was dual responsibility. The experience of having dual responsibility was not conceptualized as some drudgery but the major concern was to fulfill the requirement of each role. Women had a positive perception of their responsibilities and gave them a sense of

importance. For example the respondents said that they have increase roles but this has also increased their management skills.

Asma said:

“I always felt useless until I had these responsibilities and only then I realized that I can do something in life”.

A slight negative perception was also seen in two respondents as they said that I am getting tired of this burden. This was mainly reported by housewives.

Zainab said:

“I think that in the struggle of maintaining this balance I am losing my own.....oh forget it!

The second theme was financial stability. Economic status and stability is taken as the key factor in determining the level of adjustment and satisfaction in one’s life. Women had a positive perception about their jobs because it brought security in their life. Their earnings have brought happiness to the family and more respect from in-laws. However non-working women had displeasure towards their financial dependency.

Ayesha said:

This money is mine I enjoy it and I don’t have to report to my husband that why I used it... I simply enjoy it.” (Sparkle in eyes)

It was also reported by two respondents that sometimes I feel bad that it is my money that got me recognition and not me as an individual.

The third theme was self-negation. Negative perception and bitterness was reported by all the respondents regarding their perception of their own selves. All of them admitted that sacrifice is something that is expected out of them and the only compromise which we are allowed to make is our within our own selves. What we are, we have actually forgotten. This was common among both working and non-working women.

Asma said: “Sometimes I feel my each minute is bought and no time is for myself” Another respondent said:

“When I get ready for my office then I wear clothes which are in accordance to the official requirement and when I get back home I face home chores and actually where am I? Huh...

All the women had the common notion of not being able to pay much attention to their own personal well being.

The fourth theme was demand of perfection. A lot of discomfort was perceived regarding everything being perfectly performed by them. It was mutually reported that there is no concession at home front even regarding roles and duties.

Zainab said:

No matter how tired I am, my husband expects me to be part of every activity without any delay and assumes that as if I am some super human who has some

Magical wand in her hand and I feel that my workplace gives me more concessions than my family”

The fifth theme was independence. A very strong positive perception existed regarding their sense of independence for working women. The sub ordinate themes which were drawn included financial independence, social freedom, enhance self esteem and independent decision making. They reported to enjoy such freedom as it has been instrumental and adjusting to their married life. The feeling of dependency in the de-individuation was not reported by the working women but was strongly felt among non-working women.

The sixth theme was sense of guilt. Only two women reported that they experience sense of guilt regarding their children, family life, and their own parents as they perceive that it is the shortage of time which induces such feeling but this was not experience or reported by non-working women.

Fatima said:

“I exert a lot to compensate to my kids and husband because sometimes I feel that all the time they are waiting for me.

Fariha said:

“My job has brought a tremendous happiness to my family and my husband is surely proud of me but sometimes I feel that I do not give much time as a daughter to my parents.

The seventh theme was work load. Mixed feelings were reported regarding the work load as if been a subjective experience. The subordinate themes which were drawn included, occupational load, household task, and problems related to children. They found it mentally and physically exhausting.

Fatima said:

“I work like a laborer day and night but the heat thing is that there is a division of labor between me and my husband”

There were multiple issues which they reported but recognized the fact that the type of family unit has to be instrumental in facilitating the solution.

The eighth theme was enhanced strength. Positive perception existed when they viewed their occupational status. For them it has been a source of strength and empowerment for them. Occupational life has helped them to improve their intra personal or inter personal skills a lost sense of confidence and strength was reported by one of the non-working women.

Shabhee said:

“As a woman I feel so proud that I have become so strong and happy with my work and marriage simultaneously.

The ninth theme was exposure. All the participants admitted that their work status and marriage has increased their exposure in different dimensions. The tenth theme was challenges. Life was perceived as a challenge on a daily basis facing a lot of obstacles while playing multiple roles but being able to overcome each challenge has been a source of strength for them. They reported a positive feeling related to the challenges in their life has been making them more effective. The eleventh theme was intimacy of relationship. Mixed feelings were reported regarding the intimacy with the spouse. Two of the participants reported reduced physical contact and attributed it to the physical fatigue because of occupational and familial roles. Occasional feeling of being distant was also reported. A positive feeling was reported as they were spending the quantity and quality of time with his spouse. The twelfth theme was increased coping strategies. Both marriage and occupational status has been reported to increase coping strategies and ability to handle problems. The participants reported that they have learned different strategies to manage personal and occupational stress in a better form. The thirteenth theme was family unit. A positive perception existed among all the participants regarding the nature of family units. More support was found for Nuclear family regarding issues related to children and independence. The fourteenth theme was sense of completion. All the women reported a sense of completion of womanhood with marriage and children but by utilizing their abilities at workplace enhanced their self esteem which working women were enjoying but non-working women also felt completed after the birth of their children

Discussion

In-depth interviews were taken from four working women 2 non-working women. Open-ended questions were put forth to the participants and they were asked to talk in as much detail as much they wanted to about the institution of marriage, its associated factors and how it had been influencing their domestic and professional life. The participants' accounts clustered around six

superordinate themes Conventionality, Harmonious Relations, Marital Adjustment Issues, Lack of Harmonious Relations, Economic Constraints and Communication. Conventionality; the participants related how the orthodox practices had in fact hampered both the success of their domestic and professional lives. The societal pressures, the dual role responsibilities, the increased demands by the in-laws and spouse had affected their capacity to give out put in general and to function as a separate entity in particular. Nearly all the participants related with it, for instance, how they had to do domestic chores in addition to their financial contribution which they were making by working for long hours; how if they didn't work they were forced to find themselves in state of a 'beggar'. The word 'beggar' depicted the intensity of the emotional experience which they had undergone and which ultimately led them to assume the roles of working women but led to more emotional problems among non-working women because they believe that this has become a lifelong tag for them. Harmonious Relations; while participants related to conventionality they also had harmonious relations, as for instance, enhanced adaptability with the passage of time to deal with their dual role, the strength they gained by working and supporting family and the husband's help in adjusting with the situation. Though, in accordance with some participants it was probably because they were sharing the financial burden with the husband; but whatever it was, it actually was a source of strength. Marital Adjustment Issues, participants reflected that despite their efforts to meet both continuum they lagged behind. This lagging behind in meeting the ends led to the development of emotional burnout. Especially one of the participant stressed on the "fate" as a tool which swiped away all the colours from life, firstly because husband was killed by robbers and lastly the second husband was not only unable to reproduce but suffered from Hepatitis C. Lack of freedom, no sense of security, time management issues they all added fuel to the fire. Previous research has shown that it is difficult for women to maintain balance between the professional life and domestic life; especially when they have a demanding career (Bollinger & O'Neil, 2008). Both the non-working women were able to enjoy more harmonious relationship because of the absence of additional load coming from occupational life. Lack of Harmonious Relations; quiet contrary to the harmonious relations the participants were the victims of lack of harmonious relations in one way or the other. Especially when husbands were catering all other needs but remained emotionally aloof from them, it created a sense of emptiness in the wife. The informal working relationship actually worsened the situation and made most of the wives believe as if the husband didn't care. Another thing which comes under the umbrella of lack of harmonious relationship is the lack of privacy to the wedded couple. This problem was especially encountered in the joint family system; and it added strain in the relationship. Economic Constraints; were depicted in the participants efforts to meet the demands when husband's business collapsed and she had to fulfil the economic responsibilities. Even, at times, the husbands refused to give them daily subsistence. They were told to utilize their educative to with working women were not given such option and were forced to be restricted life. Communication, Remorse and inability to express were the leading cause of the strain in the relationship. Especially one of the participant started crying on the fact their husband gave his life in an attempt to save her but on the contrary during their companionship never expressed affection for her. It was difficult for her to accept that he had this strong feeling for her, which had gone untold. Two themes emerged from the transcript, Role Management Practices and Social Support. The extent to which the participants were able to cope with dual responsibilities despite all the odds against them, gave an index to their better adjustment. These role management practices covered the way they were able to deal with economic constraints, lack of harmonious relations, marital Adjustment Issues, gaps in communication and Conventionality. Role management was equally applicable to all the participants regardless of their occupational status. Social Support factor depicted the harmonious relations which helped as a strengthening factor for the women to fit in their roles of professional married women. No doubt the support of husband is of immense importance as until and unless he is not going to co-operate

the institution of marriage is not going to thrive. Research has shown that dual role of women had been a source of distress and to meet up with demands of both roles is a tough work. With the changing environment now women are working and are self-dependent and are no more assuming the roles of “beggars”. Ghasemi (2015) found that with the revolution in Iran women not only assumed the role of mothers but also that of professionals. They are working on both fronts to an extent that now Iranian women work in broadcast media as well (Ghasemi, 2015). The results of the study indicated that women who had support of their spouse were better adjusted to their dual roles of working women and that of married women They had better sense of security and they felt more comfortable in performing their multi-tasks. The findings of the research is in line with the study conducted by Weidekamm & Willer (2012) who studied the dimensions essential for the strategic career development of the women. They found that the support of the life partner of other people help strengthen the female and achieve the work-life balance. The support from the family unit has been an important factor in predicting the amount of marital adjustment. More support has been found for the Nuclear family system because of more independence autonomy and children. Although the importance of extended family was recognized and was taken as instrumental in socialization of children and emotional support. But the cost was count to be greater than the reward. Trying to determine factors associated with people’s quality of life, researchers have revealed that the family and the interaction styles among its members is a prominent dimension related to people’s quality of life, adjustment and well-being in all cultures. Studies have accumulated strong evidence showing that family life affects happiness greatly (Akkin & Whillans, 2021). Chilman (1982) reviewed major national surveys from 1957 to the end of the 1970s and concluded that even though societal views of marriage and family have undergone dramatic and fundamental transformations, family life is still widely seen as central to adjustment and happiness; furthermore, married people have an advantage, on indices of anxiety and unhappiness, over those who are single, divorced or separated (Lu & Lin, 1998). Recently, the position of women in developing nations has been a subject of great interest to researchers (Prorok & Chhokar, 1998), considering the crucial role of the family in woman's quality of life, this research was conducted in order to investigate the relationships of family functions and marital adjustment with quality of life in women. Furthermore, since women, especially in our society, are dependent on their families and husbands, the stability within the family affects their health greatly but the trends are changing because of the occupational status of women. Family functions, especially problem solving, communication and family roles tends to predict quality of life in women. It means that, women who solve family problems well, have good relations with other family members, perform family roles well and have adjustment with husbands, have a better quality of life. Corresponding to previous studies, such as those of Alayi et al., (2011), Bahari et al. (2000), Brandao et al. (2020), Cano and O’Leary (2000), Peterson-Post et al., (2014), Waite et al. (2009), Weissman et al. (1987), Whisman (2001), and Trudel and Goldfarb (2010) on relating family unit and adjustment. These researches have supported the importance of the effect of the family context and family factors on level of adjustment and quality of life.

Conclusion

This study discussed the in-depth understanding of marital adjustment among working and non-working women living in joint and nuclear families. As this research used interpretative phenomenological analysis method, it emphasized on unearthing the factors which facilitated females in attaining and retaining marital adjustment and what were the issues they were facing in doing so and how they coped with these issues. It was concluded that the women who got the husband’s and family support were more adjusted and satisfied with their marital life. The study can also contribute in social psychology as it challenges the stereotypical thinking of working women not being able to justify their familial roles. However, the data from male spouse could also be collected in order to have the perspective about the ability of females to play multiple roles.

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