

The Relationship between Marital Satisfaction and Marital Stability among Married Individuals in Nifas Silk Lafto Sub-City of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Research Article

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Abstract

Marital satisfaction and stability are important aspects of family life that shapes people's health and well-being. The objective of this study was to measure the relationship between marital satisfaction and stability among married individuals in Nifas Silk Lafto Sub-City, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The target population for this study was all heterosexual married individuals, legally bound by the state of marriage as husband and wife. For this study, a systematic sampling technique along with a simple random sampling technique was employed to select 326 households. Frequency and percentage, means, standard deviation, and Pearson correlation were all used to compute sample statistic. The results showed that marital satisfaction and stability were significantly and positively correlated among married individuals, $r = .68, a < .001$. Females' marital satisfaction and stability were strongly and significantly correlated $p = .74, a < .001$. Marital satisfaction and stability were also strongly and positively associated among males, $p = .59, a < .001$. In conclusion, the findings have significant implications in the enhancement of marital satisfaction and stability of married individuals, prevention of spouses' conflict and divorce in the study sub-city of Addis Ababa.

Keywords: Marital Satisfaction; Marital Stability; Married Individuals; Pearson Correlation.

Introduction

Marital satisfaction and stability are important aspects of family life that shapes people's health and well-being. Stable and pleasant marital relationships are required not only for the health of the spouses but also for children and thus, for the society in the broader sense. But unstable and stressful marital relationship leads to increased emotional disturbances and marital dissolution. Marital satisfaction within the research literature refers to how happy or satisfied a person is in his or her relationship; it is a subjective experience and opinion. People are usually satisfied when their needs are being met, and when people's expectations and desires are being satisfied. On the other hand, marital stability is referred to the commitment within a marriage relationship that is evidenced by the ability of the marriage to sustain through time. Stable marriages are solid in that there is no plan to divorce. Marital stability, therefore, refers to the relationship, not to the spouses as individuals.

Fitzpatrick and Ritchie (1993) exposed that marital success is usually defined as "marital stability" or "marital satisfaction". Marital

stability is understood as whether a couple in marriage remains together, instead of separating or divorcing. Marital satisfaction, in contrast, refers to how spousal partners evaluate the quality of their marriage relationship. It is important to note that marital stability differs from marital satisfaction, though marital satisfaction can serve as a moderator for marital stability (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). To emphasize the difference between marital satisfaction and marital stability Lewis and Spanier (1979) identified four categories of marriage: satisfied-stable (high quality), satisfied-unstable, unsatisfied-unstable, and unsatisfied-stable marriages. According to Heaton & Albrecht (1991), not all stable marriages are joyful, but this category is relatively small with estimates that 7.4% of married men and 7% of married women are in stable unhappy marriages. Irrespective of their difference, many past researchers have demonstrated that there is a strong positive correlation between marital satisfaction and marital stability (Gager & Sanchez, 2003; Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007).

Daniel Tadesse's study (as cited in Girma and Zewdu, 2019) revealed that in Addis Ababa city within a year (i.e., 2005 to 2006) 6,023 couples were married and among these 1,105 couples were separated. Additionally, Girma and Zewdu, (2019) reported that

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Received: January 01, 2021

Accepted: January 16, 2021

Published: January 20, 2021

Citation: Zewdu Girma. The Relationship between Marital Satisfaction and Marital Stability among Married Individuals in Nifas Silk Lafto Sub-City of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. *Int J Behav Res Psychol.* 2021;9(1):271-274. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.19070/2332-3000-2100048>

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the divorce rate in Addis Ababa is increasing by 139% per year. This highly increasing rate of divorce is not only implied divorce; it has indistinguishable consequences on individual family members, particularly on young children. They face multiple challenges that made them vulnerable to all forms of abuse: physical, emotional and psychological. On the contrary, children raised in harmonious and stable families are less likely to have internalized and externalized behavioral difficulties, perform better in school, are more likely to get married, and have happy relationships (Amato & Booth, 1997; Booth & Amato, 2001; Wolfinger, 2011).

No doubt about family is the foundation of a nation, accordingly, a satisfied and stable marriage relationship has a positive paramount impact on the well being of the citizens, the economy, the social interaction, the politics and the overall activities of the country. Immense literature on marital satisfaction and stability centers on Western contexts, predominantly the United States of America and Europe. In recent years, however, there is a growing interest in marital satisfaction and stability about their different facets in the Ethiopian context. Specifically, their factors and associations with sexual satisfaction, marital communication, personality, premarital expectation and marital conflict were plenty studied even if the majority of the papers were not published. But to the best knowledge of the current researcher, no research is done in this country to study the association between marital satisfaction and marital stability among married individuals with a large number of respondents. Therefore, to recommend the blocking stones of a happy marriage relationship and then a nation i.e., marital satisfaction and stability, to different stakeholders this correlational study is designed.

Research Methodology

Participants

The target population for this study was all heterosexual married individuals, legally bound by the state of marriage as husband and wife and who lived in Nifas Silk, Addis Ababa. Nifas Silk Lafto is one of the 10 sub-cities of Addis Ababa situated in the southwest district of Addis Ababa and has a total of 12 *Wereda* administrative structures. For drawing the samples for the actual research three *Weredas* were selected out of the total 12 *Weredas* of the sub-city. These were *Wereda* Two, Four, and Seven. In these three *Woredas*, there were 1700 households; out of these households, 326 households were randomly selected. The total households were obtained from each *Wereda's* administration office together with the identification number of the houses. The researcher has collected data from one of the partners rather than from both of them to avoid contamination of data. The participants were in committed marriage relationships for at least six months and no single-parent or cohabiting spouses were surveyed.

For this study, a two-stage stratified systematic sampling technique

along with a simple random sampling technique was employed to select the study units. First, out of the total 12 *Woredas*, three *Woredas* were selected randomly using the lottery method. Secondly, from the chosen *Woredas*, 326, which is computed using a formula to estimate two population mean, households were selected systematically. The sampling interval was found to be every 5th house, which was calculated by dividing the sampling frame (1700) by the required sample size (326). The units (households) listed in the sampling frame were numbered in a sequence, starting with one as the first item at the head of the list and continuing down to the last item according to their physical proximate. To determine the first Nth (from house numbers one and five) the lottery method was used (i.e., to identify the first house number). During data collection, in the case where there was no eligible person in the selected household, the data collector would go to the next selected household until he/she got an eligible respondent.

Data Collection Instruments

Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS) is used as a measure of marital satisfaction. It is a 14-item revised version of the original Dyadic Adjustment Scale designed to measure marital satisfaction (Spanier, 1976). The revised form gives upgraded psychometric properties and it is shorter, comprises only three of the original four subscales (Busby, Christensen, Crane, & Larson, 1995). The RDAS yields a Total Adjustment Score (maximum =69 and minimum =0). Points on the RDAS range from 0 to 69 with higher points indicating greater marital satisfaction. Crane, Middleton & Bean (2000) informed that the RDAS has been found to have internal consistency reliability of .90.

Marital Status Inventory (MSI) was employed as a measure of marital stability. The MSI is a 14-item, self-administered, true-false, Guttman-type measure that evaluates the dissolution potential of marital relationships (Weiss & Cerreto, 1980). Points range from 0 to 14 with higher points indicating greater marriage instability. In the current study, the MSI points were reversed to get the direction that would be consistent with that of other variables. Higher reversed points show higher marital stability and lower points show lower marital stability.

Pilot Testing

In this study, the pilot test was mainly conducted to test the internal reliability of the Amharic version of the standardized scales. The Amharic version of the instrument was administered to 42 married individuals of which 20 were male and 22 were female. Participants for the pilot test were selected through convenience from different target population from which the sample for the main study was not selected to avoid contamination of information. As a measure of reliability, the internal consistency of the items of the Amharic versions scales was examined by computing Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach's alpha provides a measure of the ex-

Table 1. Mean, Standard deviation, and Alpha Coefficients of RDAS and MSI for the Pilot Test (N = 42).

Scales	No. of Items	M	SD	α	α during the Main Study	Remark Based on α
RDAS	14	54.55	9.68	.82	.91	Good
MSI	14	12.40	2.60	.86	.92	Good

M = mean, SD = standard deviation, α = Cronbach's alpha

tent to which the items on a scale provide consistent information about each individual's level of the trait of interest. Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0 to 1.00, with values near to 1.00 showing high internal consistency.

The result of the pilot test from the alpha tests indicates that there was a consistency to the items measuring each construct and all the constructs are deemed acceptable as each of the Alpha value is ranged from 0.82 to .86, which is within the acceptable range of internal consistency for an Alpha reliability of the scales.

Data Processing and Analysis

Data were screened before performing any statistical analysis. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) window version 22 is used for analysis. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed. Descriptive statistics namely reliability, mean, standard deviations, frequency and percentage, and tables were worked out. Pearson correlation was found out to assess the correlation between marital satisfaction and stability. Before analyzing to test the hypothesis, the data were inspected for linearity, normality, and outliers, and other assumptions. As conventional, a $p \leq .05$ will be used to indicate statistical significance.

Ethical Clearances

Making ethical considerations is imperative due to the sensitive and personal nature of the study. Hereafter, ethical endorsement and clearance were obtained from the Institutional Review Board of the School of Psychology, Addis Ababa University. Written permission was obtained from Nifas Silk Lafto Sub-City Administration to carry out the study among married individuals who were living in the sub-city during the study period. The respondents were made fully aware of the content and purpose of the research and only willing respondents were incorporated in the study. Respondents were informed that the information they offer would be confidential and would not be used other than academic purposes.

Results

Screening the Data for Assumptions before the Main Analysis

Although 326 questionnaires were distributed to study participants, 308 completed copies of the questionnaires were returned and made the response rate to be 94.5 %, and all of these were appropriate for any statistical analysis. Out of the total respondents in this study, 178 (57.8%) were females and 130 were males

(42.2%). The mean average monthly income of the married individuals was 2829.67 (SD=1482.77) Ethiopian Birr. Regards to the number of children per married individual, 78(25.3%), 71(23.1%), 68(22.1%), and 66(21.4%) of participants have two, one, three, and more, and no children, respectively. For the entire survey, the mean relationship duration was 9.69 years (SD = 8.75) and ranged from 1 to 35 years. The majority of samples were lived in their first marriage/union, 275(89.3%). Out of the total number of the study participants, 256(83.1%) chose their lifelong partners by themselves or their marriage was a love marriage. All most all of the study participants twisted married with an individual who has the same faith/religion as themselves.

In the current study, before testing the hypotheses, variables were examined for accuracy of data entry, missing values, and fit between their distributions and the assumptions of univariate, bivariate, and multivariate statistics, namely outliers, skewness, kurtosis, normality, and linearity. The overall count of missing values per variable for a case was less than 10%. Each of the missed data was replaced by mean imputation systems. About outliers, the researcher used many techniques to rule out or make corrections of both univariate and multivariate outliers. To detect univariate outliers standardized scores ($> \pm 3$, considered as outlier score), kurtosis and skewness were used. In the current data, there were some outliers. Outliers on the negative side (scores, < -3) were changed to the nearest lowest non-outlier scores whereas on the positive side (scores, $> +3$) the outliers changed to the highest near points. In the case of multivariate outliers, Cooks' Distance (absolute values greater than 1 is a cause for concern) and Leverage (cutoff point, greater than .5 is caused for concerns) were used. Both univariate and multivariate normality of the continuous independent and dependent variables were examined. To carry out this assumption the researcher carried out skewness, kurtosis, histogram, Q-Q plot charts, and box plots. Using these techniques the data were found to be not enough to violate the normality assumption. In addition to the normality of variables, all the relationships in this study were examined for linearity. Linearity was assessed by examining the scatter plots of the variables; almost all the scatter plots followed a linear pattern.

Hypothesis

There is a relationship between marital satisfaction and stability.

Analysis of the data displayed in Table 2 using Pearson's correlation indicated that marital satisfaction and stability were significantly and positively correlated among married individuals, $r = .68, p < .001$. Cross- correlations comparing females' marital satisfaction and stability were strongly and significantly correlated, r

Table 2. The Association between Marital Satisfaction and Stability using Pearson Correlation among Overall Samples, Females and Males (N=308).

		Marital stability		
		overall	Female	Male
Marital satisfaction	Overall Sample	.68***	—	—
	Female Sample	—	.74***	—
	Male Sample	—	—	.59***

Note. *** .001(two-tailed)

= .74, $p < .001$. Besides, marital satisfaction and stability were also strongly and positively associated among males, $r = .59$, $p < .001$. Therefore, the hypothesis which states that marital satisfaction and stability have a relationship is supported.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between marital satisfaction and stability among married individuals. It was predicted that there was a relationship between marital satisfaction and stability among married individuals. In this study, marital satisfaction and stability were significantly and positively correlated among married individuals. The correlation analysis in the present study also showed that there was a strong association between females' marital satisfaction and stability. Similarly, males' marital satisfaction was significantly associated with males' marital stability. Thus, the hypothesis was fully supported. The findings of this study are consistent with those of Gager & Sanchez (2003); Karney & Bradbury (1995); Kurdek (1993); White & Booth (1991); Amato & Hohmann-Marriott (2007), which showed that a positive strong relationship exists between marital satisfaction and marital stability.

Although this study has answered the research questions and achieved its objective, it was not without limitations. Respondents might not give genuine answers to the questions they were asked since this study touches very sensitive and private issues as a result the self-report measure in the current research faces response biases and social desirability. Another significant limitation of the current study is that it is a cross-sectional survey research design. Cross-sectional research only yields descriptive results. It does not provide you, like a longitudinal study, to know the reciprocal relationship between the study variables over time. On account of this, future investigations on marital stability and marital satisfaction would benefit from the collection of longitudinal data. The generalizability of a result is confined to the nature of the study sample. The current study collected data only from one sub-city of Addis Ababa and urban married individuals, so additional research on more diverse samples within Addis Ababa is needed.

Conclusion

The correlation analysis in the present study showed that there was a strong positive association between married individuals' marital satisfaction and stability. Moreover, cross-correlation comparing females' and males' marital satisfaction and stability indicates that there is a strong positive and statistically significant correlation. In general, the findings have significant implications in the enhancement of marital satisfaction and stability of married individuals, prevention of spouses' conflict and divorce in

this study sub-city of Addis Ababa.

Consent for publication

This part is not applicable because the manuscript contains no person's data in any form (including individual details, images, or videos).

Availability of data and material

The datasets used and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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