

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MARITAL SATISFACTION ACROSS DIFFERENT CULTURAL CONTEXTS

Dr. Priety Agrawal

Dr. Anita Kumar

ABSTRACT

The manner in which marital happiness appears and the elements that affect it may vary greatly depending on the cultural context in which it is experienced, despite the fact that it is an important indicator of both individual and societal well-being. The goal of this study is to examine the degrees of marital pleasure that have been experienced in various cultural contexts in order to provide light on the ways that gender roles, cultural values, and conventions affect married relationships. Data was collected from married people of various faiths, reflecting both collectivist and individualist cultures, using both quantitative and qualitative study approaches. The results show that the importance of elements like family involvement, cultural expectations, and financial stability differs greatly from culture to culture, even though all cultures place a high priority on emotional closeness and efficient communication. In contrast to collectivist cultures, which put more significance on family unity and the execution of customary duties, individualist civilisations tend to place more weight on individual accomplishment and equal relationships. The study's conclusions emphasise the need of using culturally aware tactics while resolving marital problems and creating relationship solutions.

Keywords: marital satisfaction, problem solving behavior, cross-cultural differences.

INTRODUCTION

All cultures usually respect and value marriage as a social institution and recognise the importance of strong marriages to the survival of a family. Even though the vast majority of individuals want to be in a committed relationship of some kind, whether or not that relationship ends in marriage, the number of divorces is increasing. This suggests that a sizable portion of the population want to be in a fulfilling and long-lasting marriage. One major reason to be concerned is that people who are not married or in a committed relationship are more likely to have psychological and emotional issues. It would seem that marital status alone has less of an impact on mental and physical health than the quality of the marriage.

Personality Traits

Among the qualities of personality that have been studied the most are the "Big 5" According to the findings of study, neuroticism is the personality characteristic that has the most negative impact on the quality of individuals' relationships. In India, researchers discovered a weakly positive association between agreeableness, conscientiousness, and extraversion with the quality of relationships one has with other people.

Attachment styles.

vulnerability to specific conditions, such as a problematic childhood or a family history of divorce, in a person who is susceptible to such elements. Due to the significant cultural differences in the chance of being able to leave an unhappy marriage, we followed the methodology of earlier study that used attachment types rather than marital satisfaction ratings. There are four main attachment styles, and each one reflects a unique perspective on how an individual views themselves and their love relationships. There are two expressions of attachment insecurity that are caused by various attachment patterns. These manifestations include aversion to proximity and anxiety about being alone (or about being hated by one's partner).

Stressful events

A stressful environment may put a strain on a marriage, even in the best of marriages. However, this is not always the case. Whether it be with regard to one's health, money, children, or the stress of one's work, relationships are placed under pressure. The enjoyment of relationships, as opposed to the durability of relationships, is often more influenced by such circumstances.

Problem-solving behavior

Rather than the simple presence of tensions, the management of those stresses is what counts the most, according to research that was conducted in both single-country and cross-cultural settings. As part of their investigation, researchers have considered both positive and negative methods to issue solving. Surprisingly, angry verbal conduct and physical aggression, including hitting or throwing items, have a detrimental influence on the happiness of a married couple.

Even while there is a possibility that certain variables could lose their relevance due to conceptual or statistical overlap, stressful events, and adaptive mechanisms would all play a part in determining the level of pleasure that individual experiences in their marriage.

Cross-cultural perspective

The vast majority of research projects that have investigated the dynamics of romantic relationships have relied on data acquired from locations that account for less than twenty percent of the total population of the world. These regions include North America, Europe, and Australia. On the other hand, there is a significant deficiency in investigations conducted in South America, Africa, and Asia. There is a substantial body of research suggesting that partner relationships differ from culture to culture. The social acceptability of sexual encounters before to marriage, the frequency of marriages, the social roles that are ascribed to spouses, the economic viability of unmarried women, and the ease with which couples get to know each other are all elements that come into play.

The empirical question of whether or whether the elements that determine marital quality are consistent in developing faiths and more mature Western religions is one that has not yet been addressed. In Western cultures, the concept of elective marriages and the romantic ideals of love and passionate feelings are held in the highest regard. However, in religions where people's living standards are lower, partners are chosen based on factors such as status or similarity, and economic and instrumental goals are more likely to influence partner choice.

In this investigation, we will make use of the Emancipation Index, which was established by Ebbeler et al. (2017), in order to investigate the correlations between marital satisfaction and the three types of components that make up the VSA Model. We are going to check out how these linkages differ from culture to culture. A number of cultural characteristics, including the Human Development Index (HDI), the Gender Inequality Index (GII), Individualism (IDV), and the Power Distance Index (PDI), were taken into consideration as potential moderators of these potential connections. According to the results of previous research, it has been hypothesised that the cultural dimensions HDI, GII, IDV, and PDI have a moderating impact on the overall phenomenon. It should not come as a surprise that this is the case given the great degree of connection that exists between these parameters.

It was possible for Ebbeler et al. (2017) to circumvent the problems associated with multicollinearity by integrating the four cultural difference indicators into a single component that they referred to as "Emancipation." The sociological theory of emancipation states that a society is considered to have achieved emancipation when "previously marginalised individuals and groups are free to fully participate across all spheres of society; one in which freedom rather than dominance is evident in social and institutional practices."

Cultural variations may be explained by a number of factors, one of which is the standard of life. Due to the fact that marriage is considered to be a method of ensuring the survival of one's family, it becomes less viable to marry for the only purpose of romantic reasons as one's economic condition grows more perilous. Previous study has studied whether or not the VSA Model may be generalised to people within a single country who are exposed to a variety of sociodemographic hazards. When Maisel and Karney (2022) compared couples with low incomes to those with high incomes, they found that the former had more significant negative associations between stress and marital satisfaction. According to Karney and Bradbury (2023), couples with low incomes have less possibilities to change their living conditions, which makes it more difficult for them to adjust their communication skills to be constructive. solutions for conflict resolution that are passive are more adaptive for couples that have fewer resources and options compared to active solutions.

OBJECTIVES

1. The purpose of this research is to investigate marital satisfaction in various cultural situations.
2. Research on how people use problem-solving techniques to cope with stressful situations.

RESEARCH METHOD

Participants

across two thousand married couples from all across India's metropolitan areas took part in the study that is now being conducted. All of these individuals came from different walks of life, and they represented a diverse range of racial, religious, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. The participants were selected from major urban areas in India, including Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Kolkata, and Mumbai, to ensure that they were representative of the North, South, East, and West regions of the country alike. There was a

wide variety of socioeconomic backgrounds and religious persuasions represented among the participants, including Punjabi, Muslim, Christian, and Sikh individuals, among others.

Table 1 provides a summary of the demographic factors that were taken into consideration over the course of this inquiry. Importantly, in the majority of cases, the men who were married to their wives were often a little bit older than their wives. In many cases, the couple had been married for more than 11 years and had a large number of children. There was a wide variety of ages throughout the participants, from twenty-five to fifty-five. The participants in the research were restricted to married couples who had been living together for a period of at least five years.

Measures and Procedure

All of the couples who participated in the study were given the Marriage and Relationships Questionnaire (MARQ) in order to determine the level of contentment that exists within their marriages. The Marriage and Relationship Quality Questionnaire (MARQ) is an instrument that has been thoroughly validated and is based on empirical research. However, some of the aspects that are examined by the MARQ include emotional closeness, communication, conflict resolution, financial management, and relationship satisfaction.

During the process of translating the questionnaire into the most important Indian languages (Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Bengali, and Marathi), we used the back-translation method to ensure that the linguistic and conceptual accuracy of the translation was maintained. In order to guarantee that it was understandable and relevant to the culture, pilot testing was carried out prior to the complete launch.

Couples were invited to fill out the questionnaire independently while a researcher or facilitator was present to help them. This was done to ensure that the results were as free of bias as possible and to ensure that confidentiality was maintained. In accordance with the criteria for conducting research that adhere to ethical standards, each participant provided their informed consent while ensuring that their responses remained anonymous.

While conducting the analysis of the data, we compared the latent means and searched for connections between the various demographic and cultural parameters. The latent means and correlations for the variables that were evaluated in the context of India are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Marital Satisfaction and Demographic Variable Correlation Matrix for an Indian Sample (N = 2,000+)

Latent Measure	M	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
Husband's Love	4.370	—	0.052	0.612*	0.021	0.004	-0.085*
Husband's Age	42.214	0.052	—	-0.015	0.898*	0.780*	0.509*
Wife's Love	4.401	0.612*	-0.015	—	-0.020	-0.035	-0.126*
Wife's Age	39.911	0.021	0.898*	-0.020	—	0.865*	0.510*
Duration of	11.080	0.004	0.780*	-0.035	0.865*	—	0.435*

Marriage							
Number of Children	1.953	-0.085*	0.509*	-0.126*	0.510*	0.435*	—

Despite the fact that the MARQ is made up of twelve legally specified scales, we have decided to use Cultural Values as our final measure since it is a good indicator of how happy couples are with each other. The objective of the evaluation of cultural values is to document the extent to which the responder feels about the item in question, as well as the ways in which their family and community have influenced their perspective on the item. For the purpose of determining marital satisfaction, the cultural values test employs a total of nine questions, each of which is rated on a five-point scale (for example, "How strongly do you feel emotionally attached to your spouse?").

The findings of previous studies have shown that cultural ideas on emotional connection are very consistent within themselves and demonstrate a large degree of measurement invariance for both spouses regardless of the religious background they come from. In this study, the Cultural Values measure reveals a high degree of cross-cultural validity by relying on the collective emotional tendencies that have an effect on the pleasure that is experienced in marriage.

The Indian group also exhibited strong connections between marital happiness and the Cultural Values score. These relationships were found to be significant. The significant correlation between Husband's Love and Wife's Love ($r = 0.612$; $p < 0.05^*$) exhibits that cultural norms of emotional connection and reciprocal happiness serve as key indicators of relationship quality. This is shown by the fact that the relationship between Husband's Love and Wife's Love is significant. In addition to highlighting the necessity of emotional connection and mutual satisfaction in marriage relationships, the data also indicate that cultural norms in India have a substantial influence on the dynamics of marriage. In line with the findings of previous research conducted across a wide range of faiths, we have arrived at the conclusion that Cultural Values is a powerful indication of basic marital pleasure. The fact that the scale has high levels of both internal consistency and cross-cultural validity lends support to the notion that it is able to capture the underlying emotional components of marital pleasure, even when it is applied to the culturally diverse context of India.

Data Analysis

In this study, we used Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to investigate the influence that the ages of the couples, the duration of their marriage, and the number of children had on Cultural Values (see Figure 1). Although age and duration of marriage were treated as manifest-level variables with one item each, cultural values were represented as latent-level variables. Both of these variables were modelled as having one item. This strategy of using mixed models was used. Every single cultural group has its own one-of-a-kind structure, which was simulated simultaneously, and the covariance matrix was investigated inside each and every instance. In order to establish the measurement scale, the indicator loadings of the single-item manifest variables as well as the disturbance term of the Cultural Values latent variable were used.

In light of the fact that data for husband-and-wife couples are not independent, we included residual terms for equal indicators of cultural values that were related with within-culture. It was also shown that there was a nondirectional structural link between the latent-level Cultural Values scores of men and wives, and this association was seen for all of the structural models.

The structures were subjected to a battery of invariance tests in order to determine whether or not they were comparable or dissimilar across cultures and partners. We focused on assessing structural invariance, which indicates that the connections between Cultural Values and the predictor variables were equal (a) between same-gender spouses across various cultures (cultural equivalence) and (b) between spouses within the same culture (spousal equivalency). This was the primary emphasis of our research.

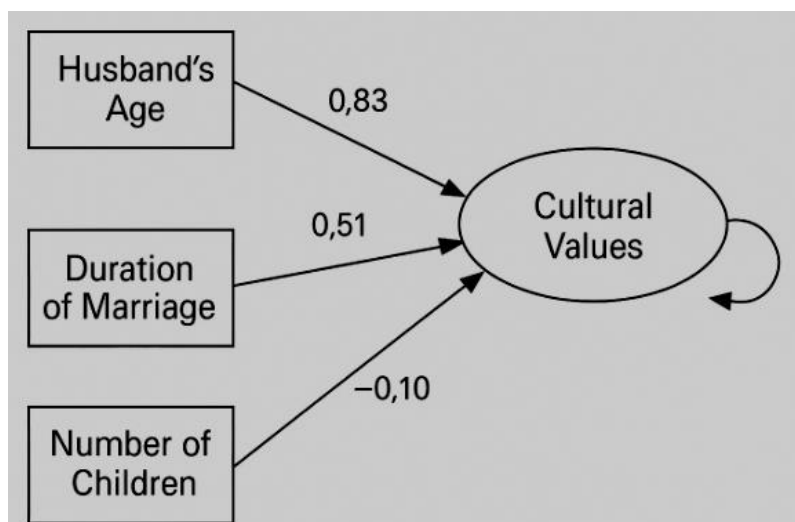


Figure 1. Structural equation model assessing couples' ages, marital length, number of children, and cultural values.

when we began comparing models, we all began with the same model, which was entirely constrained. Within the framework of this model, we imposed marital and cultural equivalence restrictions to each individual predictor. For instance, we regarded the impact of having children as being equivalent for husbands and wives as well as for various cultural groups. Creating a fundamental model that did not have any equivalence constraints was the next stage in the process. Next, in order to evaluate the local fit of individual predictors, we compared the unconstrained model to partial invariance models that placed cultural equivalency constraints on each predictor variable individually, or exclusively spousal restrictions. This was done in order to get a better understanding of the relationship between the variables.

A number of metrics that are often used, including the non-normed matched Index (NNFI), the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), were utilised in order to assess the degree to which the structural models adequately matched the data. NNFI and CFI threshold values of 0.90 or above were considered to be acceptable, while RMSEA values of less than 0.08 were considered to be indicators of a model that was well-fitting. Taking into consideration the ongoing debates that surround tight cut-off values, we additionally used comparative fit approaches in order to evaluate the influence that invariance limits have on the correctness of the model. After doing chi-square difference tests, we were able to determine whether the incorporation of invariance restrictions significantly improved or significantly reduced the model's fit.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The data shown in the table reveals that there was a slight but statistically significant inverse relationship between the number of children and the cultural values evaluations of the husband and wife. This is

something that we can observe by looking at the data. There was also a significant association between the number of children and other demographic parameters, such as the duration of marriage, the age of the husband and wife, and the age of the mother. In addition, the number of children was a significant factor in the overall results. There was a connection between these factors and cultural values. Despite the fact that they provide a general picture of the linkages, these correlations are not able to effectively differentiate between the many impacts that are caused by each demographic feature. To begin, we established a shared model with regression coefficients that were restricted to represent cultural and marital equality. This was done in order to get a more comprehensive understanding of the manner in which each of these demographic parameters influenced cultural values. In the last column of Table 2, you will get the regression coefficients that have been properly standardised for this example model.

We, on the other hand, developed an unconstrained model that did not take into consideration cultural equivalency or spousal limitations. As a result, all of the regression coefficients are potentially subject to change without any limits. Within the first three columns of Table 2, the standardised coefficients of the model are shown. The effects of certain criteria, such as the number of children, were rather similar between groups; however, the effects of other parameters, such as the age of the spouse, varied much more than the others. The unconstrained model fit substantially better, according to the results of a chi-square difference test, which suggests that there is heterogeneity in the effects of at least one predictor variable. This is the case even though the global fit indices were consistent with the conventional model.

In order to determine the factors that led to this phenomenon of heterogeneity, we conducted a number of model comparisons, alternating between marital and cultural invariance restrictions. The unconstrained model was compared to the restricted model in order to determine whether or not the fit got significantly poorer after the constraints were implemented. The fact that this is the case implies that in some parts of India, women's stated cultural values were more strongly influenced by their older husbands' commitment to traditional cultural norms, which may be detrimental in certain situations. In contemporary Indian weddings, this shows how gender roles, shifting cultural norms, and chronological age all interact with one another.

The relevance of doing research on the influence of cultural elements, both common and distinctive, on the dynamics of marriage in India is established by the findings presented here. It would seem that some factors, such as the total number of children, have a consistent influence on the values and expectations that are associated with marriage, while other factors, such as the age of the spouse, tend to have consequences that are culturally dependant.

Table 2. Standardised Path Coefficients Forecasting Spouses' Cultural Values from Demographics

Parameter	Punjabi (N = 410)	Tamil (N = 1,163)	Marathi (N = 427)	Common Model
Predicting husband's cultural values from:				
Husband's age	.190	.238*	-.120	.140*
Wife's age	.061	-.011	.020	.007

Duration of marriage	-.096	-.203*	.043	-.176*
Number of children	-.127*	-.115*	-.115*	-.121*
Predicting wife's cultural values from:				
Husband's age	.062	.143*	-.417*	.140*
Wife's age	.112	-.012	.209	.007
Duration of marriage	-.092	-.228*	-.077	-.176*
Number of children	-.127*	-.157*	.010	-.121*
Proportion of variance explained:				
Husband's cultural values	.024	.046	.018	.018
Wife's cultural values	.022	.064	.064	.018

The results of our study supported the findings of earlier research as well as our own assumptions, demonstrating that the number of children had a substantial impact on the cultural values held by couples of all three ethnic groups investigated. The statistical analysis revealed that this influence was there, and it was about equivalent for couples of Tamil and Punjabi descent. On the other hand, the Marathi group discovered that the influence on wives was insignificant and rather little, while the effect on husbands was of a comparable magnitude, although there was no statistical significance. It is possible that Marathi culture has a more collectivistic orientation, with a greater emphasis on marital reliance and close links to extended family. This might be the reason for this decreased effect, which is in line with our projections. Among Marathi couples, this tendency was more evident because of well set gender norms that associate women to housekeeping and childcare. These attitudes have been there for a long time to this day.

A number of studies have shown that the duration of a marriage, together with the number of children, has a typically negative impact on the cultural values of the spouses. This finding is consistent with prior findings in the literature. The findings indicated that this influence was most prevalent among Tamil couples, which may suggest that this ethnic group has its own unique dynamics in relationships that need more investigation.

The magnitude of the influence that the age of a woman has on cultural values was shown to be negligible across all three cultures. There was practically no correlation between the age of the women and the fact that both husbands and wives supported cultural values. The findings of this study come as a bit of a surprise, particularly when one considers the fact that research in the field of evolutionary psychology has shown that males have a tendency to choose younger partners. On the surface, it would seem that such tendencies do

not necessarily translate into disparities in the maintenance of cultural standards within long-term marriages; nevertheless, the dynamics of marriage are more complex than basic attraction.

Regardless of the other demographic factors that were taken into consideration, it was shown that cultural values had a positive correlation with the age of the spouses, particularly among Tamil couples. This was particularly true for elderly men and women, who often had greater cultural values than younger men and wives respectively. Marathi women, on the other hand, saw a significant fall in cultural values as their husbands approached old age, which was the opposite of the trend seen in the other group. It is possible that this is connected to the shifting power dynamics and gender norms that are seen in nations that are engaged in the process of modernisation. As the traditional patriarchal patterns in Marathi society undergo a transformation, it is probable that younger Marathi males would adopt more egalitarian attitudes. These beliefs have been positively connected to greater cultural values in marriages. The adoption of shared responsibilities, the promotion of marital liberty, and the emphasis on trust are all included in this. This transformation is a reflection of the fact that younger generations in other parts of the area, such as Maharashtra and Southern India, are called into questioning the conventional marital structures that have been in place for decades. The question that we presented earlier was: What are some of the reasons why partners' cultural ideas could be less freely stated or aligned if they have children? When seen through the perspective of evolution, this continues to be a cause for consternation.

A new sort of connection between couples may be created via parenting, even if the cultural values that are shared by spouses become less prevalent. It is thus possible for couples to find new sources of strength and purpose in the joint commitment they have to their children, even in situations where cultural standards seem to be eroding, especially in sectors that are more individualistic. Therefore, rather than being static expressions of mood or ideology, marital cultural norms may vary over time in reaction to evolving family dynamics and the relative prominence of various generations.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings shed light on the fact that cultural factors play a role in the manner in which human vulnerabilities, life pressures, and adaptive processes influence the pleasure that is experienced in marriage. In Indian civilisations that are more egalitarian and urbanised, such as those of the Bengali and Tamil peoples, the pleasure of a married couple is often based on emotional intimacy, attachment security, and the ability to communicate effectively. The happiness of a married couple, on the other hand, is more strongly influenced by tangible life elements such as financial stability, social stability, and extended family relationships in more traditional and rural settings, such as among specific people who speak Marathi.

It is important to take into consideration cultural variations while developing interventions with the goal of enhancing marriages. Attachment- or communication-focused therapy therapies may not be as successful in environments where couples are more influenced by structural or environmental limits. This is in contrast to the effectiveness of these treatments in cultures that are more progressive or individualistic. As a result, it is very necessary for therapy that is culturally competent to take into consideration the distinct socioeconomic realities, beliefs, and expectations of each and every community.

The incorporation of cultural knowledge into intervention strategies and assessment techniques is of the highest significance. It is of the utmost need to widen the scope of anamnesis so that it includes living conditions, family duties, and societal expectations in countries that are less industrialised or traditionally arranged. When all is said and done, in a society as culturally varied as India, recognising and valuing the diversity of cultures leads to a therapeutic practice that is more inclusive and fairer, while simultaneously boosting the effectiveness of marital treatments.

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