

Factors Predicting Marital Adjustment in Omani Society

Manal Khasib Al Fazari^{1*} and Sabri Mahmoud Abdelfattah Amir²

¹Department of Psychology, College of Education, Sultan Qaboos University, Al Khoudh, Muscat 123, Oman

²Menia University, Main Road - Shalaby Land - Menia, Minya, 11432, Egypt

Abstract

Background/Purpose: The aim of this research was to examine marital adjustment in Omani society. It also aims to investigate the factors that might predict marital adjustment.

Method: To measure marital adjustment, a specific questionnaire was designed for the purpose of this study. The sample included 255 couples who came from different regions in Oman. This sample consisted of 171 husbands and 83 wives. The survey validity was assessed using face validity. Reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient and test-retest methods. The value of Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .93, and the value for test-retest was .56. Social desirability of the respondents was also examined using social desirability scale.

Results: This study revealed that level of marital adjustment among couples was high. Gender, age, number of children, and divorce were the main predictors of marital adjustment among the study sample.

Conclusion: This study has significant implications for marital counselors.

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Introduction

Marriage is considered in Islam as a legal relationship between a husband and wife [1]. The choice of marital partner is a significant decision one can make in lifetime and it is considered as a personal achievement [2]. Marriage involves emotional attraction, love, happiness and a creation of a family [2]. Allah says in Holy Qura'an "That He created for you wives from among yourselves to repose in them and put between you affection and mercy in this are Signs for those who reflect" (Qur'an 30:21).

A successful marital relationship entails some level of marital adjustment. Marital adjustment usually leads to life satisfaction and happiness [3]. This concept has been defined in the literature as feeling of satisfaction, pleasure and happiness in one's marital life [2]. Another definition of marital adjustment includes "the process of modifying, adopting or altering individual and couple's pattern of behavior and interaction to achieve maximum satisfaction in the relationship" [4].

Marital adjustment as an important construct is linked to desirable traits because it has been highlighted by other studies as an important psychological construct. For instance, marital adjustment had a positive relationship with life satisfaction [3]. Another study revealed that there was a significant relationship between self-esteem, coping strategies and marital adjustment [5].

Marital adjustment also had positive correlation with measures of general health and well-being [6]. Moreover, findings showed that the variables of emotional expression, communication flow, financial management and work involvement correlated positively with marital adjustment [7].

Several studies examined factors that predicted marital adjustment in different cultures. For instance, a study was conducted to examine factors that might predict marital adjustment among 137 spouses in Iran. Findings of multiple regression found that gender is a predictor factor that affect marital adjustment. Men were highly adjusted more than women [8].

Another study investigated the differences between men and women in their marital adjustment among 126 respondents in their

middle age. The results showed significant differences between men and women in their marital adjustment. Husbands were highly adjusted than wives. The author interpreted such results as wives shoulder a lot of responsibilities such as looking after children, doing household activities as well as engaging in social activities and commitments. This impacted negatively on women and their satisfaction [9].

In Ethiopia, a study examined marital adjustment of 210 couples. Findings showed that gender was a significant factor as husbands were more adjusted than wives. Results also revealed that age was a significant factor [10].

Another study tested factors that might predict marital adjustment among 309 couples in Nicosia using Marital Adjustment Scale. Results of multiple regression showed that age of the participants and having good relationship with the participants' family of origin were found to be predictive [11].

A study in USA investigated different factors that predicted marital adjustment among 93 couples who spent two years in their marriage. Results of this study found that during the first months of marriage, age had some impacts on marital adjustment [12].

Siblings are the number of children in the family. This factor is associated with marital adjustment, as having children make couple enjoy their lives and feel happy and relaxed. Researches have shown that childlessness had great effect on the marital adjustment. For instance, a study was carried out to examine marital adjustment among 30 childless women in India. This study found that childlessness had a great negative effect on the marital adjustment of the respondents [4].

***Corresponding Author:** Dr. Manal Khasib Al Fazari, Department of Psychology, College of Education, Sultan Qaboos University, Al Khoudh, Muscat 123, Oman; E-mail: manal@squ.edu.om

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Divorce is another significant factor that impacts on marital lives. It is identified by how many times couples think about ending their marital relationship. The problems that happen in marital lives might lead to divorce as couples feel unhappy and unadjusted, so they don't want to continue living with each other's. Research has shown that couples who seek divorce are those who do not feel adjusted in their marital lives [13].

Marital adjustment was examined in Jordan among working women in teaching, nursing and secretary sectors in lights of some variables. This study found that (29%) of the study sample have a high level of marital adjustment. [14].

A study was conducted to investigate the relationship between self-esteem, specific coping strategies and marital adjustment among 216 couples in Canada. This study confirmed that marital adjustment was related to self-esteem, and specific coping strategies in men and women. Results also found that high self-esteem and marital adjustment are associated with the use of problem solving strategies and less avoidance as a way of coping [5].

In Egypt, a study aimed to investigate the factors that predict marital adjustment among 110 married couples in Egypt using marital adjustment scale. Social position of the wife's job and getting married with one wife were the main predictors of marital adjustment. Moreover, this study revealed that age of siblings and their educational level were the main predictors of marital adjustment among wives [15].

In Oman, A study was conducted to examine the level of marital adjustment among 492 (152 husbands, 340 wives) workers in health and education sectors in light of some variables such as gender, age, education, partner's education, age at marriage, number of sons, residence, monthly income, how the partners met and kinship degree). A specific questionnaire was developed to measure the level of marital adjustment among the study sample. The study revealed that workers in health and education sectors achieve a high level of marital adjustment [16]. Although this study addressed marital adjustment in Oman, it was limited to the workers in health and education sectors.

Problem of the study

Given that the Omani society has gone through different changes due to the impact of oil, globalization and new technology, this negatively impacted family and relationships between people. For instance, busy life, increasing in responsibilities, decreasing quality of time couples spend with each other's, all might lead to feel not adjusted to each other's [13].

Other reasons that could lead to more problems between couple are related to working women as in many times, it is very hard for working women to manage between the house, children and work. This might create problems inside the family and impact negatively on couples' marital life. Moreover, couples have more responsibilities in regards to providing the necessities to their children as they will spend more time in doing so, this might impact negatively on their relationship with their children. This also might broaden the social relationship between a married couple and their children. Thus, this might impact negatively to their marital adjustment.

Moreover, researched have shown that specific factors might predict marital adjustment in specific culture, as such addressing such an

area would be beneficial to understand marital adjustment in Omani society. In this study, authors believe that some factors such as gender, age, siblings (number of children) and divorce are important factors that might predict marital adjustment in Oman.

Objective of the study

This study aims to:

Assess the level of marital adjustment among couples in Omani society.

Address if some factors such as gender, age, number of children and divorce would predict marital adjustment.

Significance of the study

Addressing marital adjustment among couples in Oman will help understand such a topic and provide good data for counselors to help them deal with couples who have problems in their marital relationship. Exploring this topic will also help add to the existing literature in marital adjustment as there is a dearth of data in such topic. Because of lack of specific measures that address marital adjustment in Oman, this study provides a significant tool that suits Omani society. This study is considered as the first of its kind to address social desirability and its relation to marital adjustment.

Marital adjustment and social desirability

In line with these social and cultural expectations, individuals learn that certain kinds of responses are more desirable and that other kinds are less desirable. The desirability of behaving within the confines set out by one's larger group (e.g., the tribe) is dependent on the strength of societal pressures with which one is confronted through marriage experiences. A possible effect of these societal pressures is that one will tend to omit the undesirable responses or check the more favorable responses on a self-reported measure. Given this notion, it is not clear whether couples' responses to the marital adjustment items are free of social desirability and as such these responses reflect couples' true levels of marital adjustment, or whether these responses are affected by the couples' tendency to respond in a socially desirable manner and as such these responses are an artifact methodology of social desirability bias.

Operational definition

Marital adjustment

It is defined in this study as a construct that includes feelings of pleasure, relaxed, happiness and harmony in marital life.

The operational definition of marital adjustment is measured in this study using a specific questionnaire that is designed for the purpose of this research based on studies by.

Methodology

Sample

A total of 255 couples participated in this study. Some missing data was reported. This sample consisted of 171 husbands and 83 wives between the age of 24 and 54 year, who came from different regions in Oman such as Albatinah South, Albatinah North, Muscat, Musandam, Al Sharqia, Al Dakilieh, Dhofar and Alburimi. Of those, 187 couples held graduate degrees and above. About 124 got married from the same tribes, whereas 123 got married from different tribes.

About 204 of the couples lived in private houses, whereas, 43 of them lived with their family's houses. The majority of the participants (238) worked in public sectors. Number of siblings of the participants was from one child to eleven children. Duration of marriage was between 1 and 37 year of marriage.

Measures

Marital adjustment scale

For the purpose of this research, a specific questionnaire was designed to measure the level of marital adjustment in this research based on literature on marital adjustment and the scales that were developed on the same topic. The scale has no dimensions. The scale includes 22 items and the response scales range from 4 (completely apply to me) to 0 (not applicable). Examples of the items are: 'we trust each other', 'we have a happy life together', 'we believe that understanding is fundamental in marital life', 'we are doing our bests to make our lives beautiful', 'we plan together for our children's future'.

The demographic data that was collected at the beginning of the testing session included gender, age, type of residency (Independent, with family), type of marriage (from the same tribes, different tribes), number of children, duration of marriage, name of the region, educational level, and name of the job.

To check the validity of the scale, content validity was used as it was given to experts in department of psychology to check its accuracy. The judges all agreed that this scale is valid for measuring marital adjustment and their feedback and comments were added to the scale.

For the reliability of the scale, two methods were used, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient and test-retest. The Cronbach's alpha value for the total score was .93., and the value for test-retest was .56. These results indicate a good reliability of the scale.

Social desirability scale

The issue of response bias in this research will be assessed using The Marlowe-Crowne social desirability scale, short form [M-C (12)] developed by Strahan and Gerbasi [17]. This scale requires participants to indicate whether a particular statement is true or false for them [17].

The M-C (12) was translated from English to Arabic and adopted for Omani population [18]. Examples of items are: 'I am always willing to admit it when I make a mistake', 'I never resent being asked to return a favor'. The Cronbach's alpha value for the full scale was .64 [18]. For the current study, the Cronbach's alpha of the scale was .30.

Social desirability of participants' responses were examined between the social desirability scale and marital adjustment scale with Pearson's product moment coefficient of correlations ($r = -.053$). No significant correlations were found. This means that the responses of the couples reflected the true levels of marital adjustment and they were free respond in a socially desirable way.

Results

The survey' data was analyzed using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Data was screened to check for any missing or extreme values. Two statistical procedures were used for the data analysis: descriptive and inferential.

The current study examined marital adjustment among married couples and the factors that might predict marital adjustment. To assess the level of marital adjustment among the sample, the normal distribution of the study sample was first approved as the data showed that mean and median are nearly equal (Mean=3.53, Median=3.59, SD= .409, Sekwness= -1.71). Figure 1 shows this distribution.

Conclusion

Phytosterols, including β -sitosterol, are recognized for their role in human nutrition and for their anticancer potential. Development of modern instrumental analytical methods brought new options in investigating fate and mechanisms of activity of β -sitosterol in human organisms. It is now clear that β -sitosterol affects many metabolic systems in the body. However, despite its clearly beneficial role as an anticancer agent, two main factors are in the way of the use of β -sitosterol in cancer therapy: 1) Its relatively low activity; and 2) similarity to cholesterol with its presence in daily diet. The ability of β -sitosterol to affect the cholesterol-related processes possibly overlaps with its anti-cancer actions. Additional elucidations of the role of β -sitosterol in human organism may contribute towards its recognition as a beneficial substance or agent that benefits some specific patients' groups, such as breast or colon cancer patients at least in the form of a diet supplement.

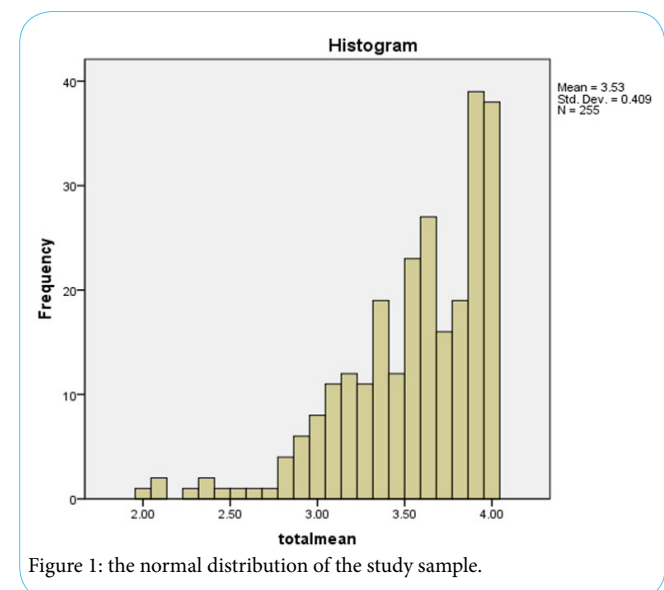


Figure 1: the normal distribution of the study sample.

As such, we relied on the following criteria (Table 1) as a criterion based on a scale of (1 to 4):

Range	Criteria
1 to 2	Low level of marital adjustment
2 to 3	Medium level of marital adjustment
3 to 4	High level of marital adjustment

Table 1: criteria of marital adjustment.

Result of this study showed that majority of the study sample had a high level of marital adjustment as (Mean=3.52, SD=.409).

Correlation and multiple regressions were conducted to examine the relationship between marital adjustment and different predicted variables. Table 2 summarizes the results of the correlation between significant factors and marital adjustment.

		Gender	Age	Number of children	Divorce
Marital Adjustment	Pearson Correlation	-.210	-.038	.161	-.304

Table 2: Correlations between significant factors and marital adjustment.

As it shows in (Table 2), gender, age, number of children and divorce were significantly correlated with marital adjustment. Gender and age were significantly and negatively correlated with marital adjustment. Number of children was significantly and positively correlated with marital adjustment. There was also a significant negative relationship between divorce and marital adjustment.

The multiple regression model for all four predictors was statistically significant, $R^2 = .185$, $F(12, 241) = 4.553$, $p < .001$. As it can be seen from (Table 3) that gender, age, number of children, divorce were the significant predictors of marital adjustment (an outcome) among the study sample. Gender was a significant predictor of marital adjustment, $\beta = -.190$, $p < .001$. Men (Mean=3.59, SD=.369), were more adjusted than women (Mean=3.41, SD=.460).

Other factor that predicted marital adjustment included age as it had also a significant negative regression, $\beta = -.269$, $t (-3.388)$, $p < .001$, indicating that younger couples were more adjusted than older ones. Other high correlated coefficients included number of children as it had a significant positive regression weight, $\beta = .181$, $t (2.253)$, $p < .001$, indicating that couples with many children were more adjusted than those with fewer ones. Divorce had a significant negative regression, $\beta = -.271$, $p < .001$ indicating that the fewer times couples thought about divorce, the higher level of marital adjustment was found.

Discussions

Majority of the couples had a high level of marital adjustment. This means that those couples feel satisfied about their marital life as it is an indication that they have a good relationship and they are well adjusted with each other. This could be also an indication that they know how to deal with each other and share their responsibilities and obligations. They can understand each other and exchange advice and information about different ideas and information about their marital life. This result is consistent with findings of other studies [15].

Gender was significantly and negatively correlated with marital adjustment. Age was a significantly and negatively correlated with marital adjustment, as the age of the couple increased, level of marital

adjustment decreased, indicating that younger couple were more adjusted than older ones. Number of children was significantly and positively correlated with marital adjustment. This means that as the number of children of the couples increased, the level of marital adjustment increased, indicating that those with many children were more adjusted than those with fewer ones. There was a significant negative relationship between divorce and marital adjustment, indicating that the fewer times couples thought about divorce, the higher level of marital adjustment was found.

Gender, age, number of children and divorce were the significant predictors of marital adjustment. Gender was a significant predictor of marital adjustment. Men were more adjusted than women. This finding could be interpreted as husbands shoulder fewer responsibilities than wives. They are most likely to feel less pressure than wives as they have to do housework, look after children and sometimes go to work. All of these responsibilities negatively impacted wives and their adjustment. This result is consistent with findings of other studies who found that gender predicted marital adjustment and that men were more adjusted than women [8-10].

Age was another predicted factor of marital adjustment. This means that the younger the couples are, the more they are adjusted. Younger couples were more adjusted than older ones. This could be because when couples are young, they are more likely to enjoy their marital lives as having less responsibilities and life demands. As such, this positively impacted on couples and their marital life. This result is consistent with findings of a study who found that age was a significant predictor of marital adjustment [10].

Another predicted factor of marital adjustment including number of children. Couples with many children tend to feel more adjusted in their marital life than those with fewer children. This is because having children make couples enjoy their time with their children and they feel more settled in their lives.

Divorce predicted marital adjustment as the fewer or no times couples think about divorce, more adjusted they feel in their marital lives. Thinking about divorce means that couples are not satisfied with their marital life and it is an indication that many problems and difficulties encounter their life which negatively impacted the couples and their lives.

Conclusions

The results of this study have different implication for marital counselors. Counselors should consider the factors that predict marital adjustment such as gender, age, number of children and divorce.

		Coefficients ^a					
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	Beta	t	Sig.	F
		B	Std. Error				
1	(Constant)	4.548	.325		14.009	.000	4.553
	gender	-.166	.060	-.190	-2.787	.006	
	age	-.016	.005	-.269	-3.388	.001	
	Number of children	.031	.014	.181	2.253	.025	
	Divorce	-.076	.017	-.271	-4.561	.000	

Table 3: regression.

Those factors might help counselors understand marital adjustment in Oman. So, they become aware of how to deal with couples in the counselling sessions. Future research is needed to investigate other factors that may be related to marital adjustment in Oman.

Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Author Contributions

Dr. Manal Al Fazari:

Searching for literature
Analyzing and interpreting the data
Drafting and writing up the manuscript (All sections), except for: marital adjustment and social desirability section was written by Dr. Sabri)

Dr. Manal Al Fazari and Dr. Sabri Abdelfattah:

Preparing the design and collecting data

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