



## Economic Stability and Relationship Quality: Exploring the Effects of Husbands' Employment on Marital Satisfaction in Low Socioeconomic Status Couples

Fizza Ejaz Janjua<sup>1</sup>, Sheeba Naimat Saif<sup>2</sup>, Lahniya Abeer Tahir<sup>3</sup> & Erum Aurangzeb<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Lecturer, Department of Psychology. Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Hamdard University Karachi Pakistan, Email: [fiza.ejaz@hamdard.edu.pk](mailto:fiza.ejaz@hamdard.edu.pk)

<sup>2</sup>Email: [sns273@gmail.com](mailto:sns273@gmail.com)

<sup>3</sup>Email: [lahniya.abeer1@gmail.com](mailto:lahniya.abeer1@gmail.com)

<sup>4</sup>Lecturer, Department of Psychology. Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Hamdard University Karachi Pakistan. Email: [erum.bibi@hamdard.edu.pk](mailto:erum.bibi@hamdard.edu.pk)

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#### Corresponding Author:

Fizza Ejaz Janjua

#### Email:

[fiza.ejaz@hamdard.edu.pk](mailto:fiza.ejaz@hamdard.edu.pk)



### ABSTRACT

*This study aims to research the connection between employment status of husbands with marital satisfaction among the couples in lower socio-economic status. It is assumed that there is a critical change between marital satisfactions of couples with relation to employment status of husband. A sample of N=100 couples (husbands and wives) consisting of n= 100 males and n=100 females (employed and unemployed both) aged from (20-59) i.e. early and middle adulthood, taken from the lower socio-economic status which is obtained through purposive and snowball sampling technique. Data has been collected from couples by using the Locke & Wallace Marital Adjustment Test (Urdu version). Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to compute the results and analysis was done using independent sample t-test. Analysis revealed there is no significant difference between marital satisfaction of couples with relation to employment status of husband. Other possible factors that might be significant for marital satisfaction of couples in the current study are discussed. Limitations and suggestions for future studies are also mentioned.*

## Introduction

Marriage is considered an essential social institution that affects people's life and wellbeing. It is a commitment that engages people in long term relationships. Marriages unite two individuals to satisfy their biological and social needs. Riss (1982) defined marriage as the legal union of the person with opposite sex. As it's a reciprocal understanding between two distinctive personalities, there is a likelihood of conflicts and adaptation problems. Marriage is the essential wellspring of

people's joy and importance throughout everyday life; happiness and constructive improvement is conceivable just when the connection between couples is reasonable and sufficient (Bhattarai, Gurung, & Kunwar, 2015). Studies have shown that family income was an exceedingly important predictor of marriage quality during social and economic crisis in various societies (Josip & Zagreb, 2005). Unemployed individuals did not have remarkably lower sentiments of confidence, yet reported altogether lower level of mental state of feeling unhappy and dissatisfaction in one's marriage, lack of communication with one's partner, and lower contentment and consonance in one's relationship in family (Larson, 1984). The aim of the present research is to study the role of husband's employment status on marital satisfaction among lower socio-economic couples.

### **Marital Satisfaction**

According to Thibaut and Kelley (1959) marital satisfaction is a state of mind that is reflected from one's own perception of profits and cost of marriage with other specific person. More cost results in less marital satisfaction and less satisfied with his/her partner. In the same way greater the perception of benefits the person has, the happier they are with their marital life and their spouse. According to Dynamic Goal Theory given by Li and Fung (2011), which formulate that partners in marriage have three goals to accomplish, these are personal growth goals, companionship goals, and instrumental goals. Moreover, the significance of these three category of marital goals have an active changes during the adulthood. Similarly, an impact covered by the evolutionary approach states that to maintain the marital relationship, the partners should be loyal, have their own children together, be productive, devoted, generous, cooperative, and they shouldn't sexually unaccepted by each other (Buss, 2007).

The explanation above validates our research, as it attempts to explain that for marital satisfaction, partners should maintain a balance between rewards and costs. Rewards in marital satisfaction are pleasures, satisfaction, and gratifications that are obtained in the result of behaviors of partners. In Pakistani culture, it is observed that majority couples from lower socio-economic background consist of unemployed husbands that leads to unbalanced marriage leading to the wives being ex to work to support their families. According to role identity theory the status of marital satisfaction is determined by common characteristics which serve as noticeable recreation role which in turn is supported by the spouse identity role (Baldwin, Ellis, & Baldwin, 1999). In addition, it is observed that the majority of marriages in Pakistan are thought of to be male dominant and considers the husband as the source of income for the wife. In other words, wives are dependent on the husbands, in regards to financial means as well, and if the husband is not fulfilling his responsibility and is not providing the expected means then there will be no satisfaction amongst the couple. Moreover, Cabrera (2014) proposed that satisfaction and happiness in the relationship must be maintained by displaying sensible attitudes in the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of partners in the best possible way. This approach supports the aim of the study by linking the unemployed husbands in a marriage with couple's marital satisfaction. In this research, this theory is applied by comparing the marital satisfaction (reward) with employment status of husband (cost). To elaborate, if the husband's role is to maintain stability in marital relationship then it would result in economic and family stability. In this research Social Exchange theory is more applicable in a way that it explains the marital satisfaction in an exchange domain. It explains that the stability in relationships occur when there is a negotiated exchange between partners (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959).

### **Employment Status of Husband**

Employment status of husband can be seen when a person is performing his job and fulfilling all his home expenses without any difficulty (basic needs). On the contrary, another example of an individual is when they don't have any job & can't fulfill their home expenses (basic needs). According to Stacey, (2011) even if unemployed men have a normal marital satisfaction there is still a likelihood that the partner may initiate divorce. Whereas woman's employment status has no effect on their marital satisfaction and there is a possibility that her husband will choose to abandon the marriage. A working woman is more likely to commence a divorce more than an unemployed woman, but only when she will most likely to be unsatisfied with her marriage.

In the study of Burke & Weir, (1976) couples were individually examined their gratification with individual life, marital life, and job in regard to the mental and physical well-being along with communication with their spouse. Which showed that employed wives were more satisfied and could perform well than non-working wives. Whereas husbands of employed wives were not satisfied as compared to non-working wives. Husband may face a greater burden in adjusting to a two-career family lifestyle as their wives are employed. In other words, employment of wives can give their husbands support in household, but they also handle problems in their life.

The effect of employed women on the mental well-being of their husbands was studied (Kessler, 1982). Their results showed that by purposefully changing their lifestyle by moving away from one's home into workforce gives advantage to the working women regarding their mental wellbeing. Their understanding is satisfactory related to the relationship between partner employment and psychological distress among males. Satisfaction comes with the distribution of labor around with respect to both emotional work and housework remained major predictors for male marital satisfaction. Partner's position towards enhancement of their work is also one of the predictor for men. Economic dependence, rewarding work hours, gender philosophy, hours that spouse spent on house maintenance, contributions to emotion work, and number of children and preschool-age children had only indirect effects on women's marital satisfaction. For men, hours spent on housework, influences to one's emotion work, spouse's emotion work, number of hours spent working and number of preschool children can have an indirect effect on marital satisfaction.

The economic status and interaction between couples can be significant predictors, along with the division of work and responsibilities share an emotional connection that releases the tension and gives each other the love and sense of belonging which they require for their mental and marital satisfaction. These concepts are related to our research, since our research is based on employment status of husband and also the work division and equality in the couple.

### **Theoretical Framework**

According to the Social Exchange Theory (Thibaut & Kelly, 1959) which states that the two main aspects that effect the married couple relationship are cost and benefit. In the same way, the choices that one partner makes most likely to have a great impact on the other partner. The aim of the current research is to study the role of employment status on his overall marital satisfaction. In Pakistani culture, husbands are considered as head of the family and the primary source of income. If husband is unemployed and facing financial difficulties, then the wife would be predicted as the displeased individual in the couple. Various researches suggest that marital contentment depends on the employment status of the husband. However, it has been observed that in lower socioeconomic status, couples that express discontent are because the male figures are mostly not willing to work, therefore, they force their wives to work and generate income for the family. If

husbands are employed and take responsibility of their family, support wife, and help her at home then it could lead to a joyful and satisfied lifestyle.

Social Exchange theory (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) is well explained in this research and is more applicable in a way that it explains the marital satisfaction in an exchange domain. It explains that the stability in relationships occur when there is a negotiated exchange between partners. So, for marital satisfaction, partners should make a balance between rewards and the costs that they expect from each other. Rewards in marital satisfaction are pleasures, satisfaction, and gratifications that are obtained as a result of behaviors of their partners. In this thesis, this theory is applied by comparing the marital satisfaction (reward) with working and non-working husbands (cost). If the husband work and satisfy their wife by helping her in maintaining a stable relationship, then there will be likelihood of economic and family stability.

Keeping the above literature in view this study is focused to find out the association between the husbands' employment status and its relationship with marital satisfaction of couples in lower socio-economic status. This study might help to highlight the factors that can reduce mental stress experienced by wives, bring harmony in the family relationships and maintain the economic stability as well as to provide a sense of belongingness. The predictor according to this research is: employment status of husband. For the marital satisfaction, husbands would have to work hard for the family and provide the pleasures, satisfactions, and gratifications to his wife that she expects from him. Wives are considered as the sensitive person in a couple that requires love and affection of her husband for her inner satisfaction.

### **Hypothesis**

- There will be a significant difference between marital satisfaction of couples with relation to employment status of husband.

### **Method**

#### **Participants**

The present research was conducted to examine the relationship between the husbands' employment status with marital satisfaction of couples especially in lower Socio-Economic Status. The sampling techniques were purposive and snowball techniques which were used and 100 married couples (N= 100) were recruited to be the part of the study. The sample size was N=100 males and N=100 females from Lower Socio-Economic Status. Participants' ages were range from (18-40) i.e. early adulthood.

#### **Inclusion Criteria**

Participants that were recruited to be part of the research must fulfill some criteria to be part of the research. The criteria that was required in participants was that they should be currently married, should be living with their spouse for at least 2 years and belong to Lower Socio-Economic Status.

#### **Measures**

The participants were asked to fill out the consent form (Appendix A) which informed the participants regarding the basic purpose of the research. They had been asked to participate voluntarily, and their signatures or thumb prints had been taken on the consent form. The demographic form had been used in the research to make sure that only those participants who fit

the inclusion criteria of the research shall be included. All the mentioned information had been gathered with the help of the form which was translated in Urdu. To assess the Marital Satisfaction, Locke & Wallace Marital Adjustment Test was used, which is 15- item self-administered test. It is used to distinguish the healthy and satisfied couples with unsatisfied couples. The initial item of the test assessed the global happiness, next 8 items assessed the agreement on specific matters such as finances, recreation, affection, friends, and philosophy of life; and the rest 6 items assessed specific choices and feelings regarding the marriage and the respondent's spouse. The test had various response formats from 7-point rating (Item 1) to 6-point rating (Items 2-9), and 4-point rating (Items 11,13, and 15) Likert-type rating, 3- and 2- choice responses (Items 10,14 and 12). A multifaceted scoring system was used in LWSMAT, including 10 different weights for all 15 items. For example, the scoring of item 12 depended on the agreement between the spouses. It is calculated as 10= stay at home for both, 3= on the go for both, and 2= disagreement. The total scores were the sum of each item and range from 2 to 158 (Locke & Wallace, 1959). The scale had scoring pattern that was based on three ranges including high (100-158), moderate (85-99) and low (2-84). Internal consistency of the test could be measured by Spearman Brown formula and found to be a respectable 0.90 based on a sample of 118, taken by Locke and Wallace in their original study (Cross & Sharpley, 1981) as reported by (Sperry, 2004).

## Results

For the calculation of the results, a series of statistical analysis were conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 21).

### Descriptive Analysis

Mean, standard deviation and Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient have been reported

**Table 1: Reliability statistics of Marital Satisfaction (N= 200)**

| Cronbach's Alpha | N of Items |
|------------------|------------|
| .625             | 13         |

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Sample (N= 200)**

| Husband's Employment Status |                      | N Statistic | Mean Statistic | Std. Deviation Statistic | Variance Statistic |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|-------------|----------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| Unemployed                  | Marital Satisfaction | 100         | 6.9481         | 1.51587                  | 2.298              |
|                             | Valid N (listwise)   | 100         |                |                          |                    |
| Employed                    | Marital Satisfaction | 100         | 6.8958         | 1.42912                  | 2.042              |
|                             | Valid N (listwise)   | 100         |                |                          |                    |

**Table 4: T-Test Results (N= 200)**

| Group Statistics            |            |     |        |                |                 |
|-----------------------------|------------|-----|--------|----------------|-----------------|
| Husband's Employment Status |            | N   | Mean   | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
| Marital Satisfaction        | Unemployed | 100 | 6.9481 | 1.51587        | .15159          |
|                             | Employed   | 100 | 6.8958 | 1.42912        | .14291          |

Table 4:

| Independent Samples Test |      |      |      |                              |      |                 |        |        |        |        |   |
|--------------------------|------|------|------|------------------------------|------|-----------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---|
|                          |      | LTEV |      | t-test for Equality of Means |      |                 |        |        |        |        |   |
|                          |      | F    | Sig. | t                            | df   | Sig. (2-tailed) | MD     | SED    | 95% CI |        |   |
|                          |      |      |      |                              |      |                 |        |        |        | L      | U |
| M                        | EVA  | .062 | .804 | .251                         | 198  | .802            | .05226 | .20833 | .35858 | .46310 |   |
| S                        | EVNA |      |      | .251                         | 197. | .802            | .05226 | .20833 | .35858 | .46311 |   |
|                          |      |      |      |                              | 316  |                 |        |        |        |        |   |

|                            |                               |    |    |     |     |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|----|----|-----|-----|
| <b>Sexual Relationship</b> | <b>Female</b>                 | 19 | 16 | 65  | 100 |
|                            | <b>Total</b>                  | 30 | 25 | 145 | 200 |
|                            | <b>Always Disagree</b>        | 01 | 01 | 00  | 02  |
|                            | <b>Almost Always Disagree</b> | 00 | 01 | 00  | 01  |
|                            | <b>Frequently Disagree</b>    | 06 | 00 | 01  | 07  |
|                            | <b>Occasionally Disagree</b>  | 11 | 05 | 03  | 19  |
|                            | <b>Almost Always Agree</b>    | 08 | 11 | 56  | 75  |
|                            | <b>Always Agree</b>           | 04 | 07 | 85  | 96  |
|                            | <b>Total</b>                  | 30 | 25 | 145 | 200 |

**Table 5 (b): Showing Pearson Chi Square Association between possible variables and marital satisfaction**

| <b>Chi Square Association between Marriage Time and marital satisfaction</b>       |                     |           |                              |
|--|---------------------|-----------|------------------------------|
|  | <b>Value</b>        | <b>df</b> | <b>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</b> |
| Pearson Chi-Square   | 19.021 <sup>a</sup> | 8         | .015                         |
| Likelihood Ratio   | 21.158              | 8         | .007                         |
| Linear-by-Linear Association   | 2.026               | 1         | .155                         |
| N of Valid Cases   | 200                 |           |                              |
| <b>Chi Square Association between Gender and marital satisfaction</b>              |                     |           |                              |
|  | <b>Value</b>        | <b>Df</b> | <b>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</b> |
| Pearson Chi-Square   | 5.645 <sup>a</sup>  | 2         | .059                         |
| Likelihood Ratio   | 5.700               | 2         | .058                         |
| Linear-by-Linear Association   | 4.834               | 1         | .028                         |
| N of Valid Cases   | 200                 |           |                              |
| <b>Chi Square Association between Sexual Relationship and marital satisfaction</b> |                     |           |                              |
|  | <b>Value</b>        | <b>df</b> | <b>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</b> |
| Pearson Chi-Square   | 88.723 <sup>a</sup> | 10        | .000                         |
| Likelihood Ratio   | 72.565              | 10        | .000                         |
| Linear-by-Linear Association   | 57.953              | 1         | .000                         |
| N of Valid Cases   | 200                 |           |                              |

*The table indicates the Pearson Chi Square Value exists between the variables marriage time and marital satisfaction, gender and marital satisfaction & sexual relationship and marital satisfaction, which shows that there is association/relationship between these variables.*

## **Discussion**

The aim of the present research is to study the effects of employment status of husband on marital satisfaction of couples. It was hypothesized that there will be a significant difference between marital satisfaction of couples with relation to employment status of husband. However it was found out that there was no significant difference between marital satisfaction of couples with relation to employment status of husband was found. Although a wide range of researches have been conducted on marital satisfaction and its association with various different factors and variables (Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000; Hendrick, 1981), the researchers found there to be

fewer researches on exploring the role of husbands' employment status with reference to marital satisfaction among lower socio-economic couples.

The results of the current study showed that there was no significant difference between marital satisfaction of couples with relation to employment status of husband. There could be many possible explanations for such finding.

Gender seems to be a significant aspect which could influence the marital satisfaction. Evidences from researches has showed that males are more likely satisfied than females in the marital relationship (Clements & Swensen, 2000). A second possible explanation for the finding could be family structure. In the current study, 64% couples live in joint family system. The study was conducted in Pakistan, a collectivist culture. Financial stability is an essential factor that affects marital life and for achieving financial stability, members of the family are dependent on each other's earning as is seen in a collectivist culture. This could be a main factor in maintaining marital satisfaction of couples even if the husbands are unemployed.

Furthermore, Pakistan is a developing country and people are striving for their survival needs. In Pakistani society, basic needs are more important for couples as compared to love and belongingness. As for the current study data was collected from couples of lower socio-economic status, who seems to earn just enough from hand to mouth. There is likelihood that these individuals do not pay attention on their marital life or marital satisfaction as definitive in the questionnaire provided to them which aimed to find aspects of leisure as well to be a contributing factor in marital satisfaction, Individuals from other socio-economic backgrounds may have had these factors as important in their marital satisfaction as compared to the lower socio economic status.

Moving further, another possible reason could be duration of marriage that has an influence the marital satisfaction among couples, as suggested by various researches. As seen in the current study, 45 % of the couples had been married for more than 5 years. Some researchers found that there is a positive association between marital satisfaction and marital duration. Couples having spent more years together were seen to be more satisfied with their partners than couples who had spent less time. Hence, it was found that with the increase in marital duration there was an increase in marital adjustment (Bali, Dhingra & Balu, 2010).

Pakistan- being an Islamic country focuses on the Quran and Sunnah which suggests the husband and wife to be understanding and supportive for each other and this is further promoted in the cultural values as per a Quranic verse (And live with them in kindness. For if you dislike them – perhaps you dislike a thing and Allah makes therein much good- Quran 4:19) we can concur that the responses given by the individuals had this factor underlying as well.

## **Conclusion**

The current research attempted to study the role of Employment Status of Husband on Marital satisfaction of Couples. T-test was used to analyze if there is be a significant difference between marital satisfactions of couples with relation to employment status of husband. However, it was found out that there was no significant difference found between marital satisfactions of couples with relation to employment status of husband. Moreover, results revealed that there is possible relation of marital satisfaction with marriage time, gender, sexual relationship, and family structure of the participants.



## **Limitations**

- The findings cannot be comprehensive enough to generalize it on larger population as the data has been collected as the sample size was only limited to 200 couples, due to the incomplete availability of target population as it was limited collected data could not be generalized to overall population.
- The data is collected from the individuals from lower-class background; and the upper and middle socio-economic background cannot be involved as the result cannot be said to have covered the entire population.
- There is a lack of control of constraining variables as there were so many factors such as presence of spouse and other family members were observed on the number of couples that influenced the responses of the participants, who participated in the study which the researchers unable to control.
- Couples where husbands were employed had different style of living than the couples in which husbands were unemployed, therefore it took a lot of effort in finding the different areas where this population could be found.
- Couples were not easily approachable, as both the spouses were not together at the time of research. Therefore, it took a lot of time and days to approach both the spouses.
- Another imperative factor that should be considered is that the duration of husbands' job should be included in inclusion criteria.

## **Recommendations**

- To conduct the similar study in the future, individuals from all the socio-economic background should be made part of this study.
- The questionnaire that was used provided more of a quantitative results and the questions were more of closed-ended questions but if the researcher wish to replicate this study, they can explore more and in detail by using qualitative method.
- This research will be helpful for future studies related to therapeutic point of view and in educational setting.
- Large sample size can be used even at national and international level as it will help in great understanding and generalization of the results on the larger population for the similar study.
- Different variety of variables can also be studied by doing comprehensive study on the topic like these.

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