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A Comparative Study of Gender Differences in Marital Adjustment and Depression of Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to measure the level of marital adjustment and depression of married women and married men. Marital dissatisfaction increases the problem of mental health. Depression is one of the most prevalent mental health problem. In keeping all these views in mind the present study was conducted on 50 married women and 50 married men in Kolkata to discover whether there are any difference in their level of Marital Adjustment and Depression. For this study, Marital Adjustment Questionnaire and Beck Depression Inventory was administrated on the participants. Result indicated there is a significant difference in the level of marital adjustment of married women and married men, where men reported better marital adjustment. Also, the prevent venture revealed a significant difference in the level of Depression between the females and males, where level of depression is higher in females.

KEYWORDS: Marriage, Adjustment, Depression.

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INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a vow with love and responsibility for happiness, harmony and expansion of strong family relationships. Adjustment is defined as a process where in one builds variations in the behaviour to achieve harmony with oneself, others or the environment with an aim to maintain the state of equilibrium between the individual and the environment. Marital Adjustment is a state in which there is an overall feeling of the couple of happiness and satisfaction of their marriage and each other ¹. Marriage as socially justifiable sexual union, begun with a public announcement and undertaken with some ideas of solidity; it is assumed with more or less explicit marriage contract, which spells out the reciprocal rights and obligations between the spouses and future children. Marital adjustment has been related to job and home stresses, mental illness, personality, depression, happiness and achievement in life. Marital adjustment has long been a popular topic in studies of the family, probably because the concept is believed to be closely related to the stability of a given marriage. Well-adjusted marriages are expected to last for a long time, while poorly adjusted ones end in divorce.

Depression is not a sign of emotional failing or flaw of masculinity. It is a treatable mental health state that affects millions of men of all ages and backgrounds, as well as those who are bothered about them- spouse, partners, friends and family. A man is more likely to refute his feelings, conceal them from himself and others, or try to disguise them with other behaviors. While men may experience classic symptoms such as depressed mood, loss of interest in work or hobbies, weight and sleep disturbances, fatigue, and concentration problems, they are more likely than women to experience “stealth” depression symptoms such as irritability, substance abuse, and agitation. Depression in a spouse is an issue that most couple will face at some point in their marriage. Depression is a typical and usual response to failure or grief, whether a death, disjuncting from a loved one, job loss, loss of physical health or relocation. Marital distress and relationship divergence also contribute to depression. Symptoms of depression include feeling of sorrow, low energy, anxiety, hopelessness, irritability; helplessness, disturbance, fatigue, and a reduced bustle level are common. There is also withdrawal from social contact and reduced concern in previously enjoyed activities, including sex. Often there are feelings of worthlessness or inadequacy and a lowered sense of self-esteem.

Men tend to have higher scores than women on measures of marital adjustment ². Thus high negativity and conflict in marital interactions is more associated with lower marital satisfaction more for men than for women. Women appear to see marriage differently than men. There are two independent perspectives of marital satisfaction, the husband's and the wife's. A meta-analysis of

marital satisfaction compiled over thirty-four studies indicated that men were more satisfied in marriage than women were although the magnitude of his differences was not great ³. In a research work with a Chinese sample, it was found that males have significantly higher marital adjustment. While a longer duration of marriage was associated with higher levels of dyadic consensus and affectional expression in men, the duration of marriage was negatively related to marital adjustment and marital satisfaction in women ⁴.

The noting of widespread gender differences in rates of depression now dates back two decades, with women consistently reported as having a twofold lifetime prevalence of depression, and a greater likelihood of seeking help for depression than men ⁵. The association between depression and marital satisfaction is further bolstered by the finding that in couples in which the wife is depressed both husband and wife report higher levels of marital dissatisfaction ⁶.

Keeping this backdrop in mind the present project is an attempt to find out the gender differences in marital adjustment and depression to alarm them to find the root cause of these malaise and cope with the stress associated with them.

METHODOLOGY:

Objectives: 1) To compare the level of marital adjustment of married men and married women.

2) To compare the level of depression of married men and married women.

Sample : The sample was comprised of married women and married men chosen randomly. The sample size was 100. The Participants were divided into two groups- Group A comprised of 50 female participants and Group B comprised of 50 male participants. All participants were within age range of 30 – 35, Bengali speaking and from middle socio-economic status. The participants were Honours graduates. They were married for more than 2 years but less than 5 years. All of them are having a child.

Test/Tools for data collection:

BECK depression Inventory(BDI): BDI⁷ is a self report inventory with multiple choices that was developed measuring depression. It consists of 21 questions, using a four point scale ranging which ranges From 0 (symptom not present) to 3 (symptom very intense) test can be administered to subject above 13 years of age. Each inventory corresponds to a specific category of depressive symptom according to DSM-IV. These are sadness, self dislike, self criticalness, suicidal thought or wishes, crime, agitation, loss of interest, worthlessness, loss of energy, changes in sleep pattern, irritability, changes in appetite, concentration difficulty, tiredness and fatigues and loss of interest in

sex. Test-retest reliability of $r = 0.93$. BDI test has been tested for content, concurrent and validity. Marital Adjustment Questionnaire⁸: The marital adjustment questionnaire has been developed to provide a handy tool to identifying couples who are making poor marriage and need psycho diagnostic help. Further, the questionnaire is developed in a way to provide a more meaningful single composite marital adjustment score for the couple unlike other available scale which give separate marital adjustment score for the two. The Marital Adjustment Questionnaire (MAQ) in its final form consists of 25 highly discriminating 'Yes-No' type items.

The split- half reliability, correlating odd-even items, applying the Spearman-Brown formula for doubling the test length, was found to be .49 (N =60) with an index of reliability of .70. The test - retest reliability was also studied. It was found to be .71 (N=60) with an index of reliability of .84. The retest was given with a time interval of 3 weeks.

Statistical analysis techniques : 1) Descriptive statistics- Mean & SD and 2) Inferential Statistics- 't' test were used to calculate the results of the present venture.

Result and Discussion:-

The objective of present study was measure the level of marital adjustment and depression among married women and married men.

Table 1: Mean and SD of Marital Adjustment and Depression

Variables	Groups	Mean	SD
Marital Adjustment	Group 1 (female)	11.64	5.64
	Group 2 (Male)	13.98	5.19
Depression	Group 1 (Female)	15.72	5.86
	Group 2 (Male)	10.19	3.94

From Table 1, it can be seen that the mean score of Marital Adjustment for females and males are 11.64 and 13.98 respectively, with the SD of 5.64 and 5.19 respectively. In case of Depression, the Mean for females is 15.72 with and SD of 5.86, on the other hand for males the Mean and SD is 10.19 and 3.94 respectively.

Table 2: Mean difference between females and males in Marital Adjustment

VARIABLE	GROUP	MEAN	SD	t VALUE	SIGNIFICANCE LEVEL
Marital Adjustment	GROUP 1	11.64	5.64	2.16	.04
	GROUP 2	13.98	5.19		

From the above Table 2, it is clear that married males were having better marital adjustment with mean 13.98 as compared to married females with mean of 11.64. from the t value of 2.16, it is evident that females and males differ in their level of Marital Adjustment at 0.04 level of significance. It might be because at this age (30-35) married females experience enough negative event like verbal and physical aggression, criticism, guilt etc got added up that in turns result in reduced marital adjustment. Women attend more to how family members and husband play their roles at home and how they solve problems that arise and what the quality of communication between family members is. Ultimately, these factors affect their health and marital adjustment. So from the result it is clear that married females have lower adjustment level than married males. From the above result (table 2) this finding is consistent with past research, which suggests that, men tend to have higher score than women on measure of marital adjustment². Women appear to see marriage differently than men. There are two independent perspective of marital satisfaction, the husband's and wives. A meta-analysis of marital satisfaction compiled over thirty-four studies indicated that men were more satisfied in marriage than women were although the magnitude of his differences was not great³.

Table 3: Mean difference between females and males in Depression

VARIABLE	GROUP	MEAN	SD	t VALUE	SIGNIFICANCE LEVEL
Depression	GROUP 1	15.72	5.86	5.26	.000
	GROUP 2	10.19	3.94		

From the above Table 3, it is clear that married males have lower depression level with mean 10.19 as compared to married females with mean of 15.72. The t value of 5.26 signifies that females and males differ in their level of depression at 0.00 level of significance. It means that married females were having more depression than the married males. It might be because of the negative event which affects the marital adjustment of females, and for low marital adjustment level of females, contribute to the cause of higher level of depression among females. Overall, it appears that disruption in the marital adjustment may lead to weak quality of life, and it may lead depression, especially for women. Especially in our society, women are dependent on their families and husband, the stability within the relationship affects their mental health greatly. Women who solve marital

problems well, have good relation with other family members, and have good adjustment with husbands, have a better mental health, if they don't than it may lead depression. From the above result (table 3) this finding is consistent with past research, which suggests that Depression is the leading cause of disease-related disability among in the world today. Depression is much more common among women than men, with female/male risk ratios roughly 2:1⁹

CONCLUSION: The above results and discussion of this study indicates that men have better marital adjustment while women tend to be more depressed.

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